

Editorial

An editor's life is one of hopes unrealised and here are two of mine:—

(1) That skiers will put on paper in the form of an article or a book the reasons why they ski. I enjoy ski-ing, but I would like to be able to point to a convincing article on the subject when someone asks me what fun I get out of it.

(2) That a few representative skiers from New South Wales will visit the Bogong High Plains and, perhaps, Mount Bogong within the next couple of seasons. Such a visit might be painful at the time to them, but would provide many happy memories and promote a better understanding between the States. What about it?—Victorian Editor.

Victoria's Snow Resorts

This guide to the principal snow resorts of Victoria is compiled from information supplied by various members of the Ski Club of Victoria (particularly Messrs. R. Weston and W. D. Bertram) and by the Government Tourist Bureau.

The object is not to recite a dull list of facts about each centre, but to give prospective visitors sufficient details to enable them to choose the resort which will best suit their individual tastes.

Melbourne skiers have one big advantage over fellow enthusiasts in Sydney or London, in that in winter they can have a day's ski-ing without spending a night away from home. Mount Donna Buang, near Warburton, is 60 miles from Melbourne, and cars can be driven along a well-metalled road to within half a mile of the ski runs. Before the next *Year Book* is published it will probably be possible to drive through to the actual summit by car all the year round. Lake Mountain, near Marysville, is 70 miles from Melbourne by roads which vary greatly in quality. Cars may be driven to within four miles of the ski runs. It acts as another week-end nursery for city skiers.

The next in order of proximity to Melbourne is Mount Buller, near Mansfield, which is 150 miles from the city. Its principal attractions are a first-class racing course, a big jump, good slopes for beginners and an excellent teacher in Mr. Helmut Kofler, who can practise what he preaches.

The rest of the mountains may be grouped together, in that they are all in one district. The normal way of reaching them is by train, via Seymour and Wangaratta, the passengers for Mount Buffalo Chalet alighting at Porepunkah (192 miles) and the remainder going on to the terminus, Bright (196 miles), and thence 16 miles by car to Harrietville before branching off to Mount Feathertop, Hotham Heights or St. Bernard's Hospice. The Bogong High Plains may be approached from Hotham Heights, but the easiest way is by train to Bairnsdale (170 miles) and thence by service car up the Tambo Valley to Omeo and Shannon Vale (118 miles).

For those who demand every comfort, Mount Buffalo Chalet is obviously the choice. Lake Catani is frozen over in mid-winter, and skating in the open-air is possible for several weeks each year. The Buffalo Plateau provides some interesting rock formations, as well as many fine alpine views. Another advantage is that luxurious buses meet the train at Porepunkah and take guests to the front door of the Chalet, 18 miles away, in winter and summer.

Mount Feathertop is the second highest of the Victorian mountains, and the bungalow, which is $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles from the summit, can be reached on horseback along a $5\frac{1}{2}$ -miles bridle-track from Harrietville in any weather. It has some good runs, but has only one ski tour, the following of the Razorback ridge to Mount Hotham (8 miles), one of the best fine-weather ski trips in the Victorian Alps.

St. Bernard's Hospice is the oldest accommodation house in the Alps and the only one with a license. It is 13 miles by road from Harrietville, and the depth of snow determines how near to the Hospice service cars can get in winter. It is usually possible to get half-way by car and considerably further by pack-horse. It surpasses most other resorts in its variety of one-day trips.

Hotham Heights, like Feathertop Bungalow and Mount Buffalo Chalet, is controlled by the Victorian Railways. It is nearly seven miles from St. Bernard's Hospice, along a ridge which resembles the Razorback in that it provides an excellent fine-weather trip. It is easier to follow than the Razorback, but gets the full force of winter storms. Like Mount Buller, it has a first-class racing course and it probably enjoys better snow than any other resort. An alternative route to Hotham, via the Bon Accord spur from Harrietville, measures nine miles but involves some severe climbing. In the worst weather, Hotham Heights could be reached via Omeo, as the road is always clearly defined and there are huts every few miles along the route.

Last, but by no means least, are the Bogong High Plains which cater for a type of skier almost unknown across the Murray. This hardy animal, like the Tibetan of fiction, boasts of the time since he last bathed and glories in the length and scrubbinness of whiskers he can grow. For those who are willing to rough it, the variety of tours to be made on the Bogong High Plains is sufficient reward. No Victorian resort holds such

a firm place in the hearts of skiers who have visited them as the High Plains. Huts, erected by the cattlemen and one by the Ski Club of Victoria, provide the necessary shelter, while snow-poles, three chains apart and numbered, give adequate guidance in foggy weather. The beginner can find easy slopes at the hut door, the expert will find on Mount Nelse, the third highest mountain in Victoria, descents to test his nerve and the ski-tourer will discover in many valleys which cross the High Plains a never-ending feast of beautiful views.

Mount Bogong is on the threshold of development and may soon be regarded as the best of our mountains. Its summit is 6,508 feet a.s.l., and on it can be found many long and steep downhill courses, as well as jumping hills. A hut which is being erected on the Staircase Spur is the first step in the right direction, and it is only a matter of time before other huts and snow-poles are placed on it to make it safe for persons other than expert bushmen.

Victoria has still many mountains which have never re-sounded to the curses of falling skiers but, until skiers start going there, they can hardly be classed as snow resorts for the purpose of this article.

The Buffalo Plateau.

Height.—The Plateau ranges from 4,000 feet to 5,645 feet at the Horn. The Chalet is 4,370 feet above sea level.

How to Get There.—By rail to Porepunkah (192 miles), thence by rail buses to Chalet door (18 miles). Trains leave Melbourne for Porepunkah at 7.45 a.m. each week-day, except Friday, when visitors travel by the 4 p.m. train. On the return journey, visitors leave the Chalet at noon on Fridays and at 5 a.m. on other week-days.

By road along the Hume Highway to Wangaratta (123 miles), thence by fair road to Porepunkah (44 miles) and steep climb for 18 miles to Chalet.

Tariff.—For the first time this year, charges are varied, according to the type of room, except between July 27 and August 16, when there is a flat charge of £8/10/- for a week's stay at the Chalet, first-class rail and car transport from Melbourne to Chalet and return and meals en route. A few special rooms with private bathroom attached are excluded from the flat rate, the charge for them being £10/5/- inclusive. At other times the inclusive rate for special rooms is £8/10/-, for rooms with hot water service £7 and for rooms without hot water service £6/10/- to £6/15/-. Daily rates are £1 a day for a stay of less than two days, or 15/- to 17/6 a day for longer periods, according to the season. Bus fares between Porepunkah and Chalet for those who do not hold inclusive tickets are 10/- single (or 15/- single between July 27 and August 16).

Ski-ing Possibilities.—By reason of its lower altitude, the snow season at the Chalet is shorter than at some of the higher resorts, but when snow is scarce near the Chalet, guests are taken seven miles by tractor to the Horn, where there is usually plenty of snow. In addition to an extensive series of ski races

and jumping events which are conducted at the winter sports carnival at Mount Buffalo each year, the Ski Club of Victoria will hold a novice and intermediate ski meeting there this year, from August 11 until August 18.

For those interested in long-distance racing, the course between the Horn and the Chalet offers plenty of scope, and there is a record for the journey awaiting the attention of any champion looking for fresh worlds to conquer. The bungalow at the Horn has accommodation for 16 persons, and may be used either as a shelter for those who wish to stay there overnight or as a base when snow is scarce at the other end of the Plateau. Mount Buffalo has many attractions for the novice skier, gentle slopes, ski-ing classes and tours which can be adjusted to suit individual requirements. It will always be one of the best recruiting-grounds for the sport. For more experienced skiers, there is a downhill course, with a descent of 800 feet and a hill on which jumps of 80 feet may be made.

Other Points.—Skating may be enjoyed in winter on Lake Catani, which is handy to the Chalet. The lake, although artificial, is large and set in attractive surroundings so skaters get scenery as well as ice. Buffalo Chalet is the only snow resort in Victoria where guests must change from their sports clothing for dinner but, in compensation, it provides a ball-room, moving pictures, bank, post office, billiards, table tennis, electric light, central heating, hot and cold baths, laundry service, sewerage system and garages.

The number of points on the Plateau from which excellent views may be obtained attracts hundreds of visitors in summer, as well as in winter, and tracks on the Plateau are well defined. For those who can appreciate sunrises and sunsets, Buffalo, and particularly the Horn, has a special attraction.

Bookings for Buffalo, Feathertop or Hotham Heights may be made at the Government Tourist Bureaux in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne or Adelaide.

Mount Feathertop.

Height.—Summit is usually referred to as being 6,306 feet above sea level, but recent observations made by the State Electricity Commission put the height at 6,267 feet. It is the second highest mountain in Victoria, being second only to Mount Bogong (6,508 feet). The bungalow is about 5,000 feet above sea level, 1½ miles from the summit of Feathertop.

How to Get There.—Same trains as for Mount Buffalo Chalet, but passengers go four miles on to the terminus, Bright (196 miles), thence by service car to Harrietteville (16 miles). The bungalow is 5½ miles from Harrietteville and can be reached on horseback by a bridle path. Harrietteville is 213 miles from Melbourne by a road which is first-class for 150 miles but deteriorates between Wangaratta and Bright, and is liable to be difficult to negotiate after heavy rain.

Tariff.—There is accommodation for 28 persons at the bungalow and a short distance away is a tourist hut with bunks for four. The tariff is 12/- a day, but a combination



Mt. Feathertop, the second highest mountain in Victoria, and the Razorback.

ticket covering first-class return rail travel, meals en route, motor transport between Harrietville and Bright, horse to and from the bungalow and accommodation for five days is issued for £6. This also covers one night's lodgings at Harrietville or Bright.

Ski-ing Possibilities.—Mount Feathertop was the scene of the 1929 Victorian Ski Championships and will also go down in history as the place where Sverre Kaaten first competed in a slalom race. The Slalom was in the Victorian Championship that year and Kaaten won with ease.

Great use is made of the ski-ing slopes on Feathertop by members of the Wangaratta Ski Club, who hold their championships there each year. There is an excellent downhill course from near the summit. Apart from the brief journey to the summit, from which magnificent views may be obtained on a clear day, the only ski tour on Feathertop is across the Razorback to Mount Hotham (8 miles). This trip also provides memorable views in fine weather, but if the narrow ridge is icy or fog is encountered the journey may be particularly unpleasant. There is a direct but difficult route via Blair's Hut to the Bogong High Plains from Feathertop, but it can only be recommended to those seeking a strenuous tour. The height of Feathertop ensures plenty of good snow until well into the spring each year.

Other Points.—Especially when covered with snow, Feathertop's appearance fully justifies its title of Queen of the Australian Alps. Sunsets seen from the Razorback are things to remember.

Mount Hotham and Hotham Heights.

Height.—The summit of Mount Hotham is usually referred to as being 6,100 feet above sea level but, in spite of the rounded top it has had since it was first seen by white men, 17 feet seem to have disappeared, as the latest calculations place its height at 6,083 feet. The stone building known as Hotham Heights is 5,800 feet above sea level and is $\frac{3}{4}$ mile from the summit.

How to Get There.—The orthodox route is via Harrietville and St. Bernard's Hospice. The Hospice can be reached in any weather, but the journey of nearly seven miles from the Hospice to Hotham Heights in stormy weather is arduous. Martin Romuld holds the record for the journey, having covered the distance in 72 minutes in August, 1932. The Blowhard hut, half-way, provides a shelter and what would probably be the coldest night's lodging in Australia. For novice skiers, in fine weather, this route will continue to be the most popular.

After taking control of Hotham Heights, the Railways Department re-opened a track leading from Harrietville up the Bon Accord Spur (9 miles) to Hotham Heights. Horses can be taken most of the way in winter, but the last section of the journey involves some steep climbing, which, although short, taxes the powers of less athletic novices to the utmost under unsuitable snow conditions. The route's principal advantage is that in bad weather only a brief section of it is likely to prove hazardous, the rest being clearly defined. A third route, and one which is more independent of stormy weather than the other two, is via Omeo. The train may be taken to Bairnsdale (170 miles), thence by service car up the Tambo Valley to Omeo (83 miles). Hotham Heights is 35 miles from Omeo by road and a car may be driven to within a few miles. The remainder of the journey would have to be covered on ski, but the road is so sheltered and huts so numerous that it might well be tackled by a person who had never skied before.

On the two occasions when a skier from Hotham Heights has had to be sledged down to the snow-line, the Omeo route was taken, and, although a sledge is a particularly awkward vehicle to handle, especially when there is a human being on board, the journey was accomplished with a fraction of the difficulty that would have been experienced on either of the other two routes. The distance from Melbourne, via Omeo, has prevented this route from becoming popular.

Tariff.—There is accommodation for 33 persons at Hotham Heights. The tariff is 12/- a day and an inclusive ticket covering first-class return rail fare, motor transport between Bright and Harrietville and five days' accommodation at Hotham Heights is available for £4/8/-. All other services are paid for by the visitor en route.

Ski-ing Possibilities.—On this subject it is difficult to refrain from becoming lyrical in regard to Hotham Heights. Until Mount Bogong is more fully explored, Hotham will probably be regarded by skiers as having the best snow. Mr. W. Bankes Amery, who won the first Victorian turning championship in 1926 with human beings instead of flags to guide him through the fog, wrote: "I have rarely seen, even in Switzerland, a more perfect practice run than that from the top of Hotham. . . ."

Whether as the last run of the day or on a bright moonlight night, with ski rattling over the icy snow and the bumps hidden by the moon's softer light, the run from the summit to Hotham Heights is full of interest.

Mount Higginbotham (5,970 feet) is less than half a mile

from Hotham Heights, and it marks the start of the 'Varsity Drag course, the scene of the downhill race in the first truly national ski championship. The 'Varsity Drag course is so named because it was discovered, in the real sense of the word, by members of the Melbourne University Ski Club and "Begg's Bath" marks the spot where one undergraduate left the snow and plunged into some icy water. The course involves a descent of 1,200 feet, and no competitor in the Australian Championships in 1932 escaped with fewer than two falls, all coming to grief at Begg's Bath, which, by then, had a wider bridge.

A pleasant morning or afternoon trip is to Mount Loch (6,144 feet), two miles away. There are some good runs off the summit, as well as two delightful stretches near the saddle on both sides. Hotham Heights has sometimes been called "The Gateway to the Bogong High Plains," and the title is not unjustified. Many pleasant trips to points on the Bogong High Plains have started from Hotham Heights, and, by making an early start, Cope Hut, near the centre of the High Plains, can be reached in a day.

The jumping hill used in the national championships in 1932 was not satisfactory, in that it lacked a safe run-out, and, until a better site for a jump is found, competitors will have to prepare for a sudden and intentional fall soon after landing. Good courses for long-distance races can be found in the direction of Omeo and pleasant "ski-strolls" for novices can also be found to places with enticing names such as Whisky Flat and Dinner Plain. As proof of the long snow season at Hotham, it may be pointed out that ski races are held there during the first week in November each year, on a section known as Australia Drift.

Other Points.—The fireplace at Hotham Heights is one of the widest in the State and a semi-circle of skiers exchanging lies and alibis around it is one of the most pleasant sights one can witness on a winter's night.

St. Bernard's Hospice.

Height.—The Hospice is 4,900 feet and the mountain, from which it takes its name, 5,060 feet above sea level.

How to Get There.—By rail to Bright (196 miles), and thence by service car to Harrietville and the snow-line. It is usually possible to get within six miles of the Hospice by car, and even in mid-winter it is frequently possible to get right through to the Hospice on horseback. It is possible to reach the Hospice in one day from Melbourne by car, but unless the snow is light, it is not advisable to go past Harrietville if the morning train to Bright is taken, as it does not arrive there until 4.35 p.m., and it would be impossible to reach the snow-line by car before dusk.

Tariff.—The Hospice accommodates 16 persons and the charge is 12/- a day.

Ski-ing Possibilities.—St. Bernard is more independent of the weather than other centres in that one can get out of the

weather by choosing slopes on the sheltered side, so that if a blizzard is blowing from the north (as blizzards usually do), all you have to do is to go to the southern slopes and you can ski in comparative comfort. It means fewer wasted days, sitting by the fireside and waiting for the weather to improve. St. Bernard has not yet got a first-class ski-racing course, although such slopes can be found. It caters more for the person who is looking for a comfortable holiday without the agonies that tourers and racers regard as essential to an enjoyable vacation.

One of the greatest charms of St. Bernard is the variety of tours which may be made from the Hospice. The Twins (5,582 feet) and Rene's Lookout (5,350 feet) are two spots for day tours, as well as the mountains along the route to Mount Hotham. There is also great scope for exploratory tours on the Dargo side. Several sheltered runs retain the snow until late in the season, and so provide good ski-ing at times when mountains of a similar altitude are almost bare.

Other Points.—St. Bernard's Hospice has the most romantic history of Victorian snow resorts. An accommodation house was established there in the early sixties, when there was a great deal of gold mining at Dargo, Grant and Crooked River, and all the provisions were packed in from Harrietville. Attempts have been made, without success, to obtain liquor licenses for other snow resorts, but the Hospice is still unique among Victorian resorts in possessing a license and is second only to the Hotel Kosciusko for the title of the highest hotel in Australia. Bookings should be made direct with the proprietor, Mr. B. J. Rush, St. Bernard's Hospice, via Harrietville.

Mount Buller.

Height.—Here, again, estimates of the height of Mount Buller vary. Although usually regarded as being more than 6,000 feet above sea level, two other observations have resulted in its summit being measured at 5,995 and 5,934 feet above sea level. The Chalet, conducted by Mr. Helmut Kofler, is 4,800 feet above sea level, but two huts, one belonging to the Chalet and the other to the Ski Club of Victoria, are within a quarter of a mile of the summit.

How to Get There.—By rail or service car to Mansfield, thence by service car to Merrijig. A road is being constructed to reduce the packhorse journey to less than the eight miles it is at present. There are three car routes to Mansfield—along Sydney Road to Tallarook and then via Yea; through Healesville and over the Blacks' Spur to Alexandra and Yarck; and through Yarra Glen over Mount Slide to Yea. The Tallarook route is the shortest, being 147 miles to Merrijig. The others are 154 miles, but provide more attractive scenery.

Service cars leave 268 Flinders Street daily at 8.30 a.m. The single fare to Mansfield is 17/6 and arrangements can be made for transport to Merrijig. Packhorses may be hired for 10/- for the journey to the S.C.V. hut or to the Chalet.

Tariff.—The Chalet has accommodation for more than 30

persons, and the tariff is 16/- a day or £5/12/- a week. The S.C.V. hut will hold 12 persons.

Ski-ing Possibilities.—Three Victorian championships, including the first, have been held on Buller, and Mr. W. Bankes Amery wrote of it: "In some respects, however, Mount Buller is in my opinion destined to become the greatest isolated ski-ing mountain in Victoria. A descent of nearly 1,500 feet on comparatively easy gradients can readily be found. The scrub is very sparse and there appeared to me to be no limit to the enjoyable tours which could be made. When I was there, notwithstanding the fact that the weather was as bad as it could be, the snow was in perfect condition. There were abundant slopes without an obstacle of any description, and this is most important to beginners. . . ."

It has one of the two first-class downhill courses in Victoria and possesses the best jumping hill. Excellent slaloms have been set on the side of Buller, but a course for a long-distance race is not so easy to find. The two miles run from the summit to the Chalet carries a trophy for the fastest time each year and is an interesting run. There is a steep short cut, but the regular route gives some fine open running at first and later involves some timber-running down a cleared track. Opportunities for touring are strictly limited. A one-day tour to Mount Stirling may be made, but there is little open running and a good deal of climbing over fallen timber. See the S.C.V. *Year Book*, 1934.

Other Points.—The ride on packhorse to the Chalet is along the banks of the Delatite River, through fern gullies and towering gum trees. There is some excellent trout fishing in the Delatite for skiers who get tired of ski-ing. [What about the trout season, though?—Editor.]

By reason of its isolation, Buller commands fine views of many of the surrounding mountains, including Cobbler, Howitt and Buffalo. Expert ski-ing tuition may be had from Mr. Helmut Kofler, and those who have tasted them swear by Mrs. Kofler's vanilla kipels, a kind of biscuit which "melts in the mouth." Last, but not least, people who would be horrified at an invitation to play ludo in Melbourne find it one of the most thrilling games when played round the Chalet fireside. Bookings may be made through McGregor and Court, 430 Little Collins Street.

Mount Donna Buang.

Height.—The summit is 4,080 feet above sea level and even the foot of the ski runs on it would be little below the 4,000-foot mark.

How to Get There.—The crowd of 5,000 persons on Mount Donna Buang one Sunday last winter chose every possible method of transport, including train, bus, van, motor car, motor cycle, push bike and walk. Warburton is 47½ miles by rail and 50 by the road from Melbourne, and the ski runs on Mount Donna Buang are 10 or 11 miles above Warburton. The road

is good all the way, but care must be taken on the climb because, although there is always room for two motorists to pass, the many turns in the road and the occasional presence of road-hogs make caution advisable.

Tariff.—Although a toll gate might well be instituted, the road and the ski runs are free to everyone. With commendable, if unjustifiable, optimism, a collection box is taken to Donna Buang each Sunday in winter by enthusiasts and a few absent-minded people do slip in an odd copper or two. An effort should be made to convince skiers that a day spent on Donna Buang is incomplete without a contribution of at least 1/- to the club funds. Efforts made in this direction so far have met with little response. Fares vary from occasional advertisements by owners of vans of uncertain vintage to take people to see the snow for 4/- to a fare of about 12/-, from which the turntable, half a mile below the summit, may be reached in comfort.

Ski-ing Possibilities.—Two runs, one 140 yards long, down which five skiers can race abreast, and one shorter but averaging 25 deg., a jumping hill on which jumps of 70 feet may be made, and a toboggan run which should be ready for use this winter, summarise the present facilities. Both the Ski Club of Victoria and the Melbourne University Ski Club plan erecting huts this winter to cater for members who wish to spend the week-end on the mountain, and it is certain that these huts will be well patronised, and, possibly, enlarged within a few years, when funds permit.

Thousands of Victorians who have never skied have watched members of the S.C.V. practising on the slopes of Donna Buang and this year, when conditions are favourable, they will be able to watch ski jumps of 60 feet. The landing ground flattens out a little, so that jumps of more than 60 feet are liable to jar the competitor, but, up to that distance, the hill is almost ideal. A timber in-run starts 10 feet above the ground, and novices can slide over until they gain confidence. There is also a slope for beginners on the Mount Boobialla side of the mountain, and classes will be held there this winter. The roads near the summit provide suitable courses for long-distance races and these will also be held.

Before many years have passed, ski jumping events on Donna Buang will probably attract thousands of spectators each Sunday and this mountain should act as a recruiting ground for the sport.

Lake Mountain.

The summit of Lake Mountain is 4,800 feet above sea level and there is a cleared ski run on it. Unfortunately, the site chosen is far from ideal, the snow getting too much sun, with the result that conditions are frequently poor. Slopes towards Mount Federation should repay investigation, but the shocking road from Marysville to the turn-off past Tommy's Bend and the improvements effected on Mount Donna Buang have pushed Lake Mountain out of the picture for the present.

Mount Bogong.

This can hardly be dignified by the title of a resort yet. Those interested should read the article by Mr. C. Cole in this book and by Mr. W. Bertram in last year's issue.

Bogong High Plains.

A separate article would be needed to do justice to the Bogong High Plains, because they cover such a large area and provide so much scope for interesting tours, as well as racing courses, with descents of 1,000 feet and more.

The two principal methods of approach are from Mount Hotham towards Mount Loch, and then down to the Cobungra River and from Glen Wills on the Mitta Highway, an easier route, in that it is possible to take horses almost to some of the huts. There are eight huts on the Bogong High Plains and five others on the approaches to the Plains. The Ski Club of Victoria was responsible for the erection of a hut near Mount Cope, with wide bunks for eight persons, running water (from a spring), and more home comforts than are to be found in other huts. The remainder were built chiefly by cattlemen, who occupy them while mustering cattle which roam at will over the High Plains during the summer. The average accommodation of these huts is less than six persons in comfort.

The altitude ranges from 5,000 to 6,000 feet, with Mount Nelse (or Nelson) the highest point (6,185 feet). This mountain would make a glorious site for a chalet, with its treeless runs and long descents. It is hoped to publish next year a separate article on the Bogong High Plains and Mount Bogong, but further information may be obtained from Mr. W. D. Bertram, 32 Dickens Street, Elwood, Victoria.



C. J. M. Cole.

Mt. Feathertop in Spring.