



Snow on the Thredbo.

Colin Wyatt.

## West Face Rival

By Mary Wyatt

Mainly due to bad weather at Betts Camp this year most days were spent in the wood run, where at least one could see the trees and get some idea of the contours, but we were keen to get further afield; so one morning we made a reconnaissance trip towards the Thredbo. About  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles from the hut we were on the Rams Head Range and could see along to our right steep slopes dropping to the hidden river below, all southern slopes and sheltered from the wind. After about a week a gleam of sunshine was seen at breakfast, so we cut lunch and rushed out.

Leaving Betts (5,550 feet) we went over the small hill S.W. along the top to 6,200 feet, and gently down to an unnamed creek which joins Spencers, about half a mile south of the Sugar Loaf. Then a climb opposite through a lightly wooded slope on to the Rams Head. To our left could be seen the flat valley, which joins the road at right angles below the Perisher Gap and which on reaching the edge of the range drops sharply into a narrow gully.

We dropped over the edge on superb powder snow, on an open slope and then in and out of a few scattered trees—this for about 500 feet. A stop to reconnoitre. The tall timber began below us, though the bottom was still hidden and it was hard to see which would be the clearest run. We made the fatal mistake of keeping to the valley instead of the ridge, and traversed down to the gully on the left, where the snow, though still powder, was rather thick and heavy.

Then at about 5,000 feet, we entered the tall timber, well spaced and full of colour, with the sunlight filtering through. As we dropped, the undergrowth started causing trouble with gum suckers tripping us at the turns and catching our sticks. It was not made easier for the three of us (Katy, Peter and me) to hear Colin yodelling from below, when we were all trying to negotiate the creek bed, which he appeared to have flown over.

Traversing back to our original ridge, we came down to fairly clear timber, and dropped on to the river bed (4,000 feet). The snow was still lying thick, if a little heavy, and we crossed a deep "drain" with paw marks in it; a heavy wombat travelling down the valley. The river was too open to cross, but we found some rocks in the sun and proceeded to gorge ourselves with sardines, oranges, and chocolate.

The slopes we had come down rose sharply above us, and we realised that, had we stayed on the ridge, we could have avoided all the suckers which had been the cause of a good deal of falling and swearing. A long, lazy discussion of the run down, in which Colin admitted that we had had 50 feet more than the longest western face run he had found, and equally steep slopes. It had been a long series of turns, sometimes in the open, at others placing them in the clearings between the trees, and all the time dropping sharply down and down, in all over 2,000 feet without a break.

The climb up was much less fearsome than we expected—a slow steady pace, and a short stop every 500 feet, and we reached the top in 1 hour 40 minutes. Climbing up the ridge and keeping away from the gully when in doubt, we found what would have been a very clear run. From the top we came up the wide valley to the road and so home, cutting out the top 500 feet.

This has been an exceptional snow year, and probably the snow would not often go very far down these slopes, but they are protected from sun and wind, and even the top 1,000 feet provide the finest steep running within easy distance of Betts or the Chalet.

# A Day on the Main Range from Bett's Camp

By Frank Thorp

For ten days we had been confined to the slopes about Bett's Camp by bad weather which we had begun to think would never break. Dr. Anderson and myself had planned on the first fine day to make the trip to Mount Tate and along to Gill's Knobs with a run back straight down to Pound's Creek.

On the eleventh day the weather broke gloriously fine, and at 9.30 a.m., rather a late start, we left Bett's Camp and proceeded up Amos Creek to the saddle between the Big Perisher and Amos Ridge, preferring to go over the range than by the tedious trudge down Spencer's Creek. Once at the Saddle, instead of turning West and climbing over the Back Perisher and thence down to Pound's Creek Hut, we skirted round to the North of the Back Perisher, ski-ing through wonderful, deep crystal snow. Below us on our right, the Blue Cow Creek meandered down to the Snowy River with the Blue Cow Mountain on the far side towering above it. The going had been through sparse, low snow gum, and this course eventually brought us out about 600 feet above and a few hundred yards below the junction of Pound's Creek with the Snowy.

We ran down to the junction in snow with slight crust, which made Christies difficult. After the good crystal snow we had just been over, it seemed remarkable to get a change to crust within such a short distance.

Upon reaching the Snowy, we did not spare the time to go up to Pound's Hut, but crossed over at the junction of Pound's Creek and the Snowy. After putting on skins, we commenced the long climb up Tate East Ridge which proved rather rough going, and I am sure does not save time in the long run. It is better to run down into Pound's Creek Valley and start the climb there. The sun was quite hot, and by the time we had arrived half way up the ridge, we had most of our superfluous clothing wrapped round our waists.

Far below us to the South-west could be seen the junction of the two creeks from Tate and Twynam. What a wonderful spot it would make for a Chalet, with its infinite variety of runs from Mount Twynam, Gill's Knobs, Mount David and Tate. There is also its value as a stepping stone on the way to White's River Hut. It was here that one of Dr. Anderson's skins parted company, and he had visions of climbing the remainder without them, but with a little improvisation they were made to hang together, and the continuation of our climb brought us to Mount Tate. As it was not quite one o'clock, we decided to run down on to Mount David, which we reached a few minutes later.

The view of the cloud formation over Victoria was the most inspiring sight I have seen from the range for a long time. It appeared as if one could just ski down the Western face and straight over this carpet of cloud. There was a light N.E. wind blowing, and I wondered what the result would be should the wind change to the West. (It happened, we were not to be left long in doubt as it changed that night, bringing blizzard conditions once more to Bett's Camp).

We lunched behind the protection of the rocky outcrop on the Northern side of Mount David and found the trouble of carrying tinned pineapple well worth the effort.

Leaving Mt. David, we skirted round its Eastern face and ran down along the ridge over good hard packed snow to the back of Gill's Knobs. From here could be seen a very enticing valley leading down the West face along the side of Mount Anderson ridge. We only wished that the lower part of the valley had been free of cloud as we would have had an hour or two to spare for a run down on terrain we had never skied on before.

After a final look around at Mt. Anderson and Jagunal, we commenced to run down towards Pound's Creek Hut. Snow conditions were excellent and the run down, although about three miles, was over all too soon. As the run had been so excellent, particularly the lower section, we retraced our steps for about a mile and had another wonderful run down. A short clumb and a final run brought us to the Snowl opposite Pound's Creek Hut, where we proceeded to dispose of oranges and raisins before the long return climb over the Black Perisher.

The total day's running was about 3,500 feet, and distance travelled about 14 miles.



West Face, Twynam West. Colin Wyatt