

## Touring New Snowfields

By Ida McAulay.

The highlights of last season's ski-ing came unexpectedly to four of us, when we went, at short notice, to explore new snowfields in the region of Lake St. Clair. We heard there had been a good fall of snow in that direction. The weather seemed settled. We dropped everything and went.

About eighty miles from Hobart, on the West Coast Road, we came over the top of Busgall Hill, and all exclaimed together, for the best of our dreams of ski-ing seemed to be coming true. . . . It was a still, blue day and we had a clear view of the mountains ahead. Their smooth domes and sweeps of snow shone brilliantly against the sky. They promised better ski-ing than any we had known. It was almost painful to have to wait till we could get there.

Soon after passing Derwent Bridge we found snow on the road. The service cars had cut wheel-marks deep enough for it to scrape our running boards. We stopped at a road maintenance hut, at what is known as the Hundred and Ten Mile Bridge, because it is that distance from Hobart. It crosses the King William Rivulet, and the height there is about 2,500 feet above sea level. The hut was picturesquely set against a wall of dark green myrtles, right under Mount King William I. We were pleased to see snow on the roof and no smoke coming from the chimney, for we intended to camp there and were glad to find the hut was empty.

Some winters previously, before the West Coast Road was open, we had seen the King William Range, remote and smoothly



The West Coast Road, Tasmania, at Mt. King William.

white, beckoning to us from afar. Since then some of us had entertained dreams of swooping gloriously on ski from the top of the King Williams down to the plains, in one long run. Now we were on the edge of our dreams.

We left the hut after a quick lunch, and drove as far as the road would take us, up Mount Arrowsmith. At the highest point in the road, about 2,700 feet, we left the car and put on ski. It took us something over an hour, over gentle open button-grass slopes, to reach one of the several knobs which form the top of Mount Arrowsmith. The snow was not so good as it looked, for the big tussocks made it lumpy, and in parts it had thawed underneath where channels of water ran. But our spirits were high. We did not care about the condition of the snow on this preliminary run, for Mount Arrowsmith was a low mountain, and inconsiderable, compared with the one we hoped to climb next day. Mount Rufus was, at the moment, the highest and most distant, and, therefore, the most alluring, of our aims. The sun was low when we reached the top of Arrowsmith, and already there were colours in the sky. We looked at Rufus, and its cradle-shaped sweeps of snow, and promised ourselves to be ski-ing there next day. A golden cloud just touched the top of Gell. The other mountains turned to rose, and then behind us the King Williams flushed the deep colour of wine, while the snow became tinted with reflections from the sky.

Presently we were running down the slopes, first in the glow of the sunset, and later by the light of Venus and a silver thread of moon. Besides the mountains, we could feel the unfrequented bush about us. There were no other people and we held in our grasp the beauties of loneliness.

When we woke next morning stillness held the world. Every tree was stiff and sparkling white with frost. Looking upwards through the door of the hut to the top of King William, we were amazed to see a slender white staff gleaming against the blue. It was a stick, surmounting the cairn, and so thickly coated with frost that it was plainly visible eighteen hundred feet above us.

Ignoring all chores we put lunch in our packs, waxed our ski and started. When we left the hut the sun was shining on mists which lay over the plains. Above them Gell rose like Fujiyama.

The gods were in a joyous mood. We rejoiced with them and were grateful. That such weather, such snow, such mountains, and ourselves should be together at the same time seemed more than our brittle luck would stand—more than one would expect or ask—the sort of thing that comes as a gift, and rarely.

Rufus (4,750 ft.) we could see ahead of us. We started over open plains, crossed a creek, and ran into a light mist which shrouded the trees and hid the view. Then began a steady uphill grade. We kept as much as possible to tongues of open button-grass which led towards our ridge. Gradually the mist thinned and disappeared. Soon we were climbing more steeply through a scattering of gums which threw lace-like patterns of shadow on the snow. We were glad to rest and find relief in such slender shade. We put on glare glasses, rolled up our sleeves, and felt our faces burning.



We came to a steep pinch, and knew that under our ski and under the snow was scrub that would have been heart-breaking to walk through in warmer times. That knowledge gave us an added feeling of exhilaration. The top of the ridge was open going. We followed it westwards for a time until we reached the tree line, and were on the main body of the mountain. Here, on a ledge that had been swept bare by the wind, we stopped to have our lunch. We sat hanging our legs over the edge, and broke the ice on rock pools to dip out cups of water. We looked south and westwards to ranges of snow-topped mountains. To the west the spectacular shape of Frenchman's Cap stood out above all others. Beneath us lay a dark valley with lakes in it, and Gell rose directly opposite.



Explorer's joy! The unskied Ranges near Lake St. Clair, seen from Mt. Rufus (4700 ft.), Tasmania.

After lunch we started seriously to climb Mount Rufus. The going was good, over open and, sometimes, ice-crusting slopes. From the direction from which we approached, Mount Rufus had a bald and rounded head. As we climbed higher we found that we were divided from it by a scoop-shaped valley. It was about four in the afternoon when we reached the top. From there we had a glorious view. The horizon was ringed with white-tipped mountains, most of whose names and shapes we knew. We were overlooking most of Tasmania. In the nearer country we picked out routes for skiing expeditions in future days and future years. And then, because the sun was low, and there were grey, windy clouds in the sky, and the shadowed slopes were freezing, we had to turn reluctantly and leave.

We had a long run down over the promised drifts that we

had seen the day before. They were icy and crusted in parts, but it was a good run all the way to the plains, where the snow was thawing.

Some of the spirit had gone out of us by the next day which we had kept for King William I. We started late, and found the way upwards rather toilsome, though it should really have been easy. The going was partly open and partly through trees where the undergrowth had been burned. It grew steeper towards the top, and we passed between two peaks on to the main plateau, about fourteen hundred feet above the hut. There were many short steep slopes coming down on to the plateau, some of them excellent, and we should have liked to



Mt. Arrowsmith (3400 ft.) and Mt. Gell (4700 ft.) from the new West Coast Road, four hours from Hobart.

have stopped and played there, but we were bent on getting as far as possible southwards along the mountain. We knew that there was good skiing country on the southern part of the range, but there was a gorge which separated King William I. from Williams II. and III. We wished to see what that intervening country was like.

However, by the time we had finished lunch, clouds were coming up with a westerly wind. It was getting late and cold, so we turned back, for we did not wish to make the first part of the descent in a bad light. Running off King William I. was not quite like our dreams. The snow was fast, and at first there were many trees. Precise turning was called for, under difficult conditions, and we had not the required skill, so we just blundered down as best we could, and later, in more open timber, on easier slopes, we enjoyed running in the moonlight, though we sometimes fell, more from weariness than anything else.

Next day we packed our things into the car for the return journey which took only four hours.



It may seem strange that these snowfields had never been used for ski-ing before, but the reason is that until the opening of the West Coast Road they had been practically inaccessible. Now it is possible to get within easy striking distance of several good snow mountains in that district. With the Accommodation House at Derwent Bridge as a base, the mountains round Lake St. Clair should become one of the popular ski-ing centres of Tasmania.

## Ironstone Mountain

By R. G. Hall.

Rising out of Tasmania's Central Plateau, behind the northern escarpment of the Great Western Tiers, lies Ironstone Mountain, a bold square landmark which may be seen from most of the higher peaks of the State. Attaining an altitude of 4,736 ft., it towers impressively above the Chudleigh Lakes, scattered about its base at about the 3,500 ft. level. The surrounding country consists mainly of small lake basins divided by low ridges. The ground is, for the greater part, grass, covered with a few rocky outcrops. The timber, snow gums and pencil pines grows in belts lining the ridges, clothing some of the slopes and fringing the lakes. The mountain itself falls fairly sheer to the north and from its corner bluffs but, on the east, south and west it sweeps down to the plateau in varying grades.

This country has good ski-ing possibilities. The endless miles of snow stretching away to the little-known Walls of Jerusalem in the south and to the Extreme Tier in the west, the fine lake and alpine scenery, and the existence of three tourist huts combine to make it ideal for touring. At the same time, the slopes of the Ironstone should provide ample scope for ski-running and downhill racing. A possible downhill course, giving an estimated fall of 1,200 ft. in about half a mile, is most promising. Commencing on an open ridge near the summit, the course becomes increasingly difficult on the open upper slope, enters a sheltered gully which is narrow and steep, swings to the left round a prominent crag and winds through the timber to the open valley at the bottom. This course is quite unimproved and a considerable amount of work will have to be done to clear the track through the timber. An important feature is that this field usually carries heavy snow which remains late in the season.

Unfortunately, like so many of Tasmania's best snow mountains, the Ironstone is rather inaccessible. An excellent motor road of 45 miles from Launceston leads to the foot of the Tiers (about 900 ft.). There is a good pack track of four miles to Lady Lake Hut (3,500 ft.). It is a further three to four miles over the undulating moors from this hut to the base of the Ironstone. Some day, perhaps, a hut may be built at the foot of the mountain and a new track cut through the Western Gorge, the head of which is quite close to the above-mentioned potential downhill course.

## Twenty-Four Hours

By C. W. Judd.

Midnight was just two hours later than the party had intended to leave on a flying trip to Ben Lomond. Twelve South Australians and two members of the Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club were packed in two cars, rucksacks were jammed uncomfortably into the few available interstices, and ski sprouted precariously from the most improbable places. By some miracle the thirty-odd miles of road between Launceston and the foot of the club track were covered without undue incident, and by two o'clock the members of the party were profanely bending, and almost breaking, their weary steps up the long three-mile stretch to the Club Chalet.

The mixed party of South Australians had a vague suspicion that there were such things as mountains but, after the first half mile, the only emotion that they were able to express was a mild surprise that it was possible to climb an overhanging track without falling back into space. Passing lightly over the hours of travail that followed, the dawn was just beginning to show in the east as the Chalet was reached, and a pause was made for a wash and a hasty breakfast. The day had broken fine and clear, with a heavy fog lying on the foothills below. The warm sunlight had made everyone much more cheerful.



F. Smithies.





P. Smithies.

The cairn on Legge's Tor, Ben Lomond (5160 ft.).

with the visitors eager to catch their first glimpse of snow, hidden from sight, two miles away, on the five thousand foot level.

There was a marvellous view from the plateau's rim, with Mount Barrow just across the way and, in the distance, Roland and the Western Tiers peering across a white sea of cloud. From the immediate foreground came the voice of Reginald Hall, informing the rearguard that "Just another twenty minutes will see us at the Tor." The twenty-minute story worked overtime from nine till one, and long before the summit was reached the more dissatisfied members of the party were asking him to tell the one about the three bears.

For late spring, the snow at the Tor was in fair condition and, once initiated into the mysteries of ski-running, it was difficult to drag the visitors away from the long slope. The two club members experienced some difficulty in producing their true form, owing to a heavy breakable crust. The secretary, however, had no difficulty in glibly explaining away the more glaring of his misadventures by introducing his audience to fall turns. However, in view of the fact that members of the party were engaged in an inter-State Badminton match in Launceston that night, we thought that it was time to be on our way. All went well on the return journey until the cars were reached shortly after six o'clock. It was not very long before Hall was able to bog his car up to the running boards, and



P. Smithies.  
THE CLUB CHALET (4000 ft.) OF THE NORTHERN TASMANIAN ALPINE CLUB, SPRING, 1933.



such a satisfactory job did he make of it that the efforts of all the male members of the party were unavailing. Followed a two-mile tramp in search of a horse and chains, and the realisation on the part of the South Australians that Badminton for that night was off. The search was successful and, as there was no opportunity of further bogging without going back to look for suitable places, the return trip was without further incident, save an enjoyable interlude with steak and eggs at the journey's end. This was shortly before midnight, and in Launceston once more. Although most of the members of the party were absolutely inexperienced, the return trip to the summit of Tasmania's highest mountain had been accomplished within the 24 hours.

## Ski-ing at Cradle Mountain

By Iles D. Carr.

Cradle Mountain! What longing the very name arouses in a lover of the open air. Flung across the northern gateway of the Central Tasmanian Scenic Reserve, "The Cradle" is the most northerly of a chain of rugged peaks with their attendant lakes and chasms. Surely no healthy person could resist an invitation to revisit this country, more especially when virgin snow awaits the ski tracks; at all events, not I.

Our visit is to be first and foremost for ski-ing, and our trip in the car is a memory of ski points digging into one's anatomy and of being glued to the seat with ski wax; but who cares? We reach "Waldheim," the home built with his own hands by that wonderful man, Gustav Weindorfer. It is a beautiful and comfortable chalet and invariably greets its visitors with a welcome which leaves a memory of good cheer, coffee and roaring fires. We remove our ski and sample its generous hospitality before retiring to make ready for the real business of the morrow.

The morning delights us with a view of snow which is, like everything else here, on a most generous scale. We hastily breakfast and make for the plateau, some 4,000 feet above sea level, to run its wide slopes or narrow valleys as fancy dictates. Our champion "grave digger" refuses to fill in his numerous graves and grandly indicates the unmarked miles of snow, we move on and on, finding new and fascinating slopes and vistas over every rise.

We lunch on the upper branches of a Pencil Pine tree, overlooking terraced lakes filmed with ice, and then continue our efforts until the setting sun warns us of approaching night, when we regretfully commence the winding run through the scrub to home and coffee.

Hounslow Heath, Mount Campbell and the plateau successively yield their snows to our ski. We rise from "sitzmarks"



"Waldheim," Cradle Valley, Tasmania.

F. Smithies.

on myriad slopes amidst raucous mirth, only to laugh sweetly when our detractors also bite the snow. Each evening we wearily follow our outward tracks home to re-fight our battles and plan new attacks.

"Waldheim" is truly a home and our host, with his cheery cure of "fire, food and friction" for inevitable sprains and bruises, makes life wonderfully pleasant. What skier cares for weather vagaries such as mist and snowstorm when warmth and welcome complete each day? To-morrow will always be bright with little fleecy white clouds; anyhow, there are still many virgin miles of snow.

Tasmania's snowy heart is kept inviolate by a wise provision of the Government. It is a scenic reserve, without parallel in Australia, comprising some 300 square miles of jumbled peaks, inaccessible gorges and trees and shrubs found nowhere else on earth. Summer decks the whole area with a profusion of flowers and sweet scented herbs; in winter the snow—words fail me; there will be more winters.

