

The Snowy Mountains Authority Ski Club

Before the winter snows of 1957 had melted from Guthega a committee was formed to plan and build a ski tow in the near vicinity of our lodge. Throughout the winter constant observations were made of snow depths, position of drifts, and of runs where snow lay longest in the spring so that consideration could be given to the planning and selection of a site for the new tow as soon as the snows had thawed. Three possible sites were marked down for detailed investigation in the summer.

The run down to Farm Creek had good spring snow, steepness of slope, and was close to electricity supply, but the run itself was too short. A site on the

southern slopes of Guthega Trig was discarded because it was felt that it was not steep enough to encourage good skiers. Our final decision rested with the south-eastern face of Tate East Ridge where the site selected had good late snow and the descent gave a varied number of runs. However, although construction on this site would be more difficult, it was favoured because it had scope for a future extension to the crest of a ridge on a section of the Main Range, which, hitherto, was not easily accessible.

We recruited members, who are engineers with the Authority, for the Ski Tow Committee. They pooled their



Guthega Tow Area.

various technical knowledge and soon had detailed plans for the tow prepared. Sir William Hudson, Commissioner of the Authority, approved our plans and wrote a letter of encouragement to the Club.

Initially the tow will be 800 feet long rising 260 vertical feet from a flat runout on the Guthega River near the head of the reservoir and will be powered by a 15 horsepower electric motor with a 30 to 1 reduction gearbox. Natural stone foundations will give the weatherboard tow hut a very smart appearance.

Our surveyor soon finished his job, and after work on the computation and design of the power and tow lines was completed the real task commenced. The Canberra Y.M.C.A. Ski Club supported our plans and backed us with an offer of assistance with the construction work.

As one of the first jobs, a raft was made from forty-four gallon drums, to enable equipment to be transported across the Guthega Reservoir. Its first voyage was to float the two "Snowy surplus" snow huts to the site where they will be re-erected as the Tow Hut. To supply electricity to the tow a powerline over one third of a mile long had to be built. This proved to be our hardest job to date. A disused powerline was purchased from the Authority, dismantled (it

took two week-ends), and the material moved to its new position where our engineer in charge of powerline construction took over. Under his direction and employing the latest method used by the Authority, holes seven feet deep were blasted and the poles (varying 30 to 40 feet in length) moved into position and erected. Seven poles had to be floated on the reservoir to points nearest their holes, then manhandled into position by teams of "slaves" using block and tackle or plain muscle power. The erection of poles on the steeper hillside proved to be a task requiring much resourcefulness. An experienced linesman guided us in the stringing of the conductors.

With work on the powerline almost completed the labour force will now concentrate on the erection of the tow line, buildings, and bridge across the Guthega River. No description of the construction of the Guthega Tow would be complete without a word of praise for the girls who so ably took over all the normal summer maintenance jobs around our lodge and for those who, week-end after week-end, cooked delicious meals for the tow builders.

A hearty invitation is extended to all skiers to attend the opening of the tow soon after the first good snow fall.