

Tasmanian Notes, 1932

By G. T. F. Chapman.

The outstanding achievement of 1932 was the organisation of the States' ski-ing interests and the formation of the Tasmanian Ski Council. As with all other projects, unity of action and purpose are essentials to success, and it is a pleasure to record the formation of the Council. The Council represents the organised ski-ing bodies of Tasmania and will, like the N.S.W. Council, function as the governing body so far as State and inter-State affairs are concerned. The Council will not have any control over the internal affairs of the constituent clubs, who will continue to manage all their domestic affairs. The Council will, however, appoint delegates to the A.N.S.F. and give effect to its rulings.

The clubs comprising the Council are, at present, the Ski Club of Tasmania, the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club and the Hobart Ski Club. Provision has been made for the inclusion of other clubs as circumstances dictate. To facilitate the quicker working of the Council, the State has been divided into two areas, north and south of a line between Ross and Tunbridge, each area appointing three delegates to the Council. Again, to obviate delays in waiting for meetings, provision is made for the bulk of the business to be conducted by mail, something after the manner employed by the A.N.S.F.

The delegates to the Council for 1933 are: North: F. Smithies, R. G. Hall and W. F. Mitchell. South: H. R. Hutchison, V. C. Smith, and G. T. F. Chapman (secretary).

During the 1932 season the Ski Club of Tasmania and the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club have been active, and many ski trips were made to various parts of the State. The Northern Club is also to be particularly congratulated upon its energy and perseverance in building the first unit of its Chalet on Ben Lomond at an altitude of 4,000 feet, despite considerable difficulties in the way of finishing the work during the early winter.

Owing to very bad weather conditions and other circumstances the Northern Club Championships could not be held on the week-end arranged for them, and the runners who took part in the scratch downhill event are all to be complimented on covering the unmerciful course in order to give the spectators their Roman holiday.

Late in the season a new club, the Hobart Ski Club, was formed, with a view to catering more particularly for Hobart people who frequent Mount Wellington (4,166 ft.). The mountain is very close to the city and day trips are easily made during a good winter, when ski-ing is available for several months on end. Unfortunately the H.S.C. was not organised until

August and poor snow frustrated any club gatherings; keen interest, however, is being maintained and the club looks forward to an active winter in 1933.

In June some heavy falls of snow on the Black Bluff (4,400 feet) aroused considerable interest at Ulverstone on the North Coast and a local club was commenced; the season, however, was disappointing, very poor snow rather damping the progress that an enthusiastic start promised. However, as good snow country is reported to be generally available at "The Cradle" (Mountain), if not always at Black Bluff, it is sincerely hoped that the movement will be revived this winter. The Black Bluff is some 32 miles by road from Ulverstone, the road running well up the mountain. In connection with new formations, interest is being taken in the proposal to form a University ski-ing club which, if successful, would pave the way to inter-'Varsity meetings.

From the foregoing remarks it will be seen that the general interest in the sport is growing steadily. Rapid progress is difficult, as the facilities for transport and accommodation are poor and the Government of the day persistently refuses to see the State-wide benefits that would flow from opening up the good snow country with proper roads and accommodation.

The Hartz Mountains of Tasmania

By G. T. F. Chapman.

A slight darkening of the bright spring sunlight, a chilliness as a light cloud partially obscured the sun, brought us back to the purpose of our trip and, with a little involuntary shiver, my companion buttoned up his shirt collar. I looked at my watch: "After eleven; time we got down." It was time, but we both continued to gaze at the skyline of blue and purple peaks and ridges, mantled in gleaming snow. "Picton runs a long way south." "Yes," I replied mechanically, for I was speculating on the ski-ing possibilities of Mt. Weld, the difficulty of traversing his densely wooded slopes and whether the snow would be worth an expedition. "It's getting cold and starting to haze over; let's go." With that we pulled our rucksack cords tight and gave a final glance at the South-Western Ranges. "Still four, three hundred," I remarked, returning the aneroid to its case. "That's pretty accurate," my friend commented and then we scrambled down some three hundred feet of loose, broken rock to the topmost tongue of a snow drift, where our ski awaited us like expectant dogs impatient on their master's return.

We had just climbed Mount Hartz and below us, some four thousand three hundred feet down, the slumbering Huon, with its orchards and homesteads, lay basking and dreaming in the warm September sun. The roofs of Geeveston were plainly to be seen, while, further to the south, the wide sweep of the Southern Ocean's horizon faded away into a hazy sky. Yesterday we had

lunched in Hobart and after a pleasant forty-mile run we had parked our car in an old mill at South Creek, the road terminus and the starting point of the nine-mile pack-track to the Hartz Hut. Here, on the top of Mt. Hartz, the Hut was hidden by an undulating spur or fold of the moor that stretched for a mile and a half between us and our last night's hospice. The Hut was good, even palatial as bush huts go, being floored, lined and fitted with a complete door and chimney for each of its two rooms. Bunks too; in fact a haven of rest, not to be lightly scorned. We honoured it with prolonged patronage, until nine in the morning. This, mark you, was not sloth; far from it. It was but a mark of appreciation to the Hut, its builders and their



skill. However, we had seen on our arrival that the moors were thawed out and we knew the day's ski-ing would be restricted to the drifts and side-slopes of Mt. Hartz and the ridge. This ridge straggles along in a northerly and westerly line, with open and undulating moors on its east side.

On leaving the Hut we had carried our ski across the moors to the foot of the pass, in the ridge at the foot of Mt. Hartz. Here connected snow-drifts gave a snow track up on to the peak and we easily zig-zagged our way up some 700 feet, to within approximately 300 feet of the cairn at 4,300. Thus, in side-tracks and herring-boning, did we achieve the first ski-ing done on the Hartz, on Sunday, 5th September, 1931.

When we had looked down over the peak, towards the south-eastern side a welcome surprise spread before us, a cirque valley full of good hard snow, snugly sheltered from the morning sun and northerly winds by a bowed spur that extended away from the main ridge. The western side of this cirque was the slope of Mt. Hartz, the only outlet being to the south-east. As a result "The Dougery," as we called it, caught and retained a great deal

of the blown-over snow from Mt. Hartz and in its shady and sheltered keeping it accumulated from fall to fall until the late spring. Although there had not been a fall for two weeks and mild weather had thawed out the exposed moors, the Dougery was still well filled with good snow, its steep and varying sides promising all manner of good running. We had looked, gloated, and then, knowing that we had found good snow slopes, turned our attention to the splendid westward view, now so clearly pictured in the morning sunlight.

With a final snick of his heel-clips my partner straightened up and with a couple of powerful lunges was sizzling down the fast, granulated snow; a swing to the right and he vanished over the edge of the ridge. A loose buckle delayed me some seconds and when I came across the ridge he was sixty feet below, at the bottom of a steep drift, and taxi-ing across to repeat his descent on a second big connected drift that leads to the saddle overlooking the Dougery valley. Linked stem-Christies were the order of things, giving good practice, forcing snappy and accurate turns. We were soon on the crest of the saddle with open snow stretching out to the bottom of our cirque valley. Our ski grizzled as we shot down the still frozen bank; a quickening, surging and rush of frozen air as we hurtled down, an undulation, a dip, a rise, a frozen boss (which nearly threw me head first) and then a soft spot and, with a fatal waver, balance and control failed and I took a glissading fall. Up and on, but now with wider tracks, to run out on the floor of our discovery. High above the intense blue of the spring sky; the warm, brown, lichened and weathered rocks and the intensely clear snow showed the height we had so quickly descended. The aneroids now showed three thousand two hundred feet, indicating a run down of some six hundred feet or more. The Dougery turned out to be even better than anticipated. The high protecting wall of Mt. Hartz to the west and the sheltering spur to the north-west broke all the wind. The sunshine glared into the Dougery now and made it a wonderfully comforting valley.

"Another biscuit?" "No thanks." And, stiffly rising, I collected up the scattered gear from our lunch rock. It was now some two hours or more since we had arrived at the Dougery, and after excellent ski-ing we had lunched preparatory to returning to the Hut across the moor. Some last runs, and then we slowly climbed up the side to the saddle of the sheltering spur. Here we felt the rising wind, but now we quickly dropped, traversing from drift to drift, till we finally ran out on to the Badger grass at the foot of the pass at the base of Mt. Hartz, close to where we started the ascent some hours earlier. Hurrying on, we soon crossed the moor, not delaying to try the numerous practice and nursery drifts that ran invitingly close to us from the main ridge. At the Hut we had a snack and assembled our gear, marching off on the homeward trail at about a quarter to four and eventually arriving at our car some minutes before half-past seven.

The Hartz Hut is built close to the edge of the shelf-like plateau of moors that runs round the northern and eastern sides of the main ridge of the mountains. This plateau shelf rises from some two thousand eight hundred feet at the north, to about three thousand two hundred feet at the southern end, near the foot of the pass; undulations, streams and creeks from the tarns, as well as small belts of timber, add variety and the shelf varies from three-quarters to a quarter of a mile in width. The hut is about the centre of the moor, so is admirably located, allowing easy tours to the moors, as well as being reasonably handy to the good drifts on the ridge, the Dougery and Mt. Hartz. As the ridge runs in a north-south direction, the moors on the eastern side are sheltered to a great extent from the westerly gales and there seems to be a good number of drifts and practice slopes that should be also well protected from more southerly weather. On the western side of the main ridge the mountain slopes away fairly rapidly into the gullies that form the Picton Valley and, apart from the ridges round Lake Hartz, the west side seems too rough and exposed for good ski-ing.

The Hartz have a "Hoodoo" and a little marble stone, a hundred yards from the Hut, tells how a party returning from prospecting in the Picton Valley were exhausted by a blizzard that broke upon them when crossing the ridge. It is this liability to sudden bad weather and sea mists that is the drawback to the ski-ing possibilities, thaws cutting out the moors, and mists waiting to cloak the drifts and slopes from sight. All this renders the Hartz snow far more uncertain than that of the more inland ranges of similar height.

The track into the mountains was cut a number of years ago, but the popularity of the mountains has suffered considerably with the opening up of the Mt. Field National Park. Again, the famous Geeveston Mills are no longer running and the forests no longer produce the scenes of timber-trains and hauling teams. Only small box-case timber is cut and the tram rails and lines have been torn up or are rotting to decay. All these factors, as well as fires and their depredations to the once beautiful dense scrub round the lakes, have tended to cause the Hartz to be overlooked from a snow point of view; but as they do not matter from the skier's viewpoint, there is quite a case for week-end visits after good snowfalls.

The peaks and snow country of the Hartz are clearly visible from Mt. Wellington on fine days and, after a little experience in snow-craft, it is quite possible to have a very good idea of the conditions likely to be found on the mountains from observations from Mt. Wellington.

The time required for a visit varies with the tastes and capacities of the people concerned. However, to all able-bodied people two days is sufficient to try out the mountain; three seems the ideal.

The visitor has to take all food, bedding and gear with him, but, as pack-horses can be got out to within a mile or so of the Hut, according to snow conditions, the trip can be made quite easy. In fine weather horses are taken to the Hut. By motor-

ing to the road-end at South Creek (41 miles from Hobart) in, say, two hours, and walking to the Hut in another four and a half, a visit on Saturday and a return late on Sunday is quite practicable. The eight or nine miles of track are fairly good, though somewhat wet in places.

The Ski Club of Tasmania

The Ski Club of Tasmania has enjoyed another excellent year and, although members have not experienced a good snow season, a number of trips were made, both to Mount Wellington and to National Park, where the club Chalet was well patronised.

Owing to poor snow in August and the absence of a number of members club competitions were not held. Snow in National Park and all southern Tasmanian mountains was not good and, though July falls were very fair, they were not maintained or supported during August, mild weather and thaws cutting out a great deal of the not over-abundant July snow. In consequence, the later falls in September were not of great use, as they had little on which to accumulate. During the King's Birthday week-end some of the northern club members paid a visit to the Club Chalet at National Park, and this meeting resulted in the Tasmanian Ski Council constitution being started on its successful course. Later in the spring some members were able to accept the N.T.A.C.'s invitation to visit their Ben Lomond Chalet.

On account of the light snow in August the surface of Twilight Tarn, on whose shores the Club Chalet is built, was in good skating trim and as a side-line some very good days' skating were had. While hardly the business of the Club, skating is an



The Club Chalet, Twilight Tarn, National Park (3500 ft.).
A Spring Snow Scene, November, 1931.



The End of Valhalla Valley racecourse, 500 feet above the Club Chalet.

added attraction, particularly as one can don skates in the hut, the tarn being less than ten yards from the door. As mentioned earlier, a number of members were abroad during the season, and it was therefore decided to carry the General Meeting forward to March, 1933, when the usual club dinner and the Annual Meeting were held, the function ending with a dance. The dinner, and a surf picnic at Clifton Beach, held in December, proved very popular functions and afforded members opportunities for welcoming back Professor and Miss McAulay from Europe and the vice-president and Mrs. V. C. Smith from New Zealand and Mount Cook.

Looking forward to the coming season, it is good to anticipate the improvements that the Easter working party have effected to the wood-running course, and also to the new ski track that has just been completed round the north-east side of Lake Fenton. This new track will make access to the Club Chalet considerably easier, for in good snow it will be a matter of easy ski-ing, even with large packs. In connection with communication and roads, it is more than disappointing to report that the Lake Fenton Road unemployment relief work was quashed after tentative approval by the council appointed to allocate the spending of the money; parochial and unenlightened politicians deftly turned the funds to more vote-producing districts. The seven miles of road needed is very unwisely frowned on by certain ministerial circles. As its absence absolutely stifles the practicability of winter ski-ing, tourists are put off and, of course, the advancement of the sport by local people is handicapped.

As usual, a number of members spent their Christmas holidays and summer vacations in exploring the ski-ing possibilities of some of the lesser-known mountains. Mount Fell, the Frenchman's Cap, the King William Range and Wyld's Crag were climbed and investigated as far as summer conditions would per-

mit. There were three falls of snow over the Christmas-New Year holidays which were not quite anticipated, ski and gear being left behind. As a result of the various trips it seems clear that the three last-mentioned mountains all have had fair, and, in the case of the King William's, good, ski-ing country. Inaccessibility is the main drawback. The King Williams are now served by the new West Coast road which runs across their northern spurs at 2,500 feet, thus making some parts of the range fairly easy of approach. The best snow country, however, appears to be further south and well away from accommodation or even pack-tracks fit for winter conditions. The road passes the northern spurs at the 112-mile peg from Hobart, so, with an accommodation house at the Derwent Bridge eight miles away, some ski-ing will soon be done.

At the annual meeting the following officers were elected for 1933: President, H. R. Hutchison; vice-president, V. C. Smith; committee, D. L. Anderson, W. T. A. Crookall, G. R. Brettingham-Moore, Professor A. L. McAulay, Evelyn Ward, Miss N. L. Hutchison; honorary secretary, G. T. F. Chapman, 212 Davey Street, Hobart.

The Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club

The 1932 season was one of further development for the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club. Every week-end between Easter and June members worked enthusiastically at Ben Lomond and succeeded in completing the first section of the Club Hut and clearing the three-mile track from the road. The living room had to serve all purposes and temporary accommodation was provided for lady members. Before the coming winter it is hoped to add to the Hut and to improve the lower section of the track so as to open it to motor vehicles. Although the work done last year rendered a trip to Ben Lomond reasonably comfortable, it was still a fairly strenuous undertaking and it was, therefore, most gratifying to see a considerable increase in the club's membership.

Last year Tasmania experienced an exceptionally poor snow season. Except for the June storms, which provided a good covering for all the highlands, there were no heavy snowfalls. The ski-ing season was, consequently, particularly short. On Ben Lomond, however, the club members skied without interruption from June to December, and this mountain undoubtedly carried more snow than any of the other accessible highlands. Every week-end parties visited the Hut and at the end of the season a great improvement in the ski-ing standard was evident.

The Race Committee ambitiously arranged a four-part Club Championship which, unfortunately, had to be abandoned. At the week-end set down for the Downhill and Slalom, the conditions were most unsuitable. Ice with patches of slow wind-blown powder made running difficult and dangerous, and a blizzard did not improve matters. The Slalom was postponed, but an attempt was made to run the Downhill. Of the fourteen

competitors, only six faced the starter. These were sent off at two-minute intervals over the middle section of the downhill course, the top and bottom sections being impossible. Four of the starters managed to finish, but, on checking the times after the race, it was found that one of the watches was out of order, and the Racing Committee had to declare the event "no race." Later the whole Championship programme was abandoned.

In addition to Ben Lomond, other snowfields were visited by ski-ing parties. Among these were Cradle Mountain, Black Bluff, Pine Lake and Ironstone Mountain. The last-named, which is situated in the Great Western Tiers, offers great ski-ing possibilities, but its present inaccessibility may be judged from the fact that the three members who made the trip had to carry their ski twenty miles.

During the Australian Championships three members of the club visited Hotham as spectators.

Last winter a new ski club was formed on the North-west Coast, with the intention of exploiting Black Bluff. It is hoped the coming season will be kind to them and that they will develop into a strong club. Black Bluff is a fine mountain which carries a great deal of snow and which abounds in excellent slopes.

The Ski Club of Tasmania and the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club have recently constituted a Tasmanian Ski Council, which should assist the clubs in their relations with one another and have a beneficial effect on the sport generally.

The following are the officers of the N.T.A.C. for 1933-34:—President, C. F. Monds, Esq.; vice-presidents, C. J. R. Stackhouse and G. E. Perrin; captain, F. Smithies; committee, I. D. Carr, G. C. McKinlay, W. F. Mitchell, H. L. von See, and G. Hutton; honorary treasurer, S. V. Tilley; honorary secretary, R. G. Hall, 7 Dowling Street, Launceston. **R. G. Hall, Honorary Secretary.**

N.W. Tasmanian Alpine Club

This club came into being last winter and was the outcome of a report submitted to the Tasmanian Tourist Bureau by Major R. E. Smith who, in company with Mr. G. P. Taylor, visited the Black Bluff during the winter of two years ago.

A number of Ulverstone enthusiasts, consisting of Messrs. G. Cruickshank, Peter and Dick Jones, D. Wilson, G. Hodgkinson and several others called a meeting, of which this club is the outcome, with its headquarters at Ulverstone. Later on, a trip was arranged to the Black Bluff to try out the possibilities of ski-ing and a party of about 70 made the ascent.

This mountain is situated south of Ulverstone. One good point about it is that it is visible from many points in the town, and when snow is there it can be seen plainly. The distance by motor road is 30 miles, then a walk of three miles takes one to the ski-ing ground.

The party left Ulverstone in several cars and proceeded by the best graded inland route known as Castra Road. At Nietta the road reaches an altitude of 1,750 feet, and thence a descent

is made to the Leven River for a distance of about seven miles. The river is then followed for two miles, when the homestead of "Levenvale" is reached. This is the property of Mr. G. P. Taylor and, as he was amongst the party, all present were made at home in either some of the week-end shacks or in the main building, which contains a large room for visitors, also a large fireplace, which was most acceptable on the return trip.

The vehicles were left here and a start made on foot, whilst a few were fortunate in securing mounts. About two hours walk and we were well in the snow region and, on reaching the plateau a fine area of snow appeared which reached for miles in a southerly direction. A party of skiers was seen in the distance. One of these proved to be Mr. R. G. Hall, honorary secretary of the N.T. Alpine Club, who, with a party, had gone up the mountain earlier in the day. The country was found to be most suitable for the sport, but the snow, on that day, was rather soft; this was the opinion expressed by those of the party who were experienced. The outcome of the trip was that most of the party joined the club, and many pleasant trips have since been held.

The view from this mountain is superb to all points of the compass. It includes Bass Straits, Port Sorell, Lake Lea, Cradle Mount, Barn Bluff and Middlesex Plains, whilst, nestling under the West Head, is that miniature lake or tarn known as Lake Patrick, called after the pioneer who was responsible for the opening up of this track and making the highlands of Tasmania so accessible to the various towns of the North West Coast.

The homestead of Levenvale was reached slightly before nightfall. Here a cheery fire was burning and, after partaking of some hot coffee and other refreshments, Ulverstone was reached after about one and half hours' motor run.

As interest in the sport is still keen, the members are waiting for the next heavy fall of snow for another trip.

It is possible to reach these ski-ing grounds from either Burnie, Ulverstone or Devonport in from three to four hours. A party of tourists could leave Melbourne, say, on Tuesday afternoon, be met by car or take the train to Ulverstone, be at the snow-line by 10 a.m. on Wednesday and return by the steamer, arriving in Melbourne by midday Thursday.

This trip is well worth considering, and Mr. G. Cruickshank, the honorary secretary, or the President, Mr. G. P. Taylor, would be pleased to make all arrangements for any party making the tour. Accommodation at "Levenvale" is available for a small party.

HOBART SKI CLUB.

As mentioned in the Tasmanian Ski Council's report, a new club was formed last season to exploit the ski-ing on Mt. Wellington. The officers for the year are:—E. T. Emmett, president; W. A. C. Johnson, vice-president; A. F. Hannon, honorary secretary (240 Macquarie Street, Hobart); committee, A. J. White, J. B. Thwaites, R. Reid, C. Oldham, G. O. Lofts, and G. T. F. Chapman.