

The Jagungal Expeditions of 1928

INTRODUCTION.

(By J. W. S. Laidley, W. A. Gordon, R. H. Allen, and
L. C. Stephen.)

After the Kiandra-Kosciusko traverse had been successfully accomplished in the winter of 1927, it became obvious that two outstanding climbs remained. Jagungal and the Grey Mares are mountains lying approximately half-way between Kosciusko and Kiandra, but at some distance westward of the direct route. As climbs they involve no more difficulty than an ascent of Kosciusko itself, but so far are they from shelter that an ascent even of the nearest, means that a distance of 90 miles must be travelled on ski.

During the 1927-1928 summer it was determined to attempt the ascent of Jagungal during the following winter. If this was successful it was hoped that an expedition to the Grey Mares would follow in some succeeding season. Nine out of ten people who go regularly to the Hotel Kosciusko have never heard of Jagungal, and ninety-nine out of a hundred have never seen it. This is due to two causes. Firstly, it is twenty-five miles from the Hotel as the crow flies, and forty-five miles over the shortest practicable ski-ing route. Secondly, from the Kosciusko end of the range it is not a conspicuous object, being both too far away from any point of vantage, and also because on the south it does not rise to any great elevation above the surrounding plateau.

However, it will come as a surprise to most that Jagungal or the Big Bogong is not only the most magnificent peak in the whole range, but was practically the only peak recognised by the aborigines who inhabited the district. It received this recognition from two facts. Kosciusko, Twynam, and Tate, although all are higher peaks, are mere incidents in a mountain range, where the apices of the peaks are not more than 500 feet above the passes which lie between them. Jagungal, on the other hand, is not on the Main Divide at all, but lies at the extremity of a subsidiary spur which runs at right angles to the Divide, branching off from it in the region of Bull's Peaks. At this point the Divide is about 6,000 feet high. As the Jagungal spur stretches out westward, not only does it increase in height until at the trigonometrical station it reaches an elevation of 6,770 feet, but the surrounding tableland also falls away to the tremendous gorges of the Geehi and Tumut, where the elevation cannot be over 2,000



LOOKING TOWARDS THE MAIN RANGE FROM SPENCER'S VALLEY.
Pounds' Valley and Mount Tate are in the centre of the picture.

feet. Consequently, Jagungal presents a most striking object from every direction, except the south and east. From the Kiandra end of the range its magnificent crouching lion appearance may be seen from any point of vantage. The other cause for its recognition in the pre-ski-ing era was that its flanks were the principal breeding grounds for the famous Bogong moths, which seemed to take the place of caviar in the aboriginal dietary.

Curiously enough we have a record of a previous winter ascent of Jagungal. This was done in the year 1898, by a party of miners from the Grey Mares gold mine, which was then working. A photograph taken by a member of this party of the summit of the mountain is published with this article. While feeling not a little disappointment that the mountain had been climbed in winter before, yet the following facts should be borne in mind. First, an ascent from the Grey Mares mine cannot involve a journey of over 15 miles, there and back, while from the Kosciusko Hotel, Jagungal is 45 miles, and from the Tin Hut, the last shelter en route, it is at least 15 miles. The Grey Mares workings lie along the spur which connects Jagungal with the Grey Mares, and from there an ascent of either mountain would be child's play. Secondly, it is doubtful whether the ascent was actually completed on ski. The Kiandra type of ski is so wide that it is practically impossible to traverse a steep slope in them, as the strain on the ankles is too great. It is quite in accord with our present knowledge of Kiandra skiers that the party carried their skis up the mountain, and only used them in the run off. However, this is a minor point, and the main pleasure of the whole expedition lies, and always will lie, in the successful accomplishment of a long cross country trip in perfect weather and superb snow conditions, with a complete absence of accidents, miscalculations, or ill-feeling, any of which will mar the complete enjoyment of an experience, which only a skier, and he not very often, will encounter.

It was decided, therefore, to make an organised attack on the mountain during the winter of 1928. Three parties of four were chosen. No. 1 party was chosen from among those who spent a week at Kiandra before the opening of the Kosciusko season. If their condition was good enough, they were to leave on the expedition as soon as possible after they arrived at Kosciusko. They were to make the Tin Hut their base, and from there they were to make the ascent. If bad weather interfered with these plans, they were to return and the No. 2 party was to make another attempt. The same procedure was adopted for the No. 3 party. Of these three parties, two actually started. A casualty and bad weather dogged the steps of No. 1 party,

and they were forced to return without accomplishing their object. The No. 2 party succeeded in the ascent, and when they returned it was too late in the season for a third party to leave.

Many lessons were learnt in these expeditions. The necessity for good organisation and equipment was obvious. The No. 1 party explored the only other possible line of retreat from the Main Range, which had not hitherto been tried, and found it all but impossible; thus making it more and more evident that a bridge across the Snowy at Island Bend is urgently needed. Seven skiers, two of whom had never been on that part of the range before, went to the Tin Hut and into the country beyond, and thus increased the numbers of those enthusiasts who believe that a man cannot realise the ski-ing possibilities of Australia until he has crossed the Snowy.

It is sincerely hoped that this article will give at least some skiers the incentive to explore this truly magnificent tract of country.



CROSSING THE SNOWY AT ITS JUNCTION WITH THE GUTHEGA.

NO. 1 PARTY'S EXPERIENCE.

(W. A. Gordon, L. C. Stephen, and R. H. Allen.)

We arrived at Kosciusko from Kiandra the same day as the rest of the Ski Club arrived from Sydney. The discomforts of Kiandra had been somewhat made up for by the thought that once we reached Kosciusko we should have a few quiet days of rest in comfort and comparative luxury. We had imagined ourselves in slippers lolling back in big arm chairs before a roaring fire puffing at fat cigars and surrounded by a ring of admiring novices held spellbound by our tales of adventure and prowess on the Kiandra snowfields.

This, however, was not to be. We found that it had been arranged for the three of us, and Dr. Thomas, who had also been to Kiandra, to form No. 1 party to attempt the first winter ascent on ski of Mount Jagungal from the Gungartan or Tin Hut, and that we were to start the following day (Sunday, 29th July). Needless to say, we were delighted with the prospect at being the first to climb Jagungal, and felt that our good luck was due to our week's ski-ing at Kiandra, which had put us in fairly good condition for any arduous trip.

We spent Sunday morning discussing our plans, arguing as to what we should take, and packing, unpacking and repacking our rucksacs, and it was not until after lunch that we left for Betts's Camp, where we had dinner. So that we might save four miles on our next day's run to Tin Hut, we left Betts's shortly after 8 o'clock and ran down Spencer's Creek to Pounds' Creek Hut by moonlight. Here we spent a most uncomfortable night. When the fire wasn't smoking it was so hot that we were nearly suffocated and when eventually we were forced to put it out we were frozen stiff with cold. Consequently, we had very little sleep, and were glad to get up, even before day-break.

Thomas had twisted his knee at Kiandra, and, running on to Betts's Plain the previous evening, took a nasty toss and gave it another wrench which was very painful. In the morning his knee was so stiff that he was scarcely able to move it, and it was obviously impossible for him to undertake the long trip to Tin Hut. We had foreseen that this might be the case, and had arranged with "Mac" (the cook at Betts's) to start down Spencer's Creek towards Pounds' Creek Hut in order to meet him in case he had to return. Thomas decided that he would be able to get back to Betts's by himself, but one of the party went some of the way up Spencer's Creek to start him on his journey. We felt quite justified in allowing him to return by himself, as the dis-



LOOKING UP THE GUTHEGA VALLEY TOWARDS CONSEIT STEPHEN PASS.

tance is short, and he was forced to follow the creek and must eventually meet "Mac." As a matter of fact he arrived at Betts's just as "Mac" was setting out. He was one of the keenest members of the party, and was deeply disappointed at having to turn back, but later events proved that it was extremely lucky for us all that he did so, as the trip would have been impossible for him. We were very sorry to lose our companion, but in the interests of the whole party it was the only wise course to adopt.

The remaining three of us left the hut about 8.20, in perfect weather, for our 15 miles run to Tin Hut. We followed the Snowy River down until we came to the spot where the Guthega and the Blue Cow Creeks run in opposite to each other. The snow conditions were perfect, but for the last 200 yards we had to edge round the steep and precipitous banks of the river on hard icy snow which was most unpleasant and very tiring on the ankles. The Snowy was frozen over at this junction, and we had no trouble in ski-ing across, taking our packs off and carrying them in our hands in case the thin covering of ice should deposit us in the river. Arriving safely on the other side, we had a short rest before starting at about 9 a.m. on our long and tedious climb up the Guthega Valley to the Consett Stephen Pass. This valley is over three miles long, and it is one continuous climb of well over 2,000 feet. It was very hot, and the climb seemed never-ending, and we were glad, but tired, when we reached the Pass about 11 o'clock. We chose this route in preference to climbing Pounds' Creek Valley and going over Gill's Knobs, because we were anxious to avoid edging round the very steep slopes of Mount Tate, and also because we thought we would save a considerable amount of time. Having tried both routes, however, the party is unanimous in its opinion that the Pounds' Creek Valley route is certainly the better of the two.

After a short rest to admire the view and to refresh ourselves, we turned north and climbed on to the Granite Peak Range. Along this range the going is generally bad and very icy, but for once we found the snow conditions excellent; the usual icy surface was covered with a layer of good powder snow, and there was a complete absence of wind which enabled us to keep to the top of the range. We had some quite nice short runs from time to time, and White's River Pass, which was our next objective, came into view below us to our right sooner than we had expected. From this point we obtained a fine view of Jagungal, and also Mount Gungartan, and, after having carefully surveyed the surrounding country and taken our bearings by compass in case of accident, we ran down towards the Pass,

which we reached at about 12.30 p.m. Finding that we were running well within our schedule, we decided to take things easy and have our lunch in comfort, and it was not until about 1 o'clock that we left the Pass and started the climb up to the saddle of Mount Gungartan. This is a fairly long climb, but the gradient is not steep and in comparison to the Guthega Valley it seemed quite easy work. We crossed a small shallow valley which runs down the western side of the mountain until we came to a fence just sticking up out of the snow, and we followed this over the



LOOKING DOWN THE GUTHEGA VALLEY FROM
CONSETT STEPHEN PASS.

Pass between the two peaks of rock, one of which forms the summit of Mount Gungartan. From here we ran down the other side of the range, keeping close to the fence, until Tin Hut came into view straight ahead of us, not more than a mile away. Here we again had an excellent view of Jagungal, some 16 miles away on our left: also the Cup and Saucer Hill, and the whole of the country which we hoped to traverse the following day.

We arrived at the hut about 3 o'clock, and, after some difficulty succeeded in making an entry through the win-

dow, the door being blocked with snow. Gordon was pushed through the window, and found the hut in the possession of a large rat, calmly squatting in the middle of the floor. Undaunted, he gave battle immediately, but with no success, and the rat made its escape.

The hut was in a much better condition than when visited by the Kiandra party in 1926. A large tin-lined case containing all kinds of foods had been sent up there in the summer, and in addition to this there was quite a good set of carpenter's tools. The floor had been covered with malthead which kept out a good deal of the draught, and there were two spare rolls of it which were very useful to put down at night, as the floor became very wet with snow from our boots. We found sufficient wood in the hut to light a fire, which we did without delay, and made ourselves some hot soup and a cup of tea—both very welcome. In 1926 the fire smoked abominably, and we were led to believe that this had been remedied. However, it was not long before we discovered our mistake. Certainly, it had been improved a little, but it still smoked sufficiently to make things very uncomfortable, and on occasions to force us to the window to wipe the tears from our eyes and to get some fresh air.

Four canvas sleeping bags with eiderdowns inside had also been sent up in the summer, and in addition to these there were a few rather rat-eaten blankets which had been in the hut since 1926. We had also carried with us a light sleeping bag each, and with all these we were able to make a fairly comfortable bed on the floor, which we did fairly early, as we intended to start at day-break next day. After another uncomfortable night, brought about by persistent visits from the rat and the snoring of one of the party, we were only too glad to have breakfast as soon as it was daylight. The day broke fine and clear, and, after seeing the sunrise on Mount Gungartan, we set about preparing for our thirty mile trip to Jagungal and back. Our original intention was to take only one rucksack between us, containing our lunch and a few odds and ends, but after due consideration we thought it better to leave nothing to chance.

This part of the range is still practically unexplored and the weather always very treacherous, and it was quite on the cards that we might get caught and have to spend a night out. Our only chance of shelter would be Farm Ridge Hut, about three miles the other side of Jagungal, and this we knew was unstocked with either food or blankets. Accordingly, we decided to take a rucksack each, with our sleeping bags and extra rations, etc. All preparations having been completed to our satisfaction, we left the

hut about 7.30, very optimistic of our chances of success. We had intended to start earlier, and undoubtedly should have done so, although as it turned out the late start was really a blessing in disguise, as otherwise in the fog and blizzard which came up later we might never have got back to the hut in safety.

Our first objective was the Cup and Saucer Hill, about half-way between the hut and Jagungal. The country here is fairly level, and, the snow conditions being perfect in the early morning, we made very good time. However, after travelling about a mile, a westerly wind began to rise, and we saw mist coming out of the valleys ahead of us, and Jagungal, which a few minutes before had stood out clearly silhouetted against the morning sky became enshrouded in a thick cloud. At the time we thought it was only a morning mist and would later clear away, so we continued down the Valentine Creek, not really thinking very seriously about it. However, the wind began to increase in intensity, the clouds ahead became thicker and thicker, and presently we were entirely enveloped in a thick fog; but as it was still very early we decided to keep on going until we were



ON THE TOP OF GRANITE PEAK RANGE.

Jagungal can just be seen in the centre in the distance.



ON THE SLOPES OF MOUNT TAIT.

quite sure that dirty weather had set in. Visibility was now very bad, and we had to take our direction to Cup and Saucer Hill by compass, and it was not long before we realised that it would be folly to continue. Accordingly we decided to call a halt behind a small rocky knob which gave us some protection against the wind in order to see definitely whether the weather would clear. Half an hour's wait was sufficient to convince us that discretion was the better part of valour, and very reluctantly we decided to return to the hut before conditions became any worse. The wind became stronger still, and with the thick fog and the driven snow we were only just able to see the tips of our ski in front of us, and we had to rely solely on our compass for direction. We had hoped to follow the tracks which we had made an hour earlier, but they had already become practically obliterated and we were unable to pick them up. At first we thought it would be sufficient if we

took our bearing every few hundred yards, with the result that we soon found we had wandered quite considerably from the correct route, and from then on we were even more careful than ever. The next half hour was most unpleasant; keeping close together and stopping every few minutes to read the compass, we plugged on steadily, the driven snow biting into our faces and the icy wind numbing our fingers. We knew that if we kept our right direction we must eventually go very near the hut, but in a blizzard it would be very easy to wander perhaps within a hundred yards of the door without actually finding it. Fortunately, however, we soon came across a fence which we had noticed earlier in the morning led back within a few hundred yards of the hut. This was a continuation of the fence running over the saddle of Mount Gungartan, and we knew then that if the worst came to the worst we could follow it almost to White's River Pass, and, if necessary, run down that valley out of the snow-line. However, we had no further difficulty in locating the hut, which we reached at about 10.30 a.m.

We were greatly disappointed at having to return after such a promising start, but we consoled ourselves with the fact that we were probably lucky in getting back to the hut with such comparatively little difficulty.

It was by this time blowing a blizzard, and there was nothing for it but to make ourselves as comfortable as we could in the hut and discuss the prospects of making another attempt the following day. As the day went on the weather became much worse, and it was evident that an attempt on Jagungal next day would be impossible. We knew from experience that blizzards in these parts generally last at least a couple of days, and sometimes more, and, as we could not bear the prospects of spending another two days in the hut, we decided to abandon our attempt and to return and allow the next party to take our place when the weather cleared.

During the evening we discussed our plans for returning. There were three alternative routes: (1) To return to Betts's Camp, the way we had come. (2) To return to the Hotel by Pinn's River; and (3) to return to Betts's Camp, or to the Hotel by White's River. The first was undoubtedly the best, provided the weather was fairly good, but this seemed unlikely. A great deal of the route could be negotiated in bad weather, but it would be suicidal to attempt to go along Granite Peak Range if the visibility were bad. On the other hand, this route provided good skiing all the way to Betts's Camp, containing several of the best runs in the mountains; also it would mean that we would return direct to where No. 2 party were waiting for our return be-

fore starting themselves. Neither of the other routes provided good ski-ing; in fact, we knew they would necessitate carrying our skis a large part of the way; but both can be negotiated in comparative safety, no matter how bad the weather is, and are, therefore, very useful in an emergency.

The Finn's River route had been tried by the Kiandra party of 1926 when they, too, had been caught in Tin Hut, but they found it a very trying experience, and were forced to wade waist-deep across the Snowy River at Island Bend. Furthermore, they had to carry their skis for some considerable distance to Reid's Hut, where they were left until they could be retrieved on horseback in the summer. Allen and Gordon were members of that party, and they had no desire to repeat the performance if it could possibly be avoided.

The third of these routes, White's River, had never yet been tried by skiers in winter, and necessitated starting by climbing over the Saddle of Mount Gungartan, which might be rather difficult in a heavy fog or a blizzard. In the meantime, however, nothing could be decided until we saw what the weather was like in the morning. There is no need to describe the rest of our stay in the hut. The second night was much the same as the first; the rat paid us another visit; our noisy member gave another exhibition of snoring and the fire smoked; so we again spent a most uncomfortable and almost sleepless night.

The weather improved slightly during the night and the wind dropped, but at 8 a.m. the next day there was still a heavy fog and it was snowing slightly. After some consideration we decided to climb over the Saddle of Mount Gungartan and run down to White's River Pass, and there to make up our minds whether to take route No. 1 along Granite Peaks Range, or route No. 3 down White's River Valley. In any event we thought we could reach Betts's Camp, and we were particularly keen to do this, as we knew the No. 2 party were there awaiting our return. Accordingly we packed our rucksacks, left a short note in the hut stating what had happened to us, and set out about 8.30.

We took with us only our few personal belongings, repair outfits, etc., and left our sleeping bags in the hut for the next party to use. During the night a good deal of snow had fallen, and the temperature had arisen and the going was bad and very heavy. We had little difficulty in finding our way in the fog, but the climb was tedious, and, to make things more annoying, we had to push ourselves practically all the way down from the Saddle of Mount



TIN HUT WITH MOUNT GUNGARTAN IN THE BACKGROUND.

Gungartan to White's River Pass. In good conditions this run is superb. On reaching the Pass, about 9.45 a.m., we found that route No. 1 was out of the question; the fog had not lifted, and it was now snowing very heavily, indeed, so without much more ado we set off down White's River Valley.

Our trip down White's River to the Snowy could really be made into a long and rather amusing article on its own in the hands of a competent writer with a good sense of humor. We are no writers, so will not attempt to describe it, but thank goodness we have a sense of humor, otherwise in all probability none of us would ever go near Kosciusko again. We left the Pass at 9.50 a.m., under the impression that we would just run down the valley and get to the Snowy at about 11.30 or 12, and reach Betts's Camp by 3 p.m. comfortably. Suffice it to say, however, that we never reached Betts's Camp at all, but, instead, managed to reach the Hotel Kosciusko, in the dark, at about 7.30 p.m., more by the grace of God and Gordon's unfailing sense of direction than anything else.

Since leaving the hut we had been ski-ing, walking, climbing and swimming for 11 hours, without even stopping to eat, and we had carried our skis and stocks for several miles, at times over the most appalling precipices, and at times through thick, almost impenetrable bush. We had crossed and re-crossed White's River, and had struggled across the Snowy at a point where it is about 50 yards wide, balancing ourselves on rocks and our skis and stocks on our shoulders, and we had all fallen into both rivers at least once. However, with the exception of having ruined some good ski-ing boots and torn our clothes a little, we had come to no harm, and that at least was satisfactory.

We had failed in our objective and had really had a most unenjoyable three days, but such is the attraction of exploring the mountains that we have all decided to make another attempt to reach the top of Jagungal the first time the opportunity presents itself. Next time, however, we will benefit by past experience, and, no matter what the emergency, we will not return by White's River, and for their own sake we hope nobody else ever will.

THE NO. 2 PARTY.

(By J. W. S. Laidley.)

On Monday, July 30th, the second party, consisting of Teece, Moulden, Dods and Laidley left the Hotel for Betts's Camp. The No. 1 party had left for the Tin Hut from Pounds' Creek that day, and we considered that in going to Betts's Camp early we would fulfil two objects. One, to improve our condition; and, two, to be near our jumping off place if any unforeseen incident happened.

We had news of the No. 1 party as soon as we entered the camp. There we found Thomas, who had had a nasty fall the previous evening, and had with great difficulty returned from Pounds' Creek to Betts's Camp that morning. His leg was exquisitely painful and our emotions were divided between sorrow at his misfortune, and pleasure that the accident had happened where it did and not at the Tin Hut or on the way to Jagungal. His helplessness and his description of the difficulties and pain of his four mile journey from Pounds' Creek made us realise what a serious thing such a mishap could be on the Main Range.

Tuesday broke with a mild blizzard. The early morning was fine, but at 8.30 a.m. it began to blow from the south-west, and clouds came over with snow and fog. We conjectured that the No. 1 party had made an early start that morning for Jagungal, and that the weather had forced them to return. That our guess was correct we were to learn later, but a certain anxiety existed as to how far they had gone upon their journey before being forced to turn back. If they had left Tin Hut before daybreak they would have had many miles to return against a blizzard through extremely difficult country. The bad weather continued all Tuesday, and on Wednesday morning it was still snowing and blowing. About mid-day it cleared up, however, the wind dropped and there appeared to be every prospect of fine weather. In view of these circumstances, and in spite of our previous arrangement with Gordon that we would not leave until he returned with the No. 1 party to Betts's Camp, we decided to spend the night at Pounds' Creek and leave the next morning for the Tin Hut if the weather was still good. A party returned to the Hotel from Betts's that day, and with them went Thomas whose knee had greatly improved after a day's rest; and we arranged with them that if the weather was again bad on the morrow, that a party from the Hotel would make an attempt to reach Tin Hut on horseback by crossing the Snowy at Island Bend and going up Finn's River.

Thus it stood that if the No. 1 party returned that day to Betts's, or the Hotel, via Finn's River, the No. 2 party would reach Tin Hut within a few hours of their departure. If, on the other hand, the No. 1 party was in trouble and was still at the Tin Hut, they would be reached by the No. 2 party if the weather was fine, or if the weather was bad the emergency relief party would reach them via Island Bend and Finn's River. As to accommodation, we agreed that at a pinch the No. 1 party and the No. 2 party could all sleep in Tin Hut for one night together, for we had six sleeping bags, four eiderdown quilts, and a few blankets. On Wednesday, after an evening meal at Betts's Camp, the No. 2 party left for Pounds' Creek Hut. We carried eggs for breakfast the next morning, as there was no fresh food at all at Pounds', and we took some bread for the Tin Hut.

Thursday morning broke clear and, without hesitation, the party left Pounds' Creek Hut at 7.30 a.m. for the Tin Hut. A complete outfit was carried in the way of spares. Teece and Laidley took sleeping bags, and Moulden and Dods took a blanket apiece, to supplement the bedding in the Tin Hut. Most of this had been sent up with the stores during the summer, but the No. 1 party had taken a sleeping bag each, which they had agreed to leave in the hut when they left. Lunch consisted of oranges, a tin of fruit, and an egg each, while we took in addition a billy, some tea and sugar, and a loaf of bread. Teece and Moulden used Ellefsen bindings, Dods used Ideal, and I used Huitfeldts. That in a trip of 90 miles from the Hotel to Jagungal and back, we had not the necessity for even a new toe-strap speaks well for the ability of our ski, sticks, and bindings to stand up to hard work.

We crossed the Snowy without difficulty, immediately below Pounds' Hut, and at once climbed over the bluff separating us from the Pounds' Creek Valley. An easy climb of about 200 feet brought us to the top of the bluff, and before us we could see Pounds' Creek winding up into the mountains. Without delay we ran down a short incline into the bed of the creek, and on beautiful well-packed running and climbing snow made straight for the branch which leads in a northerly direction up to the foot of Mount Tate.

After proceeding up the creek bed for about half a mile we began a slow gradual ascent of the left-hand bank of the creek, always keeping on the great wall separating us from the Guthega. An hour's climb saw us on the top of this ridge, at a height of about 6,000 feet. There were one or two stunted trees near us, and we were at a considerably lower altitude at this point in our journey than any party



THE SUMMIT OF JAGUNGAL OR BIG BOGONG.

The Grey Mares, Bogong, can be seen in the distance
From a photograph taken by a member of the party which climbed the mountain in 1898.

had been previously on the way to the Consett Stephen Pass. This course was adopted in an attempt to avoid the steep and dangerous edging round the side of Mount Tate, which had always seemed in previous years to be a dangerous avalanche slope. An alternative to this was to climb right over the top of Tate, but this involved useless climbing and a difficult run down on to the Consett Stephen Pass. As it was, for the snow conditions prevailing on the day, we seemed to have struck an ideal course, and from the bluff we climbed a steady even gradient up the right-hand bank of the Guthega to the Pass. We had no difficult going, and not more than a few yards of steep edging, apparently missing the steep side of Tate altogether by passing below it. Moreover, the whole climb was steady and even, and we were not forced either to herringbone, or to run down a yard on the whole ascent. This route to the Consett Stephen Pass can be thoroughly recommended for the guidance of future parties. If the ascent of Pounds' Creek is made so as to reach the crest of the ridge dividing the Guthega from Pounds' Creek at the tree line no difficulties will be encountered.

The Pass was reached in 2 hours 50 minutes after leaving Pounds' Hut, and after a short rest we climbed out of the Pass (6,500 feet) on to the Granite Peaks Range. Snow conditions were again perfect, in spite of the fact that the sun was now very hot and we were forced to remove all superfluous clothing. It is worth recording that during the whole trip we did not meet a square yard of ice. We reached the top of the first peak in the Granite Peaks Range, and from there had a comprehensive view of the country as far as Gungartan, which in the past had always proved to be the most difficult part of the journey to Tin Hut. We could see to the left the long shoulders on the western side, round which the Kiandra-Kosciusko party of 1927 had so painfully climbed in the fog; while to the east we could see the many steep wooded gullies which had so fatally attracted the Kosciusko-Kiandra party of 1926. An obvious easy way straight for the Gungartan trigonometrical station lay ahead of us. Half-way along the range we ran into the source of a fairly large tributary of White's River, which ran due north to meet the main river not more than a quarter of a mile on the eastern side of the Pass. Until we reached the source of this stream the straight line for Gungartan had led us along the crest of the range, but just to the east of the rocky knobs which crown it. There were a few gentle undulations, but the rise and fall in no place exceeded 200 feet. It was here that we frequently came across distinct traces of the tracks made by the No. 1 party two days previously. This seemed remarkable in

view of the heavy snow that had fallen in the meantime. Apparently the wind had been too great to allow the snow to settle and obliterate the tracks.

We had a superb downhill run from the source of the stream to White's River, over fast crystal snow, and the saddle was reached at mid-day, or 1 hour 30 minutes from the Consett Stephen Pass. What a difference from the other occasions on which we had crossed the Granite Peaks!



"SKI-ING" IN WHITE'S RIVER VALLEY.

Half an hour for lunch here, and then up the side of Gungartan. The first few hundred feet lay through trees and over balling snow, but conditions improved as we passed the tree line, and a long but easy climb brought us to the gap in the Gungartan Range. This gap is marked by two pieces of piping set in the rocky knolls on each side of the gap, and through the gap passes a fence which con-

tinues past the Tin Hut and northward along the Main Divide for miles. The trigonometrical station lies about half a mile along the Gungartan Range to the east from the gap; and Moulden and Dods left us here to climb to it. Teece and I had a splendid run down and reached the Tin Hut at 2 p.m., or 5½ hours after leaving Pounds' Creek Hut. Moulden and Dods rejoined us 40 minutes later, after a successful climb to the top of Gungartan.

While having lunch at White's River Saddle we had seen tracks, obviously made on the previous day, leading down White's River towards the Snowy; we had guessed then that the No. 1 party had abandoned the expedition and had returned to the Hotel, via White's River. When we got inside the hut we found a short synopsis of the doings of the No. 1 party, and received confirmation of our guess. The rest of the day was spent in cooking a meal, cutting firewood, and melting snow for water. The weather looked quite settled, and we agreed to start for Jagungal the next morning at 3 a.m. The hut was still fairly smoky, but there was plenty of food and bedding, although there was a certain sameness in the food supply. At 1 a.m. we were glad to get up, and cooked ourselves a breakfast of corned beef, soup, fruit, and bread and butter, and left the hut at 3 o'clock exactly.

The night was intensely cold, the moon was full and just past the zenith, there was no wind, and not a cloud in the sky. With us we carried two ruksacs, containing spares, two tins of fruit, and a little chocolate. At the Finn's River Saddle, half a mile from the hut, we took our first compass bearing—due north—and then swung off along the wide Valentine Valley with our sticks singing as they twisted into the hard-packed frozen snow.

Soon, however, the gentle descent led us into a ground fog which blotted out all vision of the surrounding country and in which with rare exceptions we were to travel until we reached the Jagungal Saddle. Every mile or so we checked our bearing with the compass, and here and there climbing out of the low-lying mist on to a knoll we would catch a glimpse of Jagungal crouching far ahead, over miles of white silence.

An hour and a half brought us to Cup and Saucer Hill, and the question arose whether we would go round it on the west side or the east. If we went east we made a fairly long detour, and beyond was the Jagungal Saddle where it was low and unrecognisable. In a fog a party could go right over the saddle and be in the Happy Jack Valley without realising it. The west was rather an un-

known quantity, but at any rate the going here had looked easy from a distance in our 1927 trip: it was probably shorter, and would bring us to the saddle at a point where it was higher and more conspicuous than further to the east. We decided on the western route, and, keeping ever to the north, we climbed and ran round the southern buttress of Cup and Saucer Hill to its western face. The going was quite easy, occasionally along hillsides through scanty trees, but more often along open valleys deep in fog.

Cup and Saucer is more than a hill: it is really a short range, for it was an hour from the time we reached the south shoulder till at last we climbed out of the fog on to a low knoll at its northern end and saw Jagungal lying before us. Much closer now, and the way plain ahead of us to the saddle. One, two, three, four, five shoulders of the range to cross, and we should be at the foot of the mountain for the final climb. The compass still gave us due north, so we set our course by the Pleiades and went on.

The next hour was an anxious one. There was no glimmer in the east, and we seemed to be travelling along a particularly foggy part of the range. The five shoulders grew into seven, and, just as our spirits were becoming very low, we climbed out of the fog, saw the saddle looming above us, and the first dawn tints in the east.

The party looked like Arctic explorers. Our wind-coats, caps and scarves were covered with frozen hoar frost, and, in spite of wearing every possible article of clothing, it was necessary to keep moving in order to avoid being uncomfortably cold. Dods was the worst affected. He had lighter clothes than the rest of us, and he felt his arms and legs very cold. It was fortunate that there was no wind, as even a five miles an hour breeze would have chilled us to the bone, and either resulted in severe frost-bite, or the abandonment of the trip.

We reached the saddle about a mile from the western end of the Jagungal spur, and a climb of about 500 feet saw the party on the broad back of the mountain. From here our course lay due west along the spur to the pinnacle, which was surmounted by a trigonometrical station. Three minor humps were negotiated and before us lay the steep final climb of about 200 feet. The pinnacle, from the east as we approached, resembled a cone. It was deeply covered in snow, very steep, with no ice and very few rocks showing. The climb was not abnormally difficult, and with the help of a little side-stepping we reached the pinnacle at 7 a.m., or exactly four hours after leaving Tin Hut. There

are two other subsidiary summits, both of which from below appear higher than the one with the trig station. On the top, however, there is no doubt which is the highest. There are two posts on top, one to the south, a well built granite cairn with a strong post set in the apex, and five yards away to the north, a second and a smaller post. Whether this too was set in a cairn we were unable to determine owing to the depth of snow.

It was fairly light now, the sun had not actually risen, but the east was aglow, and the stars and moon were paling. To the south-west we could see Buffalo, Hotham and Feathertop, then nearer came the terrific westerly scarp of the Grey Mares, with their covering of snow stretching in great tongues into the wooded country below, like a carelessly flung tablecloth. Still further to the south lay the unbroken white expanse of the higher mountains in the Ram's Head-Tate section of the range. Eastward came the sombre Manaro with the gorgeous red of the dawn clouds above it, while in the north, Table Top broke the horizon, and the Happy Jack Valley lay like a map before us.

We wrote our names on a piece of paper, packed it in a cigarette tin, and tucked it among the stones of the cairn. We were getting cold and stiff, and with regret we turned away from the most magnificent view it has ever been our privilege to see. Stepping down a few paces to avoid the steepest part, we turned our skis down hill, the sun rose, and we ran off the mountain at 40 miles an hour on blood-red snow.

Twenty minutes of magnificent running brought us to the foot of the saddle, and we paused to look back on the splendid mountain which had not known a ski for so long.

It was full day now, still intensely cold, but the sun's rays were dispersing the mist, and on our return journey we kept slightly more to the east, and did not pick up our old tracks until we were once more rounding the southern shoulder of Cup and Saucer Hill. We reached Tin Hut at 11 a.m., tired, but feeling very fit; we built ourselves a fire, had a meal, and sat down. Clouds were coming over from the north-west now, and, our work accomplished, no one was anxious to be marooned in Tin Hut through a three days' blizzard, so at 12.15 a.m. we left for Pounds' Hut.

We were not as fresh as we had been, but a steady, even pace took us over the ground, and we followed our tracks back to White's River Pass in 1 hour, reaching the Consett Stephen Pass 1 hour and 40 minutes later.

Here the run down the Guthega tempted us, and rather than climb round into Pounds' Creek, we fell into the trap. The first few hundred feet were splendid running, but lower down where the valley closed in, the snow began to ball,



ON DAINER'S GAP.

Photo: W. H. Spare.

and the creek became very difficult to cross. One hour and 20 minutes from the Pass and we stood on the bank of the Snowy on the downstream side of the Guthega. There was a good ice bridge across the Snowy just above the Guthega, but the Guthega itself was open, and we had to cross it to reach the bridge. Much time and temper were wasted in this, and our outlook on life was still further jaundiced by the half mile of steep edging along the Snowy. Dods and Moulden found a better track here I think. They climbed the Blue Cow Creek for a hundred yards or so, and then doubled back till they reached the Snowy gorge, about a hundred feet above the usual track. Here it did not seem quite so steep; in any event they made much faster progress than did Teece and I.

Teece slipped while edging along the steep icy side of the gorge, and but for a small rock must have crashed right down into the bed of the river. Fortunately by some delicate manoeuvring he was able to regain his feet. At 5.15 p.m., or five hours exactly after leaving Tin Hut, we reached Pounds' Hut. We had then been on ski almost continuously for 14 hours, and during that time had travelled at least 45 miles.

The trip was over now, and the next day Teece and I strolled back to the Hotel for the supreme joy of a shave and bath, while the completely indefatigable Moulden and Dods ascended Mount Twynam, came back to the Hotel from Betts's in 1 hour 23 minutes (the record being 1 hour 19 minutes), and 48 hours later reduced the summit record to 6 hours 55 minutes.

In conclusion, the trip was the most wholly enjoyable one I have ever had. Of my companions I cannot say enough. Their loyalty, stamina, and cheerfulness under all circumstances was amazing; and, above all, I feel that Lennox Teece deserves a special mention; a much senior member and an older man than myself, who, in all things, was willing to take the opinion of a younger man. Moulden and Dods were superb; abounding in energy and strength, they broke track, cut wood, and performed a hundred and one tasks with an optimism and cheerfulness that it would be impossible to describe. I feel it was a great honor to be appointed to lead such a party.

It is possible to attach too much significance to the history of a sport, but it is also possible to under-estimate the social reactions of sport on national life.—Arnold Lunn, in "A History of Ski-ing."