



Courtesy

"Argus and Australasian."

## SUNDAY AT DONNA BUANG.

The run is about 140 yards in length; after reaching a gradient of 21 degrees the slope eases off gradually to the horizontal at the bottom. The above picture was taken on August 2, 1931, when over 400 cars, it is estimated, made the 57-mile trip from Melbourne. Since the picture was taken, club working bees and paid labour to the extent of £20 have been responsible for much improvement to the track. Members of the University Ski Club have also constructed a jump. The ski run is now in excellent condition, and should be very popular with club members this coming winter.

## A Sledge Trip on Hotham

By W. Begg.

In view of the fact that this was, so far as we can ascertain, the first occasion in Victoria on which it has been necessary to transport a seriously injured skier over any distance in snow impassable to horses or cars, it may be of interest to some members to read of the experiences of the party involved. The accident occurred at Mount Hotham to C. Donald, when he was practising for the M.U. Ski Club's Jump Championship. Just before lunch on Wednesday, August 26th, he went over the jump and fell on landing. The alighting ground was rather soft, and he dislocated his knee and the ligaments round the joint were badly torn. He was taken to the house and made as comfortable as possible by Miss V. Haughton, who has trained as a nurse, and G. Pern, who is a medical student. The next problem was to get him to Melbourne, as there was no possibility of the knee righting itself without hospital attention.

On the following day, Thursday, it was arranged that horses would come, on Friday, as far as possible from the Omeo side, probably, it was thought, within 4 miles or so of Hotham Heights. Mr. Spargo took advantage of this to order some bread and jam to come up with the horses. This was very fortunate, as will be seen later. On Thursday a sledge was made by fastening three long wide ski to a short steel-runner sled that was handy. The ski were so fastened that the steel runners extended about 1½ inch below them, thus acting as a keel to prevent side-slip when crossing steep slopes. In passing, it may be of interest to note that we made one or two mistakes in the design of the sledge, by which others, if placed in a similar situation, may profit. The ski were fastened to one another and to the sledge by wooden cross-beams, not more than 3 inches above the ground, with the result that, in soft snow, which was encountered on practically the whole trip, these cross-members were dragging in the snow. They seemed to scoop the snow up and compress it into tight lumps under the sledge, thus greatly increasing the load and necessitating frequent stops to clear it away. From this experience it would seem that, on a sledge designed to carry a heavy load, there should be no horizontal cross-beams or ties within at least 9 inches vertically of the running surfaces.

The construction was carried out in the Hotham Heights kitchen, and when at about midnight on Thursday it was nearly completed, some one innocently asked how



we were going to get it out. Panic set in. Tools were dropped immediately, and all possible exits were inspected—there were only two! The back door was impossible owing to the snow, so we had to try the route through the living room and out into the narrow passage to the front door. We found to our relief that we had about a half-inch clearance through the door, and, after much wangling, managed to get it round the corners.

Before taking the sledge into the snow, the running surfaces were waxed with beeswax, well ironed in, to make them as fast as possible in all snow. Also, we rigged up the harness under shelter. The team was a large one, viz., T. Mitchell, M. Romuld, W. Begg, J. Coupar, W. Crocker,



Photo by

G. Pern.

Drawing C. Donald to the Snowline at Flourbag.

K. Forge, G. Pern, K. Vial, A. Wilson, and I. Whittaker, ten in all. The harness was rigged so that there were three men on the main trace attached to a small bridle across the front of the sledge. There was also one man to each front corner, to help steer, as well as pull, and one steering by means of handles at the rear. Thus there were five regular pullers. In addition, on steep sidings, a rope was passed right round the patient and sledge (except the runners) and attached to the most solid member of the party, Martin Romuld, who skied along above the sledge. This rope could also, when required, be attached to the main trace on climbs, or to the rear of the sledge, on descents. One of the other spares carried the rucksack, while

yet another carried the shovel which was useful for breaking down small icy ridges of wind-swept snow. This was not necessary after passing Whisky Flat. The remaining spare man went on ahead and helped break the trail.

The harness was made very long, so that all could wear ski, and it was found possible to pull on them the whole way. In very difficult spots, such as round the Higginbothams, the steersman did not ski. (It may seem strange to those who know the country to read about difficult places and steep climbs or descents on the Omeo side of Hotham; but with a heavily laden and rather top-heavy sledge the road grades and side slopes, when the road is covered over, are quite severe enough.)

Friday dawned miserably. It had been snowing and blowing hard all night and did not seem likely to stop. There was a good 6 inches of new snow. However, we determined to go ahead. The attic door was cleared, and a cutting made so that the sledge was run right into the attic, and the patient, surrounded by hot water bags, in a hooded sleeping-bag, was placed on it. Each member was supplied with a cut lunch and off the party set. The little steepish run down from the house to the road gave us a taste of what to expect in the way of the sledge over-running the traces and so on. All the way to the Big Spur the sidings were the chief trouble, and they strained the sledge pretty badly. However, although groaning horribly, it held together. Whisky Flat Hut was reached at about 1 o'clock and lunch was eaten. Expecting to meet the horses within the next couple of miles, we left Coupar in the hut to keep a fire going and to cook some apricots, ready for us on returning. We went slowly on, mile after mile, with no sign of the horses, and at about half-past three o'clock Wilson, who was spare, went on ahead. At about half-past four we came upon a note from Mr. Bowman, which Wilson had evidently read, saying that he would wait with the horses at Dinner Plain Hut,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  mile further on, until four o'clock. Thinking Wilson would easily have caught him, we pushed, or rather pulled, on with renewed energy. It is hard to imagine our feelings and words when, on coming in sight of the Hut at about 6 o'clock, we saw no horses.

Inside the hut we found Wilson, his face all smeared with jam, making toast as fast as he could, from the bread left by Mr. Bowman for Mr. Spargo. He had actually seen the horses, but could not catch them or make himself heard. We held a council of war and decided that as our victim was in some discomfort—he would not admit pain—we would not waste the night. Accordingly, after a meal of toast and jam, Mitchell and Begg set off at about 6.30



p.m. on a journey of unknown length in search of horses or cars and men.

The snow held as far as Rundell's deserted house, where we left our ski and walked on. After a few miles, a light was seen some distance off the road and investigation disclosed a house where a welcome cup of tea and a plate of meat were swallowed. Cobungra was reached at about midnight. Here we found Mr. Bowman, and were told that Mr. MacMillan, the police officer at Omeo, had left with a party to help us. In due course he arrived, in a Ford that had to be seen to be believed, with one man, the local noxious weeds inspector, who had never skied before and several large meat pies.

We all climbed into the car and began our journey back. The weather looked like clearing up and the moon shone quite brightly at times, so that we could see where we were going. The passengers, when the car began to stick, would jump off and shove. Then, if they were lucky, they would jump on anywhere when we got going. We ended up by charging a deep drift at about 30 miles an hour, with one passenger on each running board and one on the spare wheel at the back. When the cloud of snow subsided, the two "running boarders" were found some distance from the car, breathing snow from every pore, while the "spare wheeler" had slid up over the back of the car on to the hood. After much roaring of engines and shouting of advice, the car was got out and turned round.

Then our attention was turned to the ski. At about 3 a.m. on Saturday morning we set off for the Dinner Plain Hut, arriving there at about 4.15 a.m. We roused the others—they didn't require waking—from their various perches on wood-heaps and boxes on the floor. They all had sore mouths from eating too much toast and jam. There were originally 12 large loaves of bread and 12 tins of jam. When we came to load up for home, there were 5 large loaves of bread and 6 tins of jam.

G. Pern remained in the hut to keep the fire going and have a warm drink ready for us on our return, and we set off for the car, reaching it, after some tricky downhill running, just at the first sign of dawn. We transferred the "victim" to the car and then set off for Hotham, feeling much better. Donald, we afterwards learned, had a safe journey to Melbourne, travelling continuously. Before starting back, the writer called for the opinion of the party as to whether or not we would take the sledge back with us. Martin Romuld, in English that surprised us all, settled the question quite definitely. We hope that Martin has not learnt *all* his Australian from Ski Club members.

It was a sorry-looking party that hoisted loaves of bread on to its shoulders and left Dinner Plain at about 7 a.m.

On arriving once more at Whisky Flat Hut, we found a note from Coupar (saying that he had left at about 6 a.m. for Hotham) and a billy of cold, burnt, stewed, dried apricots, which we ate with relish. From then on the snow was abominably clogging and paraffin wax was in continual demand. The party was well spread out when we reached Hotham and found Coupar fast asleep. None of us envied him his day and night in the hut with only apricots and mice for company. The last of the party arrived at Hotham at about midday, and by 3 o'clock all were again on ski, loaded this time with rucksacs, for the vacation was over and we had to be in Bright that night. A nasty blizzard was blowing, which we had not noticed much on the Omeo side, and which made the going very unpleasant as far as Blowhard Hut, where we met the Scotch College party on its way to Hotham. St. Bernard Hospice was passed at dusk, and the last of the party reached the snow-line, 4 miles further on, at about 9 o'clock. Here the cars were waiting for us, and after various delays the party reached Bright, and at midnight was to be found cooking eggs and bacon *ad lib.* in the kitchen of the Alpine. Sunday turned out very fine, and all enjoyed a pleasant run to Melbourne.

Apart from the difficulties already mentioned, the only other serious one was caused by the various creeks across the road. The snow was pretty deep, low down, frequently, as much as 4 feet, and thus there were nasty trenches to cross. However, they were fairly easily managed, when two or three people took their ski off and helped the sledge across. Once or twice, after a longish rest, the sledge froze in a bit, but a good heave got it started again. Another point of note, rather obvious perhaps, is that on steep descents with a human cargo it is advisable to tie ropes round the runners to act as brakes, although this was hardly necessary on this trip.

There are two chief points to bear in mind when transporting a helpless person. Firstly, keep him warm. It must be remembered that he is getting no exercise at all. Test judges and others who have acted as officials at sports meetings will realise how cold one gets, even in fine weather, when standing about; but the normal skier does not give himself time to get cold and does not realise how cold it usually is. The other point worthy of note is that the passenger is helpless; therefore don't scare him too much by going across steep places where they can be avoided, and don't go too fast downhill.

All members of the party seemed to enjoy the trip.



although a more strenuous finish to a holiday could hardly be imagined, especially for the two who went on all night; although, personally, I think going on was preferable to trying to get rest in a hut like that, and we at least got a drink of tea and something that wasn't toast. In conclusion, it might not be out of place to suggest that a well-designed and well-built sledge be kept at such resorts as cannot normally be approached pretty closely by horses in winter, as, now that competition is entering our sphere more seriously than ever accidents, more or less serious, are bound to happen. I understand that Kosciusko already has an ambulance sledge which is proving quite useful.

## Melbourne University Ski Club

By N. Haughton.

In May, 1929, two undergraduates, now Doctors Kent-Hughes and Wood, visited Mount St. Bernard and were introduced to ski-ing. They were captivated by the sport and realised the possibilities of making it a recognised University sport, as had already been done in Sydney. In time, a Club with fifteen foundation members was formed. It was at once seen that affiliation with the State body was a necessity, and the S.C.V. made a very generous agreement by which all our members are associate members of the main Club. That the Club has made progress since then is due, in no small degree, to the kindly and generous help of the S.C.V. and its individual members. Membership has now reached 40, of whom the majority are undergraduates, and all are keen skiers.

The first M.U. Ski Club Championship, held on Mount Buller in 1930, was attended by eight members. Despite the small entry, high standard Slalom and Downhill races were held. The Slalom was set by Dr. Cato, Victorian captain in 1931. Pern had a good win from Begg, Bates and Whittaker, who were all very close. The Downhill, of 685 vertical feet, started on the summit ridge of Buller and finished near the Hut. Pern started first, and the others followed at times in proportion to the time by which they lost in the Slalom. Again, Pern won from Begg and Bates. The combination of Slalom and Downhill constituted the M.U. Ski Club Championship.

In addition, the British type of cross-country race was introduced, for a cup presented by Dr. C. H. Osborn. This covered approximately one and three-quarter miles, and was also won by Pern, closely followed by Begg and Whittaker.

Last year the meeting was at Hotham Heights. Eighteen members attended, and Langlauf, Jump and Ladies' Championships were added to the programme. All events were run as strictly as possible under international rules. In addition to the above events, the Club ran concurrently with its own event, the first Langlauf Championship of Victoria. This was done by the authority of the S.C.V. We were fortunate in having sufficient good weather to run all the important events; but the many rough days kept parties inside or delayed them, thus wasting most of the time that was to have been spent in teaching, tests, practice and handicap events. We are very deeply indebted to Tom Mitchell and Martin Romuld, who devoted their whole time to teaching us, setting courses and marking jumps. It was they who made the meeting the success it undoubtedly was.

Club members have visited all the Victorian ski-ing resorts. Four attended the last State Championships at Mount Buller. Altogether, ten members, including two girl undergraduates, have made the touring-camping trip across the Bogong High Plains. Begg and Haughton won the Dave Roe Cup for the fastest time (6 hours 3 minutes) between Hotham Heights and Cope Hut, in 1931. On the return, with a heavier pack, but travelling alone, Begg reached Hotham in under 5 hours. It is to be regretted that no pioneering trips have been made by M.U. Ski Club members, but we expect this will be remedied in the future.

With regard to "blues" for ski-ing. The objections raised against their award to the Oxford-Cambridge teams do not apply here. The sports do not have to be of an inter-collegiate nature for recognition by Australian Universities, nor would the matches be held outside the country as in England. Finally, the adoption of the sport in only two Australian Universities is sufficient for its recognition. Blues, starting with half-blues only, will be awarded for ski-ing when Clubs concerned are affiliated to their respective University Sports Unions, and the competitors are undergraduate. There are some exceptions to the last condition, e.g., those who take a short course.

Office-bearers for 1932: President, J. D. W. Begg, Hon. Secretary, H. Pearson; both of the University, Carlton N.3.

