

Tours from the New Muniong Hotel

(By Herbert H. Schlink.)

Ever since the first journey on ski from the Hotel to Mount Kosciusko, in 1910, Australian skiers realised that the Hotel Kosciusko was too far distant from the magnificent unwooded slopes of the Main Muniong Range to be a real ski-ing home for those who wish to explore the High Alps. However, it must be admitted that in those early days the number of Australians interested in real ski-ing was so small that the expenditure of further capital by the New South Wales Government was not justified. And so it happened that for twenty years the early pioneers of the sport had to trudge 12 miles before they could indulge in any of the numerous and delightful tours to be had on the High Ranges.

It is truly remarkable how the Alps already have been opened up by the wanderings of those early skiers housed at such a distance from the area of operations. Had it not been for Betts Camp, Pounds' Hut and the Tin Hut at Gungartan, uncomfortable as they were, the amount of work already done would not have been possible. They helped in the conquest of the Kosciusko Summit, Ram's Head, Mount Townsend, Mount Northcote, Mount Lee, Carruthers' Peak, Mount Twynam, Mount David, Gill's Knobs, Mount Tate, Granite Peaks, Gungartan, Jagungal, and numerous other peaks, as well as the 75 miles' journey to Kiandra. All the journeys were arduous and done at considerable risk, as the explorers had to remain away for days at a time without any contact whatsoever with their base.

All that is now changed with the opening of the Muniong Hotel, as the chalet is to be called, at Charlotte's Pass, 12 miles beyond the Hotel and 1,000 feet higher. Its actual situation is under the Pass at the foot of the valley leading down from Mount Stillwell. The Summit of Mount Kosciusko is six miles further on and 1,500 feet higher. Although a small building, it has all the conveniences of a modern hotel, central heating, electric light, drying room, laundry, hot and cold water, septic tank, etc., and is connected with the base hotel by telephone. It was a romance to visit the kitchen and see a cook in uniform standing before a range capable of supplying meals for a hundred or more guests. Could this really be Charlotte's, over which hungry, weary and at times almost exhausted we had struggled on our 50 or more journeys to and from the Summit during the past twenty years? Could

it really be true that this comfortable hotel was actually at the spot from which we often raced away, sometimes with terror in our hearts, as the blizzard came tearing through the gap after us?

At the official opening, recollection of the many times we had passed this spot wet, frozen and weary, with still many miles between us and a hot meal was too much for me; so as the others had gone to bed I called upon the manager and the engineer to share my memories. Yes, at last we skiers have what we have struggled for since 1910. It would still be a myth had it not been for the attempt made by the Ski Club of Australia to purchase a few acres of land for the erection of its own Club Hut at this spot, followed by the sad fatalities of 1928, as well as the sporting and energetic attitude of the Chief Secretary, the Honorable Captain Chaffey, M.L.A. The Director of the Tourist Bureau, Mr. Lambie, the manager of the Hotel Kosciusko, Mr. Speet, and all the officers and men connected with its construction deserve great praise for having it ready for use this season.

Now that it is an accomplished fact, Australian ski-ing will advance by leaps and bounds. It means that slopes of 2,000 feet are within reach for competitions and tests; that jumping hills are at its very door-step. It means that a hundred yards will land you in the Snowy Valley and the very heart of the snow country. It means that by merely climbing two hundred feet to the top of Stillwell all the glories and grandeur of the sunsets and sunrises of the High Alps are available, even to a weak skier; and, finally, it means that thirty or more day and half-day trips on the unwooded slopes of the High Alps for all who care to make it their headquarters during the months of May, June, July, August and September are available.

For the benefit of those who are unacquainted with the terrain, I might be permitted to describe briefly some of these tours.

1. *Summit of Kosciusko.*—The trip to the Summit of Kosciusko is now feasible, even for a poor skier. After a climb of 200 feet to the top of Charlotte's Pass the snow poles along the road can be followed to the Summit, or, as an alternative route, the skier can run directly down to the valley of the Snowy River, follow its right branch, which, passing Dr. Foreman's Hut, will bring him out at Sentinel Rocks, where the Seaman Memorial Hut is situated; or by following the left branch still further towards Townsend Saddle and turning to the south just under it they will arrive at the foot of Cootapatamba Saddle just below the Summit of Kosciusko. The journey there and back

is 12 miles, with a climb of 1,500 feet. An average time for the ascent is 2½ hours, and the return 1½ hour. A pleasant day could be spent by having luncheon at the Seaman Hut.

2. *Mount Townsend*.—The first part of the journey is as described in the alternative route to the Summit. Instead of turning south to the Summit, Townsend Saddle is climbed. Upon arriving on the Saddle, Mount Townsend is seen straight in front on the other side of Wilkinson's Valley. You are now on the Main Divide and could climb Kosciusko by keeping to the top of the ridge in a southerly direction. To climb Townsend you make north, behind Mount Northcote, skirting Wilkinson's Valley until you come to a saddle connecting the two mountains, where you get an excellent view of the Northcote Canyon. From here a steep, smooth climb takes you to the Summit of Townsend. The journey is about 15 miles, the climb 1,500 feet, ascent three hours, return two hours. An easy day's tour.

3. *Mount Lee*.—The journey is the same as far as Townsend Saddle. From there you turn north; keeping to the front or east aspect of Northcote negotiate a difficult saddle to Mount Clarke, and then you skirt the back of Clarke above Lake Albina, which separates Clarke from Northcote. This is very difficult to negotiate, as it is exceedingly steep and mostly icy. It might be better to climb right over Clarke, but I have never done this. You follow the ridge north and ultimately reach Mount Lee, which appears as a mere hump in the spinal column of Muniong Range. Beautiful views are obtained towards the east and Monaro. To the west Northcote Canyon, Mueller Range and the Riverina may be regarded as the Summa Summaxima of the Alps. You may now retrace your steps or, better, proceed along the top of the ridge, which is usually icy, with many ups and downs, until you reach Carruthers' Peak, from which an incomparable view is obtained. You would then descend via the Blue Lake to the foot of Charlotte's Pass and home. Either retracing your steps from Mount Lee or carrying on as described would be a journey of about 15 miles and a climb of 1,500 feet. It is a very difficult journey, and a whole day should be taken. It should never be attempted unless the day is bright and sunny. There is always a devastating wind on the ridge, and you are on the very top of it for five miles. Always leave the ridge before 3 p.m., as clouds and fogs descend rapidly.

4. *Blue Lake and Carruthers' Peak*. A nice half-day trip. From Charlotte's Pass run straight down to the Snowy crossing. Then a long, steady climb of about 1½

hours up the opposite slope will bring you to a sign post which indicates Blue Lake and the direction up to Carruthers' Peak, which is on the top of the Main Divide. It is a six miles' climb, about 1,000 feet. Time, easy going ascent, takes about two hours, return one hour, to Blue Lake. Carruthers' Peak, 8 miles; ascent, 2½ hours; return, 1½ hour; climb, 1,500 feet.

5. *Mount Twynam*.—This mount can be ascended by various routes, either via the Blue Lake or keeping lower, via Hedley's Tarn. When we climbed it the first time we went from Carruthers' Peak, via the Blue Lake. On the second occasion we climbed via Hedley's Tarn. The run off is also by various routes, back via the Blue Lake, via Hedley's Tarn, arriving lower down than Charlotte's, and making up along the right bank of the Snowy to its crossing below the Pass, or descending by Townsend Creek Valley, or one of the south branches of Pounds' Creek Valley, either of which bring you to the Snowy River, when the junction between the Snowy and Spencer's Creek is easily found. You may then visit Pounds' Hut below the junction, or make your way up Spencer's Creek to the Hotel. It is an easy day's journey, the average time being: ascent, three hours; return journey, via Spencer's, 2½ hours; via Charlotte's Pass, one hour.

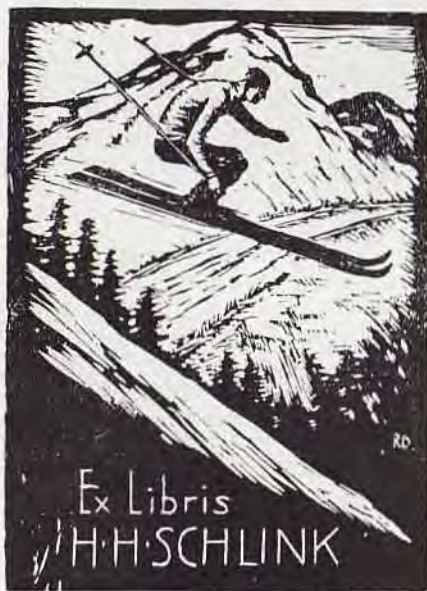
6. *Ram's Head Range*.—By climbing the valley at the back of the Hotel Muniong you get on to the Crackenback Range; by crossing behind Mount Stillwell you can then follow old Betts Camp road, over gently undulating country to Merritt's Outlook, or by turning off at the pile of stones cross the valley at the source of the left branch of the Snowy River and reach the low range joining Kosciusko to Ram's Head Mountain at the southern end of Etheridge Range. You can go to the Summit by turning north at this point, but by turning south you run along easy country until you come to the steep ascent to Ram's Head. Journey, about 16 miles; climb, 1,400 feet. Time: ascent, 3½ hours; return, 2 hours.

7. *Gill's Knobs, Mount David and Mount Tate*.—Going down Spencer's Creek you cross the Snowy at the junction; climbing over a small hill you get into Pounds' Creek Valley. You then take the northern branch of the creek and have a long, steady climb to Gill's Knobs. From there it is an easy matter to run to Mount David or Mount Tate, as there is very little climb. The return can be made down the incomparable slope of Pounds' Creek Valley, a run of three miles, falling about 2,000 feet, or you can go on past Mount Tate to Consett Stephen Pass, run down the Guthega River Valley to its junction with the Snowy, and make

your way up to the left bank of the Snowy to Pounds' Hut. These two runs are amongst the best on the Alps. Journey: 18 miles; climb, considering up and down, 2,500 feet; ascent, 3½ to 4 hours; return, 2 hours.

These are only a few of the many half and day runs from the Hotel Muniong. Space will not permit the description of the two and three day's trips to Tin Hut, along Granite Peaks, with its unexplored delights, Bull's Peaks, Jagungal, Farm Ridge and numerous other peaks all the way to Kiandra.

Although much has been done by the skiers of the past there still remain numerous valleys, mountains and ranges to explore for those who can sleep comfortably at the Muniong Hotel. The erection of this hotel is the greatest epoch-making event in the history of Australian ski-ing, and the writer still has hopes of living to see the Australian Alps dotted with chalets, huts and shelters all the way to Kiandra.



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