The Perisher Range

A PRELIMINARY COMMUNICATION.

By J. W. S. Laidley.

It will be remembered that in *The Australian Ski Book* for 1929 a topographical description of the Ram's Head Range was published. In that article the statement was made that there are three main subsidiary ranges which take their origin from the Ram's Head Range. These are in order from south to north: The Guthrie Range over which the Summit Road passes at Charlotte's Pass, the Perisher Range, and the unnamed range which contains Mount Sunrise and the Plains of Heaven. Of these three the Perisher Range is in every way the most important. Not only does it lie roughly midway between the Hotel and the Chalet, and is thus easily accessible by all skiers from either place, but it contains at least two peaks of nearly 7,000 feet and an unlimited amount of the best ski-ing to be found east of the Snowy River.

In all existing maps the Perisher Range is most inadequately and inaccurately described, and very few skiers have a sound and comprehensive knowledge of its topography. It is with the view of stimulating research in this area that this article has been written, and I propose here to give no more than a brief explanation of the geography of the Range.

The Perisher Range is connected with the Ram's Head Range by the Perisher Gap (5,940 feet) over which the Summit Road passes. On the Ram's Head side or east, there is a gentle ascent to Mount Wheatley, which is roughly 6,300 feet high. On the west, however, the ascent is steep and leads in a series of ridges to the Summit of the Perisher, which is about 6,900 feet in height and the highest point in the Range. On the west, the Perisher Range is bounded by the Snowy River, which here for the most part runs between precipitous banks and in an almost straight line due north.

To the north and south the Range is also bounded by water. At the Perisher Gap two small creeks take their sources. The one on the north side runs sharply down from the Pass to the Perisher Plain, where it becomes senile in type with many remarkable meanders. About half-way across the Perisher Plain it is joined by a second stream of equal size, running west. The two form the Perisher Creek and run roughly north-west to join the Snowy River. Thus the northern boundary is formed by the Perisher Creek.

In a very similar manner the southern boundary is formed by Betts Creek and Spencer's Creek. The former takes origin on the southern slope of the Perisher Pass and runs due south until it is about a mile beyond Betts Camp. There it joins the much larger Spencer's Creek, and the two run north-west to the Snowy River. Thus it is seen that the Perisher Range is separated from the Ram's Head Range by the Perisher Gap, from the Guthrie Range by Spencer's Creek, from the Main Range by the Snowy River, and from the Smiggin Holes high land by the Perisher Creek.

So it is obvious that now we are faced with dissecting the topography of a roughly quadrilateral mountain mass containing about 9 square miles of country.

Four main creeks and many smaller ones drain the Perisher Range. Of these, by far the largest is the Blue Cow Creek. This rises under the Summit of the Perisher itself and takes a straight and precipitous course to the Snowy River which it joins a few yards below the Guthega junction. This creek bites deeply into the mountain mass and converts it into the shape of an enormous horseshoe.

Two creeks come next in size and importance. Both rise together at the Pass which connects the southern portion of the Range with the main massif, and run steeply in an eastward direction to meet Betts Creek almost immediately opposite Betts Camp. The more southern is called Amos Creek and leads directly to Betts Camp. The other is unnamed and is usually referred to as "The Other Creek." Amos Creek is always the aim of touring parties coming from Pounds' Creek Hut to Betts Camp. At night or in fog it is extremely easy to mistake Amos Creek for its fellow, "The Other Creek," but, whichever one is taken, an excellent run to the Betts Plain is assured.

The fourth creek rises under the Back Perisher and in general direction runs due north to meet the Perisher Creek in Sunset Valley about a mile below the snow poles on the Summit Road. This creek forms a very easy means of access to the Range from the Smiggin Holes side, and is commonly used by parties traversing the Range from Smiggin Holes to Betts Camp.

Only one other creek is worthy of mention. I mean the notorious Bugeral Creek. This is extremely small, rises from the southern end of the Range and runs into Spencer's Creek, about a quarter of a mile above its junction with the Snowy River. The banks of this creek are extremely steep and excessively wooded, forming a most formidable obstacle to anyone travelling down or up the right hand bank of Spencer's Creek.

If the rough sketch map accompanying this article is now consulted it will be seen that this huge quadrilateral mass of mountains has been cut into a most irregular shape by these creeks which have just been described. All that goes before may be taken as fairly authoritative, but it is the backbone of the Range that needs more accurate research before it can be properly described. Splendid work could be done by a party starting from the Chalet and traversing the backbone from south to north. If equipped with a compass, aneroid, camera and note-book, the whole Range could be mapped sufficiently accurately for ski-ing purposes in one day. It is the earnest hope of the author of this article that this will be attempted this year.

ROUGH SKETCH MAP OF PERISHER RANGE.

With two exceptions, no mountains are indicated in this sketch map, which confines itself to the river systems, Summit Road, and Huts. Many uncertainties have deterred me from attempting a representation of the mountain range itself, chief among which are the following. Which is the Blue Cow? Which is the Paralyser? Does the Paralyser even exist? For if it does exist, it is certainly not in the position indicated in that flight of fancy known by courtesy as the Hotel Kosciusko Map.