

The Building of a Snow Lodge

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A snow lodge is at present being built at Hotham by the Alpine Club, Melbourne. This, taken with plans for similar projects there announced by the Edelweiss Club and the University Ski Club (and rumours of others) suggests that Hotham has stepped out in front of the field in the race to become Victoria's first ski village.

The site is near the Davenport Dive on Mt. Higginbotham, just below the road; permissive occupancy was granted by the Lands Department in July, 1945.

This snow lodge was planned by the club's architect, Malcolm M. McColl, B. Arch. A.R.A.I.A., to hold about 14 people at a cost of £900. As the site is located at the top of a steep shoulder jutting out into a vast amphitheatre, careful orientation of the living room was necessary to get maximum sun and retain a view of the panorama of the Swindler's Creek spurs through the landscape-windows; provision has been made for a future terrace, to flank the two sunny walls of the living room.

There is good ski-ing to be had straight down from the front door into the Davenport, and the continuation of the shoulder below the lodge has distinct possibilities after some clearing. There is an ample water supply from a spring giving 27-ft. head to the lodge, and plenty of dead snowgum within reach for firewood. If the Omeo road is one day kept open in winter, as a result of a greater ski population at Hotham, access to

the A.C. Lodge will be reduced to a business proposition.

The walls of the ground floor are of attractive local stone, and the upper storey is of timber sheeted with fibro-cement; the roof slopes at a very shallow angle and is provided with a heavy snowguard near the edge to keep snow on, for the threefold objectives of warmth, preventing the building-up of fallen snow against the windows, and retaining the best possible photogenic qualities in winter. Similar care has been exercised with the guttering, which can be cleaned easily of mud-deposits, cannot be blocked by snow, and prevents water dripping off the edge of the roof without preventing the formation of (to the photographers) highly desirable icicles.

Though the site is very well protected from weather, the rooms have been laid out to provide a series of airlocks for retaining warmth, and also for isolating any obnoxious odours from the sewerage system. Entering, one passes through the ski-room, acting as the first air-lock; racks are provided for storing ski, stocks and skins and on the opposite wall there is a long narrow work-bench beneath the window with toolboards above on either side. Wood is stored at the end of this room, by the door where it can be handled with a minimum of effort.

From the ski-room a locker passage leads past the showers and drying-room to the living-room; this is the second airlock from

the entrance and also serves as a lock for the W.C. which is in a small room at the opposite end of the passage to the door of the living room. Two showers are provided and a small washbasin, in the downstairs ablutions. To obtain a fast rate of progress at periods of peak traffic, shaving has been banned in this area, and will be performed (if at all) at the two basins provided in the bunk rooms upstairs. The two showers can be used together from the one dressing-area, or they can be separated by closing a door between them, in which case entrance to the drying room provides the necessary second dressing-area.

The drying room is heated by an oil-fired stove which has ample heat capacity and also copes with the supply of hot water for the showers, kitchen and upstairs basins—an auxiliary supply of hot water comes from the kitchen stove, also oil-fired. The kitchen is a long room, with 24 feet of bench space and fitted with ample cupboards and drying racks; the stove backs on to the fireplace of the living room, which is entered through a buffet-servery with double sided cupboards opening both into the living room and the kitchen; a capacious storeroom opens off the far end of the kitchen. The living room has the fire place on the longer of the two inside walls, so that all heat is retained in the building; the stairs ascend from the corner by the entry from the passage, to the bunk-rooms on the upper floor. The bunks have been arranged so as to give added support to the roof and an ingenious use of curtains allows the division of the sleeping space into rooms for two, four or six people; this was necessary to provide privacy for household staff if employed, and also to allow flexibility in accommodating families and later perhaps the junior members. The design of the flooring for the bedroom will allow the piercing of the walls later to erect a small cantilevered balcony outside the bedroom windows and overlooking the terrace below.

The fireplace in the living room received special care in design; no cooking will be done here, and the chimney has a flue entirely separate from the flue of the kitchen stove and the stove ventilator—all flues are carried through the roof in the one structure—this separation of flues being essential to avoid smoking problems.

Windows, except the large fixed ones of the living room, are the ordinary double-

hung type, though special care has been taken to preserve an air seal by devices in the frames. All windows are protected against snow and fire when the lodge is unoccupied by metal shutters, which have gaily-coloured insides to add to the general exterior decoration when the lodge is open.

The basic plan has been to provide a logical progression of actions through the lodge; one enters through the ski-room, parking ski and skins before going to the locker passage where rucksack is placed in a locker and dry clothes and footgear obtained. Wet clothes are peeled off in the drying-room before having a hot shower, after which the living portion of the lodge is entered. Small tables with gay patterns on their clothes are set at one end of the living room where the members can admire their prospective schusses, through the large windows alongside, while enjoying their meals.

As can easily be imagined, the final plan was not achieved without a great deal of preliminary effort. The architect, who had made a special study of ski cabin and chalet design whilst on the Continent before the war and has two very successful ski cabins in Victoria to his credit already, laboured under great difficulties whilst on Air Force duties at Darwin.

The war did not make the preparation of plans any easier; at one stage the A.C.'s committee was conducting correspondence with McColl in Darwin and other members in Morotai and America, and to cap it all, a stonemason far from Melbourne in the Ovens Valley. Much research was required into problems new to hut-construction—the effects of water freezing in the pan of the water closet (it burst) and also the cistern (a hush-flush eliminated the latter), the most economical form of hot water system both in cost and in labour supplying the fuel, the placing of personal lockers in relation to the conflicting demands of washing, drying and dressing operations—and many others. Still, we had a lot of fun solving them and in making the thing go, and in case anyone is interested, we did not have any great bother in getting permissive occupancy for our club-site from the Lands Department of Victoria. In fact we found them very interested, and their whole attitude was most helpful and co-operative.