



Old Betts Camp 1906, postcard, KHA collection held at National Library of Australia

## **Tourists on the Summit 1875 - 1914**

### **Betts Camp, the Lakes' Shelters and the Kosciuszko Road**

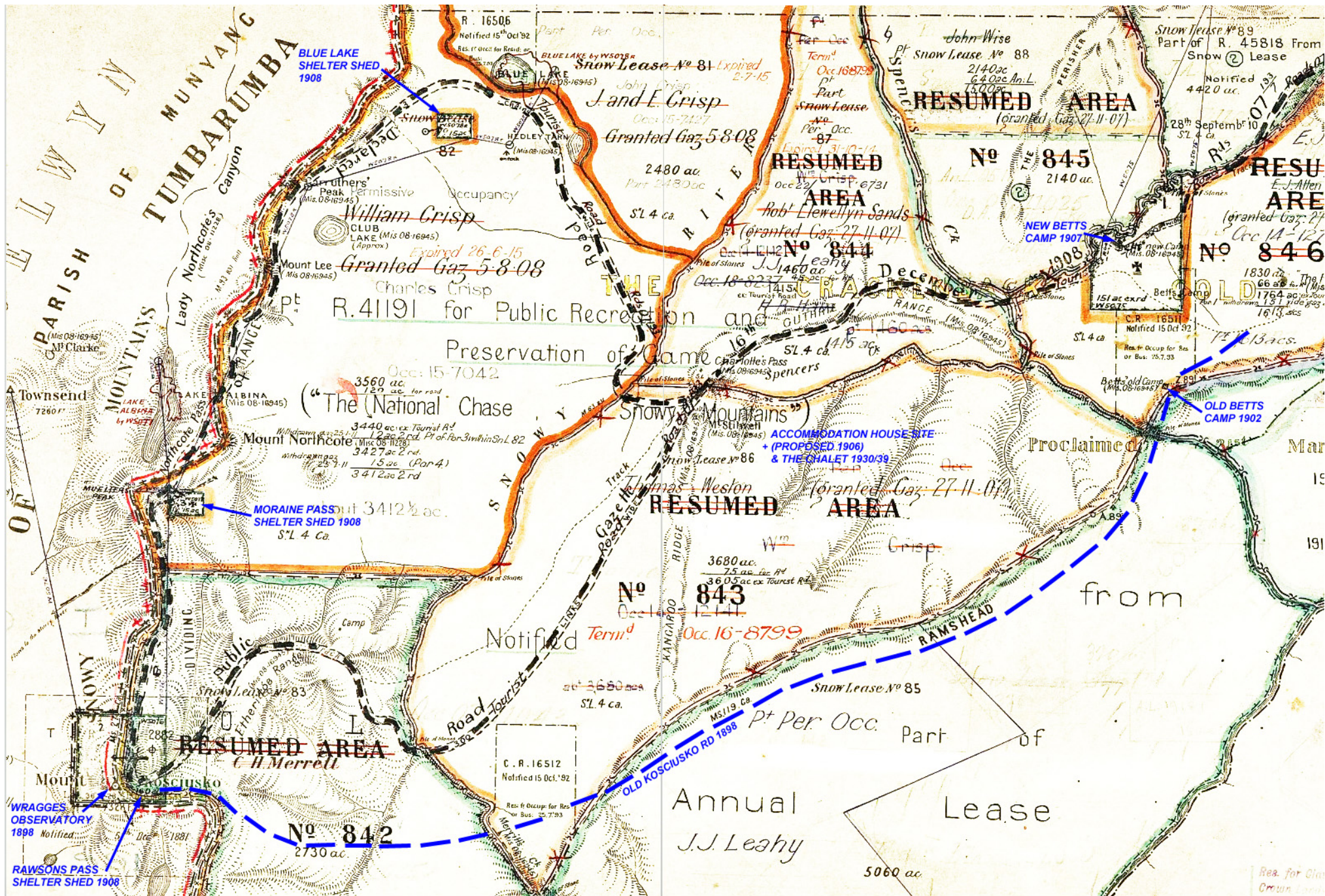
**David Scott, July 2011 (rev Aug 2013)**  
**For the Kosciuszko Huts Association**

Acknowledging the web-based research resources provided by the National Library of Australia including *Trove* & *Picture Australia* and the NSW Dept of Land & Property Information's online Parish & Pastoral Maps

**Article #1 of 3 on the history of the summit area within the Kosciuszko NP**







Tourist Accommodation & Shelters in the Summit Area - locations overlain on Parish of Kosciusko Map 1898-23 (NSW DLPI)



# Tourists on the Summit 1875 - 1914

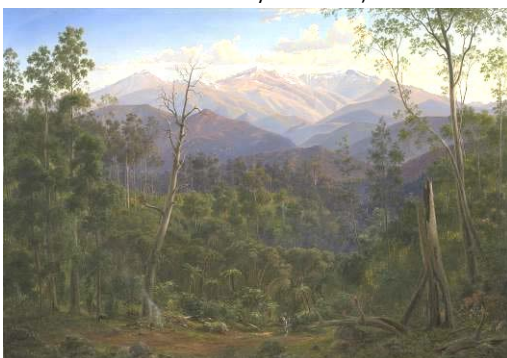
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## Introduction

The name *Betts Camp* applies to two hut sites located in the valley of Spencers Creek between Perisher Gap and Charlottes Pass. *Betts* is synonymous with the development of skiing in NSW and the *summit record* – the challenge of skiing 50km from the Hotel Kosciusko (at the site of the present Lakeside Inn) to the top of Mt Kosciuszko and back in the shortest time.



Art that inspired visitation: Eugene von Guérard's 'North-east view from the northern top of Mount Kosciusko' 1863 above and 'Mount Kosciusko, seen from the Victorian Border (Mt Hope Ranges)' 1866 below (© National Gallery of Australia & National Gallery of Victoria)



Both Betts Camp huts were built by the Government Tourist Bureau in the first decade of the 1900s, and for one purpose — to get tourists to the summit. Predominantly through articles from the period, the following pages describe tourism and the development of roads and facilities on the main range in the period up to the completion of the Hotel Kosciusko and the shift of tourism toward winter recreation.

Recreational interest in ascending the highest point in Australia surfaced in the late C19th, fed by romanticised reports of exploration and scientific endeavour. Popular art was influential, with Eugene von Guérard publishing a set of colour lithographs including views of Mt Kosciuszko in 1870.

Possibly of greatest influence were prominent Monaro settlers, including David Ryrie MHA, who were advocating for regional development. Most summit visitors of the late C19th were guided by the owners or managers of pastoral stations.

Many early visitors ascended Mt Townsend instead of Mt Kosciuszko, as there was uncertainty as to which peak was Kosciuszko. The confusion was fuelled by published imagery, such as von Guérard's 'North-east view . . .' — actually the view from Townsend, and repeated illustrations of a large stone cairn 'at the summit' — depicting the cairn erected by a Victorian survey team atop Townsend.

## 'Diary of a Trip to Kosciusko in 1875'

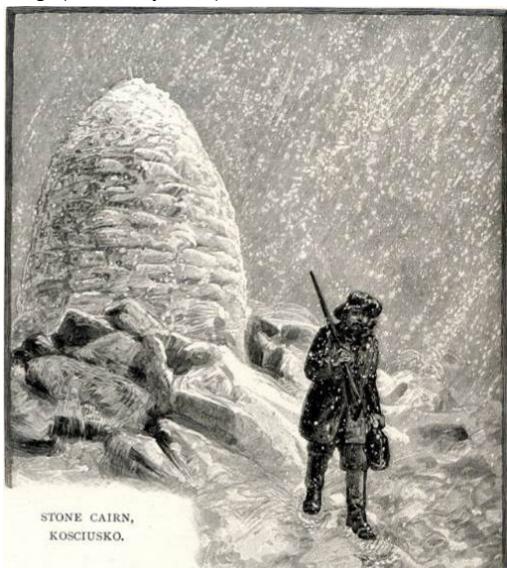
One of the first recorded trips to the summit occurred in 1875, when a party that included Laurence Stephenson, Willie Wilkinson, Lewis Whitfield, G Boyce Allen and "a man named Jim Scully, who had been on the mountains with cattle six years before", set off from Kalkite station on the bank of the Eucumbene River, now under the northern end of Lake Jindabyne.

*"Thursday 7th January. Started on horseback 7:20. Crossed Snowy River about 8. Halted about 9 on hills about 900 feet above river for breakfast. Started again at 11:15, wet through by misty rain. Passed first snow patch about 5,700 feet. Could see what we believed to be Kosciusko nearly covered with snow. Reached camping place about 4:30 — a long, grassy slope about 20 miles from Kalkite and about 5,900 feet above sea. Collected wood for big fire, around which we slept . . . Thick mist came up about 8 pm. Hobbled our horses and let them graze.*

*"Friday 8th January. Up before 5. Had some breakfast, and at 6:30 started on foot in direction of summit. No track to guide us, so had rough going und ascended and descended a succession of ridges covered with scrub in which we got wet through — so wet that when we came to one stream at bottom of a gully we walked through it as we were. The top of Kosciusko was only about 1,400 feet above our camp, but the distance was about six miles . . . and we must have climbed several thousand feet. About 11 we got on to a long and narrow ridge, which Scully*



C19th images of 'the summit cairn'— but more likely to be on Mt Townsend than Mt Kosciusko. An 1872 image above (journal published by Syme & Co) and an 1886 image (unknown journal)



said was the summit, but through the clouds we could see a rocky peak, evidently higher and apparently precipitous. To get on to it we had to descend a steep grassy slope into a gully with a lake at the bottom, and then climb a rough, cone-shaped hill about 800 feet above the lake.

“Got to the top about 12:40, after six hours' hard work. On the summit there is an enormous pile of bare rocks about 40 or 50 feet in height, and on top of the rocks a round cone of stones, built by some surveyor. The river Murray was distinctly visible on west side. The mountains and gullies on the Victorian side were pretty clear, but the whole of the low country of N.S.W. was hidden by clouds. We were very cold and hungry, and had nothing to eat but a little damper which we carried in our pockets. No wood was obtainable for a fire to make tea.

“Found our way back to camp by an easier route, keeping more to the south. The only difficult bit was a very steep slope of hard snow, which we could only descend by lying on our backs and making footholds with our heels. A very thick mist rolled up after we got back to camp and it was cold, 44°F, but we were all tired out and slept well.

“Saturday 9th January. Fortunately mist cleared off and we rode back to Kalkite. Old Mr Ryrie told us he did not know of anyone who had been on the rocky peak or beyond the ridge which Scully said was the summit.

“(The route described in the diary is hard to follow . . . and it would appear that the party eventually climbed Townsend. The ‘easier route’ back to camp may well be over Charlotte's Pass. ‘Old Mr Ryrie’ probably refers to Mr Stewart Ryrie, the remnants of whose homestead may be seen near the hut on Snowy Plains. Ed ASYB.)”<sup>1</sup>

### **A Northern Route via Snowy Plain 1880s - 90s**

One of the most notable published articles is that of an 1885 trip by a gentleman of some acquaintance, who caught a steamer from Sydney to Eden and thence rode up to the Monaro. “Close to Maffra we met our friend, who owns the station, and we were rejoiced to find that a telegram which we had sent from Eden had proved sufficiently tempting to induce him to accompany us the rest of the way. The next morning our party was recruited by a fourth, a gentleman who had had considerable experience among the very mountains which we wished to explore . . . [and] we started for Bobundara . . . an hour's

cricket practice with our hosts, who were about to play in a few days in the Candelo team of twenty two against the English Eleven. . . As the sun went down we left the peaceful homestead to its normal state of quietude, and made tracks for Coolringdon.

The following day “we started again with an addition to our party of a pack-horse, laden with rugs and provisions, for the two nights' camping out on the Snowy Ranges, which would be necessary, if we were to reach the summit of Mount Kosciusko . . . and after crossing the Rocky Plains came to the Eucumbene River, muddy and turbid from the goldwashing operations 20 miles further up at Kiandra . . . climbed the Nimmo Ranges by a good buggy track, after the ascent of which we found ourselves once more in a tract of level country, a plateau called the

<sup>1</sup> Allen, G Boyce 'Diary of a Trip To Kosciusko in 1875' reproduced in the Australian Ski Yearbook 1956



*Snowy Plains. . . We were most hospitably welcomed at the Chalet . . built as the homestead for a selection on the Calkeit [Kalkite] run . . .*

*“Next morning . . we crossed the Gungarlin . . to the Burrungubbut [sic] Creek . . traversing the neighbourhood of Valentine's Swamp . . crossing the head of White's River . . Every time we rose on the ascent, Kosciusko, with its rugged peak, rose grandly before us . . but ridge after ridge of the long Muniong Range we put behind us only to find our goal still over the next.*

*“The place we selected for our camp was a small clump of trees half-way down the side of a long valley or ravine . . soon lit a blazing fire, and did ample justice to our evening meal of cold meat, bread, and various other delicacies, which we washed down with fragrant ‘pints’ of billy tea . . It was not long before we were comfortably curled up in our wallaby rugs, with our saddles for pillows, and sleeping soundly . . .*

*“The next morning . . [following] a hunt after the horses which had strayed some distance in spite of their hobbles . . Before 7 . . we were once more in the saddle . . [after some distance] we were for the first time actually stopped by snow, which had drifted under the shelter of the ridge, and hardened to the consistency of ice. . . In the next dip we sighted a mob of wild horses, scrubbers as they are called. . . Below us was a dark sombre looking lake of the deepest blue . . Over another flint-strewn saddle . . we descended the last valley that separated us from the summit of the range. Half-way down we left our horses to feed on the long waving grass . . descended the valley on foot . . crossing the head of another tarn, we commenced the final ascent at the steep side of the mountain . . the last 10 minutes over huge boulders, piled up as if by the hands of giants, we reached the cairn which marks the summit of Mount Kosciusko . . about 10 feet high, built up roughly, but not without symmetry, of smaller boulders laid flatwise. There we found in a bottle the names of several persons who made the ascent last summer.*

*“The day, which had threatened early in the morning to be dull, turned out cloudless and clear, and the recent rain had put out the bush fires, which would even on a day with a clear sky do much to obscure the view. . . Looking north . . our view was bounded by the lofty peak known as the Big Bogong . . To the south, across an intervening valley, rose a nameless round-topped peak [Mt Kosciuszko], three miles to the south of which is the aforesaid Ram's Head.*

*“At noon we began the descent, noticing on our way down over the boulders the Hanging Rock, an enormous wedge-shaped boulder perched on two huge upright ones, forming an archway*



Hanging rock formation that remains a feature of Mt Townsend to this day (Denis Evans 2010, website)

*through which a four-in-hand might be driven. In less than half an hour we had regained the valley where we had left our horses . . and the wind, which was blowing freshly when we were at the top, had increased to quite a gale . . with such terrific force as to lift the horses off their feet . . We reached the camp about 4.30, and found that with the change of wind the place was very bleak and cold . . We decided to make for a sheltered spot on Finn's River, some miles nearer home . . struck our camp . . keeping as much as possible to the lower ground and descending several valleys, which were very steep and precipitous . . reached Finn's River about 7.30, and had not much trouble in finding a suitable clump of tress, near which we soon had a good fire.*

*“In the morning we woke to find the ground covered with white frost, from which, however, our wallaby rugs prevented our feeling any unpleasant effects . . a thick white fog obscured everything, and we could only see a few yards before us . . reached Calkeit about noon”<sup>2</sup>*

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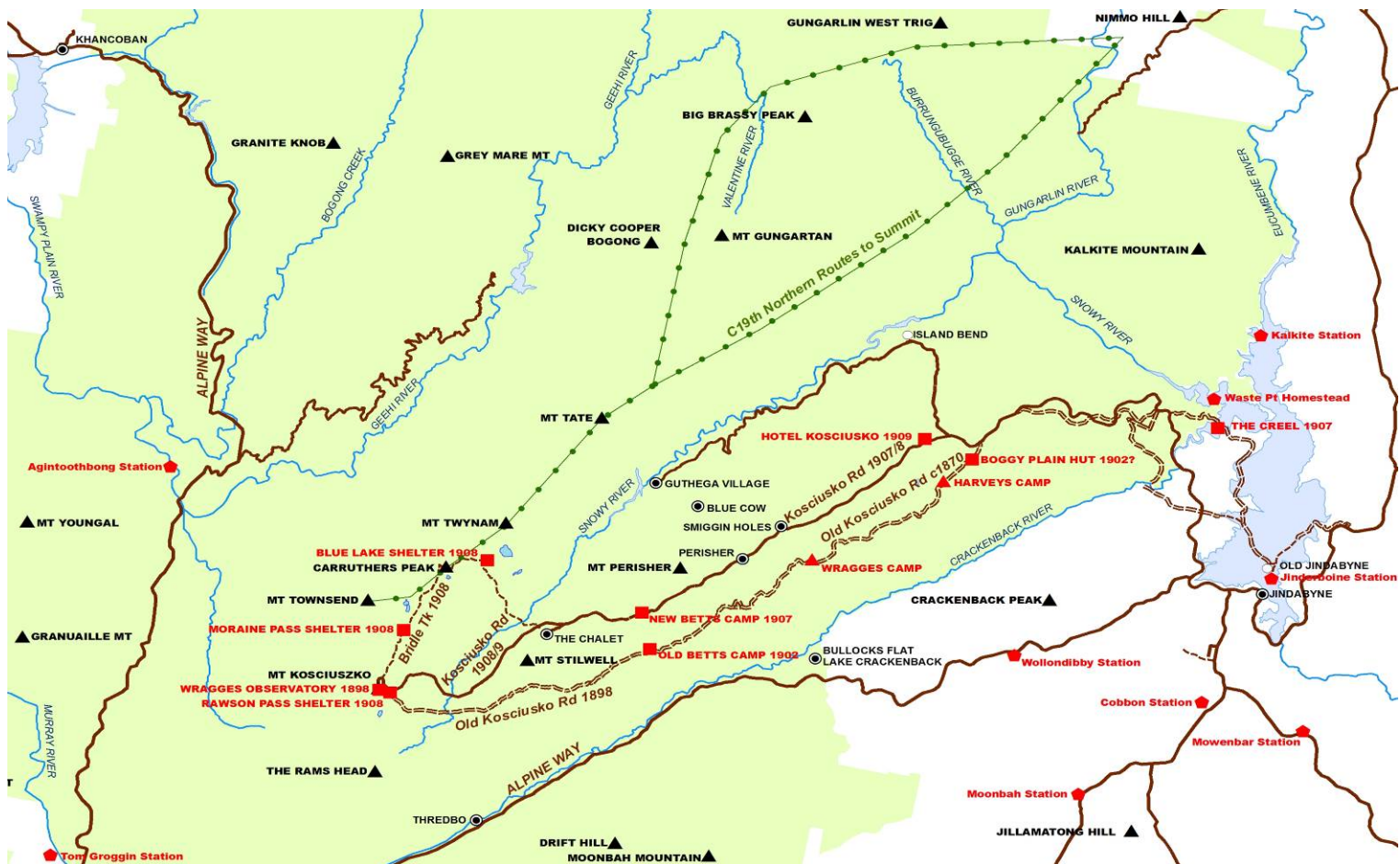
<sup>2</sup> SMH 3 Feb 1885



Another trip via the northern route was published in 1897. This author had travelled via the new railway line and the *Southern Mail* train to Cooma, visiting Kiandra and Yarrangobilly Caves prior to proceeding with the owner of Maffra.

*“We set off in the afternoon in a stoutly-built buggy with a pair of strong horses, and almost immediately we began to ascend . . . the country got wilder and the hills steeper . . . at the top of a hill . . . I was somewhat astonished to see my host jump down and chop vigorously at some fairly large saplings on the roadside, and then proceed to fasten them on the back of the buggy as a drag. This precaution I soon found to be necessary as the slope was very steep, and no ordinary brakes could prevent a heavy vehicle from descending in a manner too hurried to be pleasant . . . [after some time] we came once more to rolling country, which I was informed was the Snowy Plain, and our destination for the night.*

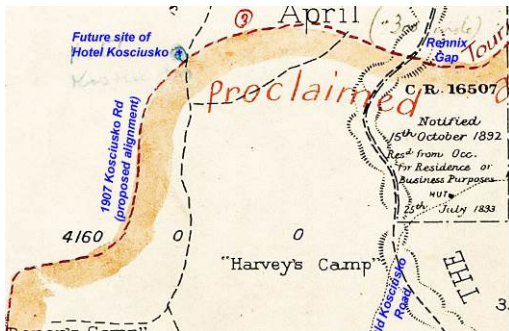
*“The next morning saw us mounted on horseback with our luggage for the next few days strapped in front of us, and consisting mainly of a plentiful supply of rugs and blankets. . . it was not very long before I made acquaintance with the famous mountain bogs . . . After crossing a pretty little plain we arrived at a cattle camp, and I had an opportunity of seeing how the mountain men live . . . [the area is] rolling country, well-grassed and interspersed with streams with hills of no great height dotted over it. On this are depastured large flocks and herds which have been brought up from the plains for the summer months, and as there are no fences a large number of men are needed to shepherd the stock. Consequently at intervals one comes across camps, in each of which about half a dozen men live for the five months during which the mountains are accessible. These camps generally consist of two or three good tents surrounded by a palisade of bushes. Add to these a roughly built fireplace with a few round ovens as its accessories and the camp is complete.*



**Early Tourist Facilities and Routes to the Summit (D Scott 2011)**



Crown Reserves along the Old Kosciuszko Road as shown on 1898 parish maps. It is likely these locations had been used as camps long before their gazettal in 1892. (NSW DLPI website)



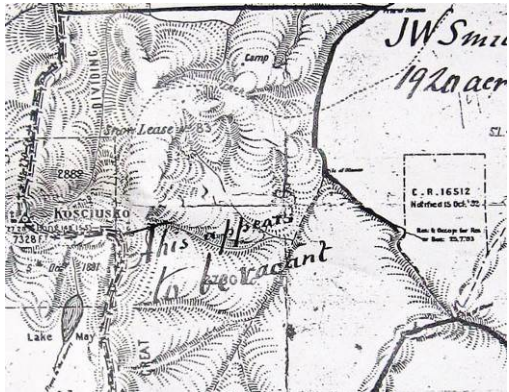
Bogy Plain reserve with hut CR16057



Wragges Camp reserve on Wragges Creek CR28051



Betts Camp Reserve CR16511



Snowy headwaters/Kangaroo Ridge reserve CR16512

"The track now led over the worst bit of country . . . For miles there was scarcely a sound piece of ground underfoot, and on all sides bleak hills, with their usual covering of granite boulders. Late in the evening, after seven hours in the saddle for a 19-mile journey, we arrived at our halting-place — a camp of 'sheep men', pitched in a pretty wooded gully, at the base of a peak called Dickey Cooper's Bogong. Here we were made welcome, and a tent with a comfortable bunk was set apart for the use of the two travellers. The evening air was keen, so we enjoyed lying about a roaring fire while we smoked and yarned with the half-dozen occupants of the camp . . .

"At 7 o'clock in the morning we were again in the saddle . . . at midday we stood on the highest point in the continent . . . Turn whichever way we would, before us lay a never-ending vista of hills . . . for an hour more we sat gazing on the wondrous view, or more prosaically taking it by means of a 'Kodak'.

"We had to push on if we wished to avoid a ride in the dark, and evening was just drawing in when we came to our resting-place, welcome indeed after the long day of just twelve hours, eight of which we had spent in the saddle . . . To reach the Snowy Plains again the next day we took an easier track . . . and we loafed along in the most casual fashion, stopping for a yarn and a 'dish of tay' at least half a dozen times, in fact whenever a stockman's camp or a digger's hut presented itself. 'Merry' indeed we found it 'To blow the cool tobacco cloud, and watch the white wreaths pass, sitting loosely in our saddles all the while' . . ."<sup>3</sup>

### A Road to Kosciuszko and a Camp at Betts' 1880s

A bridle or dray track from Waste Point up to the locale of Betts Camp is likely to have been in existence by 1871. At this time, James Spencer held the *Excelsior Run* and would have moved stock from his homestead run at Waste Point to and from the main range.<sup>4</sup>

From later maps it is apparent the track from Waste Point converged at Sawpit Creek with another track from Collins Homestead (near the Gaden Trout Hatchery)<sup>5</sup>. The Collins' track was the most direct route from Jindabyne up the range and remained in use as a foot/ bridle track well into the C20th. Beyond Sawpit Creek the original track followed a similar alignment to the present Kosciuszko Road past Wilsons Valley and up to Bogy Plain, below Rennix Gap, where it departed the alignment of the current road to follow the crest of the Rams Head Range past Pretty Point and Porcupine Ridge to a low saddle in the Range just north of the Mt Stilwell. Here, in the eastern lee of a lightly wooded knoll, was the original site of Betts Camp.

A bridle track and/or stock route may have continued from here to Tom Groggin station via the south side of Mt Stilwell, Merritts lookout and Dead Horse Gap (where it joined a track from Wollondibby), but there is no record of a track to the summit at this time.

<sup>3</sup> SMH 27 Mar 1897  
<sup>4</sup> NSW Gazette 1871  
<sup>5</sup> Kosciuszko and Surrounding Districts map, Lands Dept 1909



Betts Camp was named after Arthur Charles Betts, the Lands Dept District Surveyor for the Monaro 1875-87, who visited the summit area on several occasions during the 1880s. The Camp likely acquired its name in February 1881, when Betts, with Surveyor-General Philip Adams and his daughter Charlotte (whom Charlotte's Pass is named after), and guided by James Spencer, visited and camped on the summit. The name Betts Camp was certainly in use by 1885 when Robert von Lendenfeld passed through enroute for Mt Kosciuszko accompanied by Betts, James M Spencer and others.<sup>6</sup>



Wragges Camp.  
C.H. Kerry / Powerhouse Museum

Wragges Camp 1897 (Charles Kerry collection, Powerhouse Museum)



Fireplace believed to mark the site of Wragges Camp  
(C Doubleday 2010)



Wragges Observatory Tent 1897 (G Scully, flickr)



Wragges Observatory 1899 (NLA)

Betts Camp had likely been in use as a stockmen's camp for many years prior to its receiving this name. It was a logical staging point, offering shelter, firewood and water just below the exposed grasslands of the summit area. A 1902 record describes Betts Camp as including sheepfolds in which 3000 sheep are being harboured each night whilst being allowed to graze more widely during the daylight.<sup>7</sup>

By 1892 four crown reserves had been created along the original track, at Boggy Plain, Wragges Creek, Betts Camp and at the headwaters of the Snowy River. These were likely all created on pre-existing campsites used by stockmen. Interestingly, over the next few years the reservation status of all was modified to allow for "residential or business purposes",<sup>8</sup> suggesting the Lands Department had recognised the potential future need the track to be upgraded and the possibility of accommodation or public houses being erected at regular intervals.

By the late 1890s public interest in Mt Kosciuszko began to increase with the publication of Clement Wragge's proposal to establish a meteorological observatory on the summit. In December 1897, Wragge brought the men and materiel to establish the observatory in on a dray along the old track. They camped enroute at a site that would become known as 'Wragges Camp' although it was likely to have been a stockmen's camp for years beforehand. After camping the following night at Betts they travelled to Mt Kosciuszko. The track created by the dray, and reused over the next few years in building and supplying the Observatory, was in all probability the very first vehicular track between Betts Camp and the summit.

In the same month that the Observatory was established, the NSW Minister for Works committed funds to developing the road to the summit: *"Some time ago Mr Young was invited to make a stay at a station in the neighbourhood of Cooma and he intends to accept this invitation in February next. In view of the large number of tourists that are being attracted to Mount Kosciusko the Minister has decided that the road shall be materially improved, and has accordingly sanctioned the expenditure of £600 upon it. Of this sum £400 is to be expended on the portion of the road leading to Baker's Camp [Betts?] and the balance is to be expended on the road above that point."*<sup>9</sup>

Public interest is reflected in a Brisbane Courier report of the time "Mr Wragge has successfully established the observatory . . . the New

<sup>6</sup> SMH 18 Feb 1885

<sup>7</sup> SMH 11 Feb 1902

<sup>8</sup> Parish of Kosciusko map Ed 2 1898-1923

<sup>9</sup> SMH 22 December 1897



*South Wales Premier intends to visit Mount Kosciusko to see what can be done to make the place available as a summer holiday resort.*<sup>10</sup>

The Premier never made it, but Wragge became highly effective at working the media, partly with a view to promoting science and partly to securing long-term funding for the Observatory. The exploits of the observers became chronicled as romantic adventures complemented by the striking photography of Charles Kerry. The Observatory attracted a stream of visitors, including the Reverend JS Hassal in March 1898:

*“Tourists generally make Betts's Camp on the first day from Jindabyne. At this, spot we camped in a tent the two nights we were out, and in the mornings the ground was white with frost and water holes iced. Kosciusko is seven miles from this camp. We reached the summit of the mountain at 10am . . . went on along the same range to what is called the 'Blue Lake' . . . four miles took up over two hours, the road was so rough and mountainous, but the scenery along this route is very grand. From this lake we made back to our camp, but if ever I travelled a rough track this was one. There was no track really; it took us nearly two hours to go three miles, and the place we crossed the Snowy was enough to make one's hair turn gray.”*<sup>11</sup>

In February 1902 the NSW Minister for Works, Edward O'Sullivan visited Mt Kosciusko to investigate the possibility of providing rail or road access for public recreation. He was accompanied by a number of politicians and Charles Kerry, with Spencer as guide once again. They travelled up the (Old) Kosciusko Road and overnighted in the open at Betts Camp. The following day they reached the summit, the Minister in a horse drawn buggy and the others on horseback.

*“Nine hours from Jindabyne, the frontier settlement . . . the rapid traveller finds himself at Betts' Camp . . . encircled by a series of hills and mountains, two of which bear the ominous names of the Perisher and the Paralyser. After tea, and an impromptu concert, came an attempt at rest, broken by no less than four desperate attacks by dingoes or native dogs upon a sheepfold a few yards away. At 5am next day all were up and dressed, to partake of a frugal breakfast provided by the guides, who had prepared the open tents with their gum-leaf beds.*

*“Ascending a boulder strewn path . . . reached the summit of the mountain called the Ram's Head, 6600ft high. . . . After five miles of hard travelling in and out of all kinds of boulders and over several ridges we came to the end of the Ram's Head, and there lay Kosciusko before us!”*<sup>12</sup>

*“When the top of the mountain was reached the magnificent view was greatly appreciated by all. After being photographed the party gave three cheers for Mr O'Sullivan, the first Minister of the Crown to reach Mount Kosciusko. He then delivered a short address . . . By request he recited 'Advance Australia'. . . Some of the party visited the Observatory and other places, but the Minister returned to Jindabyne. A spell was made on the road at Bett's Camp for lunch. Throughout the road was bad and the experience rough still the Minister considers the trip well worth it.”*<sup>13</sup>

Upon his return O'Sullivan committed £1200 to improving the road from Jindabyne to the summit and constructing a hut at Betts Camp as an overnight shelter for tourists.<sup>14</sup>

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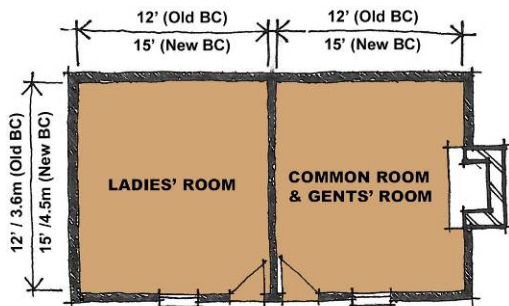
<sup>10</sup> Brisbane Courier 10 Dec 1897

<sup>11</sup> The Queenslander 2 Apr 1898

<sup>12</sup> SMH 26 Feb 1902

<sup>13</sup> SMH 11 Feb 1902

<sup>14</sup> SMH 6 Jan 1908



FLOORPLAN  
Old Betts Camp and New Betts Camp (initial construction)

## First Tourist Accommodation on the Main Range Old Betts Camp 1902

The hut at Betts Camp appears to have been constructed, and the road works commenced, prior to the winter of 1902, as report from an April states “Mr Wragge is pleased the Government has improved the road to the top of the mountain . . . [and] while pleased with the Government erecting a shelter shed at Bett’s Camp, he thinks another should be erected between there and Jindabyne.”<sup>15</sup>

In a retrospective article from 1908, O’Sullivan stated “Some five years ago I . . . erected two shelter sheds near Betts’ Camp for the accommodation of visitors to Mount Kosciusko.”<sup>16</sup> It is unclear whether he meant one two-roomed shelter shed (ie Betts) or a second hut was built. No second hut is ever recorded at Betts, however it is possible that a hut shown on maps within the stock reserve at Boggy Plain<sup>17</sup> may have been built as a shelter on the Old Kosciusko Road at the snowline, albeit could just as easily have been a stockmen’s hut.

It is likely that stockmen had huts on the main range during the C19th, particularly in the lower areas to the east, however the 1902 hut at Betts Camp is the first recorded hut in the summit area, indeed the first purpose-built tourist accommodation within the area of the Kosciuszko National Park south of Kiandra. Report of an earlier hut at Betts Camp appears to be based on a Charles Kerry photograph that was reproduced during the 1950s with the title ‘Old Betts Camp 1898’. This same photo was originally published in respect of a trip Kerry did to the Grey Mare mine in 1898, and appears to be a hut that was visited on that trip, which included the first ski ascent of Mt Jagungal.<sup>18</sup>

The Betts Camp hut was a weatherboard building with a corrugated iron roof. It comprised two rooms of approximate size 12’ x 12’ (3.6m), each having an external door and a window in the eastern wall. The northern room had a stone fireplace and was believed to initially served as the men’s’ quarters, and possibly the communal kitchen/dining area. The southern room was the ladies’ quarters.<sup>19</sup>

The 1902 roadworks appear to have focussed on improving the boggiest parts of the track as far as Betts Camp. Whilst there is extensive evidence of cuttings, stone embankments and raised causeways through boggy areas along the route between Rennix Gap and Betts<sup>20</sup>, the route between Betts and the summit is less evident and may never have been developed beyond a set of wheel tracks or bridle path. By the early 1900s, four campsites existed along the Old Kosciusko Road – the hut at Boggy Plain, Harvey’s Camp, Wragges Camp and the hut at Betts Camp.<sup>21</sup>



Old Betts Camp 1906 (KHA collection, NLA)



“McAllister’s Hut at Grey Mare”, Charles Kerry 1898 – erroneously republished as ‘Old Betts Camp 1898’ during the 1950s (SMA collection & Phelps Article 1898)



Rock wall along the Old Kosciusko Road  
(C Doubleday 2010)

<sup>15</sup> SMH 9 April and 10 April 1902

<sup>16</sup> SMH 6 Jan 1908

<sup>17</sup> Parish map, Parish of Mitchell Ed2 1898 and Ed3 1910

<sup>18</sup> Kerry, Charles photo reproduced in Snow Revelry articles as compiled in *George Petersen’s Kosciusko* 1993 and the article ‘*Mountaineering in the Alps*’ Phelps 1898

<sup>19</sup> SMH 3 March 1908

<sup>20</sup> Doubleday, Craig program of fieldwork 2007-10

<sup>21</sup> Parish maps (Mitchell, Guthega, Kosciusko (Wallace)





Kosciusko, painted by WC Piguénit 1903  
(© National Gallery of NSW)

The artist William Charles Piguénit appears to have passed through Betts Camp enroute to Kosciuszko during 1902-03 on commission to produce 'Mount Kosciuszko' for the National Art Gallery, and may well have been one of the first visitors to the new hut.<sup>22</sup>

By the mid-1900s the NSW Tourist Bureau was running 3-day guided horse trekking tours to Mt Kosciuszko, using the hut at Betts Camp as a base camp. "Kosciuszko, beautiful, fascinating, yet repellent . . . is the ultima thule of many tourists. From Jindabyne it is reached on horseback, alpine guides being obtainable for parties. The

Government shelter, called Bett's Camp, is the resting place for the first night, and the next day the summit of the mountain is reached. . . . It takes three clear days to 'do' Kosciuszko . . . the trip costing about £1 per day for guides, horses, and food. The rest of the week may be profitably spent on the [Snowy] river bank fishing, swimming, or hunting, according to taste".<sup>23</sup>

Whilst guests rode, their supplies were brought up to Betts by bullock dray. The tours were 'first class', however the dray couldn't always get through the bogs on the Old Road and the hut had very limited furnishing – "women sleep . . . on beds of gum leaves covered with a rug; while men camp in tents outside!"<sup>24</sup>

Series of photographs of tourist party trip to the summit during the 1900s, possibly the tour group of Mr Anderson, (State Library of NSW)



Departing Jindabyne,



At Wragges Observatory on the summit.



On the Lakes Walk bridle track near Moraine Pass.

In 1907, the Tourist Bureau published an 82 page tour guide 'Across the Alps in New South Wales', that featured a series of tours, including a 12 day First Class trip to Mt Kosciuszko for a party of six at £12 per head, travelling by train to Cooma and thence separate journeys to trek to the summit and Yarrangobilly Caves. For the horse trek to the summit via Betts Camp, James Spencer was in charge of guides and provided horses, meals and all equipment, the total cost of this leg of the tour was £3.<sup>25</sup>

During 1906-07, Mr Anderson, who had been appointed by the Premier Joseph Carruthers to develop tourism to Mt Kosciuszko, went on such a tour:

"Mr Anderson accompanied one of the much publicised Summer Camp Excursions to the summit. The new road was under construction, so the route taken was the old road along the Crackenback Range. Coaches conveyed the tourists from Cooma to Jindabyne where luncheon had been arranged, horses hired for the party and a bullock team engaged to carry the food, tents and camping equipment.

"The party included pressman Watkin Wynne, parliamentarian Sir Thomas Henley; about forty guests in all, astride and sidesaddle. The Tour prospectus said 'First Class throughout'. The luncheon at Jindabyne was corned beef, bread and tea. Mr Anderson asked the waitress why at least potatoes were not added. He was told forcefully, if he did not like it he could 'so and so' leave it. Observing the muscular forearm of the woman and for the sake of peace he did his best to like it.

"The riding party reached Old Betts' Camp fairly late. They had dawdled at many look-out points. The bullock wagon, it was learned

<sup>22</sup> SMH 17 Mar 1903

<sup>23</sup> SMH 10 Dec 1904

<sup>24</sup> SMH 30 Jan 1907

<sup>25</sup> Petersen, George Snow Revelry 1956 as reproduced in George Petersen's Kosciuszko 1993

later, still was hopelessly bogged miles back along the track. The women were accommodated on the floor in Old Betts' and the men settled on the grass outside. It was cold. Mr Anderson, after a look around, chose the lee of Sir Thomas Henley for shelter value and thus survived the miserable bivouac. He said Mr Wynne had a lot to say about the 'First Class throughout' portion of the advertisement."<sup>26</sup>

A number of notable visits to Old Betts Camp occurred in January 1907. The first was a visit by the NSW Premier Joseph Carruthers, who was inspecting progress of the new Kosciusko Road and the proposed sites to be developed for accommodation. *"The Premier . . . left Jindabyne on Thursday for a trip up Mount Kosciusko on horseback. He had a small party with him under the direction of guide MacLure of Jindabyne. They reached Betts's Camp that night and the next morning a round trip was made including the summit of the mountain, Mount Townsend, and the Blue Lake, then back to Betts's Camp. . . . The Premier expressed himself delighted . . . intends adding numerous improvements for the comfort of tourists.*

*"Mr HC Merrett of Dalgety accompanied the Premier, and at his suggestion a point on the range between Kosciusko and Blue Lake was christened Carruthers' Peak. This point was previously without a name [in fact it was known locally as 'the Saddleback']. A bottle of wine was broken on the boulder at the summit of the peak and the health of the Premier was drunk."<sup>27</sup>*

In the same month, a party of university students, led by the eminent geologist Professor Edgeworth David, came to Old Betts Camp via bullock dray along the Old Kosciusko Road to study glacial features on the main range:

*"After lunching at Pretty Point on January 19, our party started with the bullock waggon . . . in which all the equipment for our party of 27 was being conveyed . . . . The waggon was a weighty mass of tough wood, clamped with iron, with huge wheels provided with massive tyres. It was capable of holding four tons — our load, bulky rather than heavy, weighed about a ton and a quarter. The bullocks were a splendid team of 12. To judge by the frequency with which the driver [William White] referred to them by name, 'Leopard' and 'Redmond' were either the two who were working best, or working worst!*

*"We were now at the sharp bend, and to have attempted to pull the waggon straight around that sharp curve would have meant a certain capsizing. This was William White's hour. He ordered the students to clear away the snow-gums from the outer bend of the curve, back for about 20 yards from the edge of the track; tomahawks and axes, and 20 willing pairs of arms soon effected the required clearing, so that the bullocks might get a series of straight pulls along tangents to our semi-circular turn. Then White and his heavy nine-foot whip spoke together, Leopard and Redmond and their mates gave a long pull, a strong pull, and a pull all together, and the waggon was slewed around a little; then the bullocks were told to all go astern easy, which they did, the port hind-wheel being chocked from time to time with junks of rock, while the waggon slowly slid backwards, being thus made to swing round slightly to starboard, pivoting on the port hind wheel; then the starboard front wheel was chocked, and the hind wheel unchocked, and the bullocks went ahead dead slow; and once more the waggon was slewed slightly into position for rounding the sharp curve. This manoeuvre was repeated several times, the waggon swinging into position like a liner coming round into her berth at Circular Quay. Then all at once White clapped on full steam ahead, and the waggon took the curve beautifully amid great cheering. We felt after that lesson that there were many things worthy of being learned not taught at a University, and our driver, with his mild blue eyes, and well-tanned skin, telling of many years of hard, patient toil, was from henceforth honoured amongst us.*

---

<sup>26</sup> Lamble, HJ: 'Looking Back' Australian Ski Yearbook 1948

<sup>27</sup> SMH 21 Jan 1907



*“Once over Pretty Point we made rapid progress to Wragge's Camp, three miles beyond, where we stayed for the night . . .*

*“The following day all went well for a time, then the waggon became bogged and had to be unloaded; then it became bogged again up to the axles, and the bullocks became bogged too. . . . Altogether it bogged four times . . . . At last, in mounting the ‘Porcupine Ridge’, with its huge spines of granite, the waggon was run up fair and square against a 10ft high granite tor. For a whole hour we were stuck here on the steep, rocky mountain-side, sometimes backing, sometimes coming forward again, only to be dashed on the fatal rock once more. But White had still a manoeuvre up his sleeve. It was the starboard bow of the waggon that kept striking, and so, detaching his chain cable from amidships, he fastened it on to the starboard bow, and then ran it through the ring of the pole, and Leopard and his team, making a supreme effort, dragged the waggon safely past the rock . . . they fell into, a grand swing, which they kept up all the rest of the way to Betts' Camp. When White at length drew up his team in great style right opposite the door of the accommodation house the cheering broke out afresh with redoubled vigour; the ladies, who had arrived hours before the bullock team, and who were by this time in a somewhat famishing condition, joining in heartily . . . it took about 12 hours to travel the seven miles from Wragge's Camp to Betts' . . .*

*“It was almost a pathetic sight the next morning as we sat out at breakfast to see our bullocks come up two by two and lie down close to the waggon in their proper positions for being yoked up in case they should be wanted. ‘You see’, Bill explained, ‘they generally come up like that and wait about; then they go down to the creek for a drink, and come back again, and sometimes they keep on doing that for most of the day’. On this occasion the tired animals had three good days' absolute rest in front of them, with plenty of good feed and water, which they well deserved. The rest of our pilgrimage was to be made without the bullock waggon.*

*“On the morning of January 21 the whole university party of 27 left the accommodation house at Betts' Camp, and walked by way of Spencer's, Creek and Charlotte's Pass to the Snowy River and the Blue Lake, a distance of over five miles. . . . It is believed that our party of ladies are the first who have ever walked the whole distance from the Snowy Valley to the top of Kosciusko and back . . .”*



Old Betts Camp in a semi-derelict state (ASYB 1928)



Site of Old Betts Camp today (C Doubleday 2010)

The Government Tourist Bureau continued to run tours to Mt Kosciusko via Old Betts Camp up to the summer of 1906-07; *“The fourth Mount Kosciusko trip . . . will leave Sydney on the 21st inst, and return on the 27th, while those who wish the extension to Adaminaby, Kiandra, Yarrangobilly Caves, and Tumut, will return on the 3rd prox. The new accommodation house at the Snowy River [the Creel] will probably be ready for occupation by the first of next month, and improvements are being hurried on at Betts' Camp, which is being removed some three quarters of a mile further up the mountain, and the accommodation duplicated.”*<sup>28</sup> The last reference is to the construction of New Betts Camp.

From 1909 traffic along the Old Kosciusko Road appears to have been limited to horse-trekking parties on day outings from the Hotel Kosciusko, with Old Betts serving as a day and emergency shelter. Maintenance on Old Betts appears to have ceased. By 1905 the soft lime mortar had begun to fret away; leading to the collapse of the chimney in 1920. Old Betts became dilapidated and burnt down in a bushfire in 1927-28.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> SMH 15 Feb 1907

<sup>29</sup> Laidley, JWS; ASYB 1929, p113

## ***A New Road to Mt Kosciuszko 1906 - 07***

Recreational demand for summer access to the snowy mountains was growing. Many visitors were travelling up to Kiandra and Yarrangobilly Caves, in the comfort of a vehicle and staying in a hotel. The comparatively poor access, *“in places a bridle track . . . in places a practicable vehicle road”*<sup>30</sup>, the need to go on horseback and the limited visitor facilities were clearly a deterrent to attracting tourists southward to Jindabyne and Kosciuszko.

Early in 1906, the NSW Premier Joseph Carruthers directed that a new road be constructed to provide access to Kosciuszko at a cost of £26,000. The work would include a bridge over the Thredbo River at Waste Point, whilst separate funding would be provided for accommodation houses at the river crossing and up on the range.<sup>31</sup>

*“At last there is a promise of decisive action in the near future, and Mr Lee [NSW Minister for Works] hopes to have his proposed arrangements in full working order by next tourist season. An officer . . . has recently been inspecting the different routes to Kosciusko and . . . Mr Lee has decided to construct a road . . . via Jindabyne past Bell's Gap, and on to a point known as Charlotte Pass. This road will have a ruling grade of 1 in 14, and will be easy for motor cars or vehicles. At Charlotte Pass a properly-equipped accommodation house is to be erected. Thence a track 3ft wide, suitable for horses or bicycles, is to be made around the mountain and to the summit, coming back down the other side to Charlotte Pass. On this track the steepest pinch will be 1 in 7. It will take in such famous sights as Albina Lake, Arnott's [Harnett's or Club] Lake, and Blue Lake. From Jindabyne to Charlotte Pass is a nice run of 30 miles. Tourists may make the accommodation house a haven of refuge, and there await favourable weather conditions for a run to the summit. The distance from the accommodation house round Kosciusko and back to the accommodation house will be about 13 miles, and the trip can be done comfortably in the day, leaving plenty of time for sight-seeing. It is also proposed to fence in a large paddock of 500 acres for the accommodation of horses . . . ‘the State will be more than compensated’ said the Minister for Works, ‘by the increased railway fares, and the road will make accessible one of the most beautiful tourist spots in the State.’”*<sup>32</sup>

The proposed Accommodation House at Charlottes Pass was to be a considerable improvement over Betts Camp. It would be constructed of stone, have a resident caretaker/cook for the summer months, separate dormitories for men and women, a common room and an external porch. The tourism focus remained the same – providing a base from which summer tourists could ride or walk to the summit, albeit they would travel to the Accommodation House by motor vehicle.

An alternative road route to the summit had been advocated by residents of Adaminaby and Kiandra. Known as the Lawson-Jersey road, the route ran *“from Kiandra to Kosciuszko”*, had an excellent site for a shelter hut at *“Dicky Cooper's bend”* and would provide access to grazing camps and leases throughout the area. Unsurprisingly, the proposal was *rejected* by the Department of Works as it *“would pass over exceedingly difficult and snow-bound country”*.<sup>33</sup>

By June 1906 the Minister for Works had accepted a tender for the first stage of the new Kosciusko Road<sup>34</sup> from Jindabyne to around Diggers Creek. A construction camp was established at the Thredbo River (possibly on the site of the current Waste Point NPWS depot), with an advanced camp at a location that would become known as Rennix Gap.

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<sup>30</sup> SMH 3 March 1908

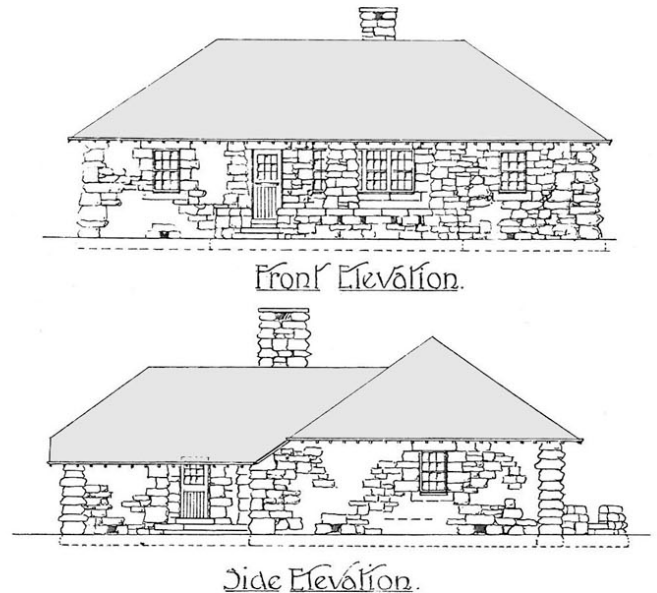
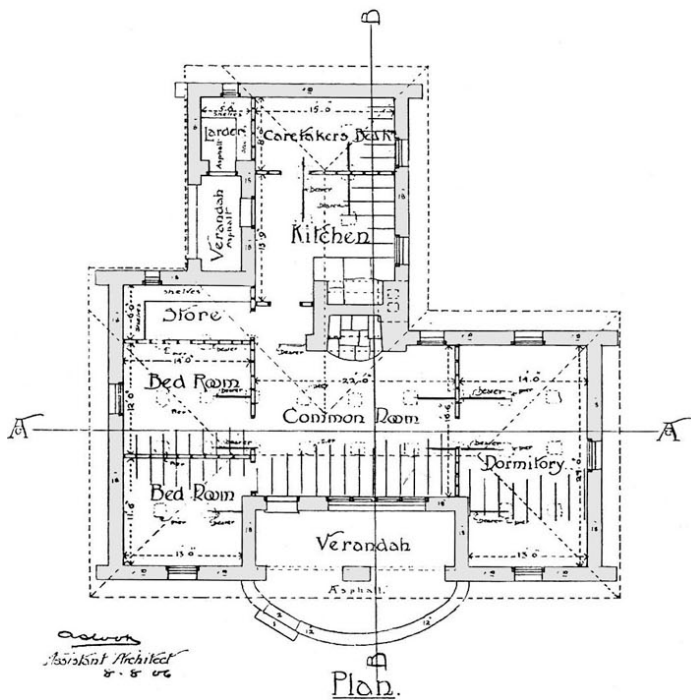
<sup>31</sup> Public Works Dept annual report 1906-07, cited in *George Petersen's Kosciusko* 1993, p35

<sup>32</sup> SMH 23 April 1906

<sup>33</sup> SMH 12 July 1906

<sup>34</sup> SMH 7 June 1906





Proposed Accommodation House for Charlottes Pass 1906 (NSW Dept Planning)

By July works had to be abandoned on the higher sections: *“Last week’s exceptionally heavy weather practically put a stop to all operations above the eight miles until spring. The camp occupied by the assistant road superintendent Mr Rennix, and three men, situated 12 miles from Jindabyne is now snowed in. A week ago the snow at this camp was 3ft deep and increasing, so it was decided to shift the camp. At 10 am the tent was struck and arrangements made to escape . . . the snowstorms then became so heavy that it was impossible to move the camp, the horses being unable, owing to the depth of snow, to draw the dray. It was then decided to face the journey on foot, leaving the dray and two sulkies, the first named containing the camp equipment. The four men each carrying as much as possible, thus set out, driving the horses on ahead and following the old track as far as the Thredbo [River], where the snow was lighter. The wind blew with great force . . . trees were also blown down and uprooted. The party at 5:30 that evening reached Jindabyne, where the horses found pasturage. Mr Rennix is making an effort to reach the camp to see if it is possible to rescue the sulkies and dray for the purpose of performing work on the lower country.”*<sup>35</sup>

Work on the road continued through the summer of 1906-07, with the main contractor employing about 200 men, and a further 260 men employed as day labour by the Department of Works.<sup>36</sup> There was some criticism of conditions for the men, although one labourer reported *“So far everything is going along quite smoothly under the supervision of our head engineer, Mr Stillwell, except that we have to walk over a mile and a half for our provisions, which are at very high prices owing to the carriage from Jindabyne being exceedingly heavy. Up to the present time I think the men have been treated very well. We had our fares paid from Sydney to Cooma, and had to walk from Cooma to the job — a distance of about 60 miles, I am told — and our wages went on from the day we landed in Cooma. A few men were discharged yesterday, being deemed absolutely unfit for the work, and a few others left, being dissatisfied with the job.”*<sup>37</sup>

By the onset of winter 1907, the road had been completed to within 7km of Charlottes Pass.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>35</sup> SMH 6 July 1906

<sup>36</sup> SMH 1 April 1907

<sup>37</sup> SMH 20 February 1907

<sup>38</sup> SMH 1 April 1907

## A Change of Plan 1907

In the summer of 1906-07 the NSW Government made a dramatic and far-reaching change to the development of tourism at Kosciuszko. International interest in winter recreation was on the rise, with an expansion of tourist development in the European Alps and the creation of large government-funded hotels in the Rocky Mountains. In a giant leap forward from its previous focus only on summer tourism centred on small parties accommodated in huts, the government dropped the proposed accommodation house at Charlottes Pass in favour of building a substantial hotel. The target was the winter recreation market with accommodation to be provided for 100 guests at a location just above the snowline on Diggers Creek.

The key proponent was Percy Hunter, Director of the NSW Tourist Bureau. Hunter was a close friend of Charles Kerry, had toured the European Alps and in 1905 and 1906 led tour groups of prominent Sydneysiders on skiing holidays to Kiandra.<sup>39</sup>

*“The idea of opening up Kosciuszko was Mr Hunter’s. Sir Joseph (then Mr) Carruthers the Premier of New South Wales, was, fortunately for later generations a man of vision. There was much criticism of the idea, the local inhabitants laughed at the thought of an hotel inside the snowline the usual armchair critics in Sydney had a grand time pointing out the difficulties . . . But with Hunter’s driving force, Carruthers’ faith in the project and the ingenuity of Colonel Vernon, the Government Architect, the hotel was built and the road pushed through the mountains to the top of Kosciuszko.”<sup>40</sup>*

The building would have 46 bedrooms, but under the influence of the temperance movement and a desire to promote it as family accommodation it would not have a liquor licence<sup>41</sup> – hence it was originally named the Kosciuszko Hospice.


Plans were quickly drawn up by the Government Architect and construction had commenced by April 1907: *“Building material has already been carted up the mountain, and the foundations of the Diggers’ Creek accommodation house are being put in. The work will be continued until the winter season renders further operations impossible.”<sup>42</sup>* Erection of the timber framing had commenced by June<sup>43</sup> *“but during the winter Monaro winds proved too strong for the unfinished work of men’s hands, and it was completely swept away.”<sup>44</sup>*

Under a building contract of £4604,<sup>45</sup> work recommenced in the summer: *“There were seven of us going up — carpenters and others — to join the camp already established . . . We have a very fair-sized camp at Digger’s Creek of upwards of 80 men, and pretty extensive works are in operation. The building of the hospice is keeping most of us engaged at present, and by and by there is a hill to be removed to improve the look-out, and a large dam is to be built for skating in winter and trout fishing in summer . . . everything should be finished before the worst of the winds come on again. Later on we shall have some work to do*

**SPEND YOUR SUMMER HOLIDAYS**  
... AT THE

## **HOTEL KOSCIUSKO.**

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Trip: to the Summit and the Alpine Lakes.  
**KOSCIUSKO GOLF CLUB’S CARNIVAL—26th to 31st JANUARY, 1914.**  
Rail Fares:—Sydney to Cooma and Return, on Special Certificate of Tourist Bureau, First-class, £2 15s.; Second-class, £1 17s. 6d.  
Sleeping Berths (First-class only), 10s. extra each way.  
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PERCY HUNTER, Director. Telephone, City 2488.

Advert from the Agricultural Gazette 2 January 1914

<sup>39</sup> Percy Hunter obituary, ASYB 1934

<sup>40</sup> Percy Hunter obituary, ASYB 1934

<sup>41</sup> Petersen, George Snow Revelry August 1955 as reproduced in *George Petersen’s Kosciuszko* 1993, p41

<sup>42</sup> SMH 1 April 1907

<sup>43</sup> SMH 8 June 1907

<sup>44</sup> SMH 30 November 1907

<sup>45</sup> Public Works Dept annual report 1908-09, cited in *George Petersen’s Kosciuszko* 1993, p35

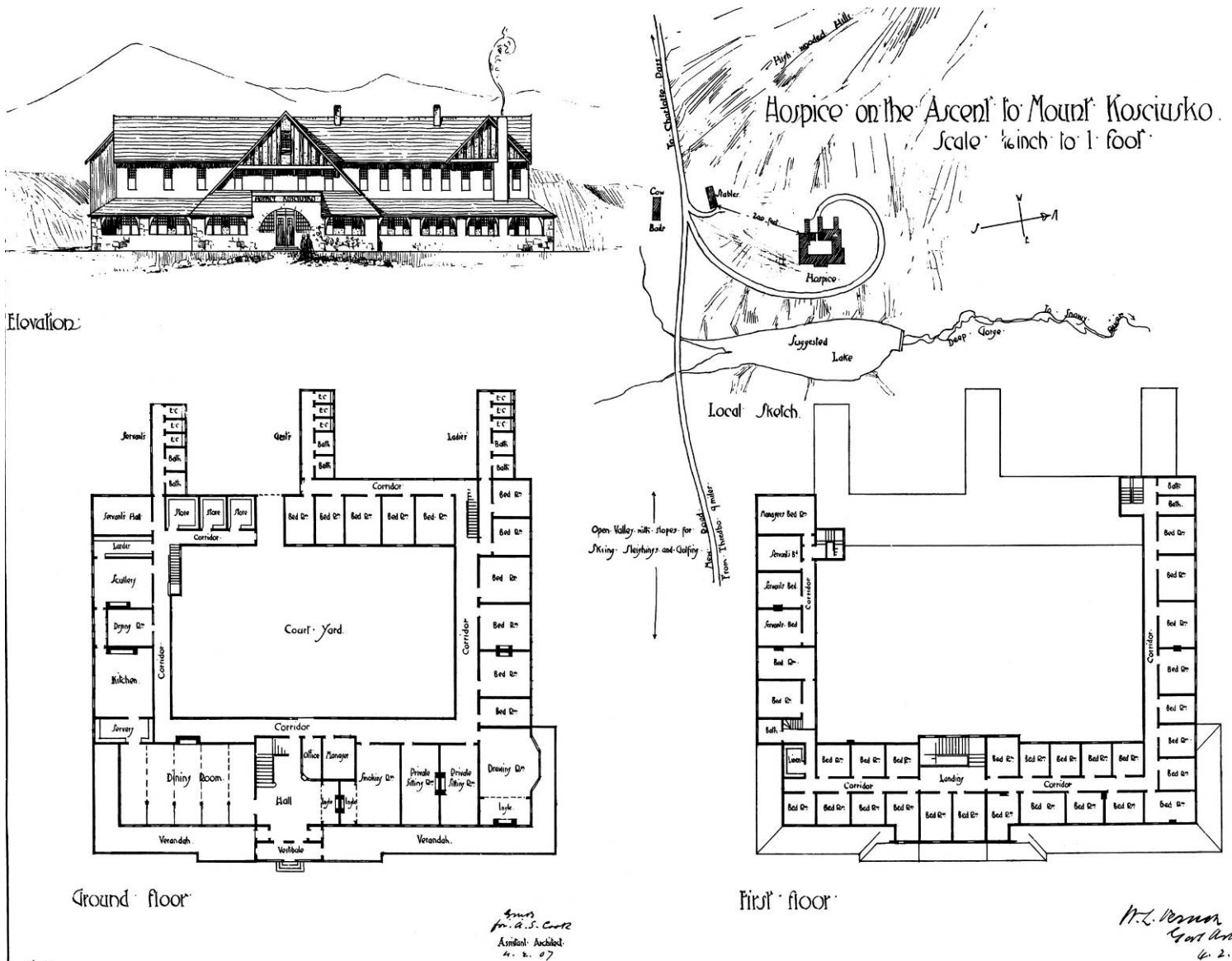


11 miles nearer the summit, but there is so much snow higher up that it is unsafe to try and make the top until December."<sup>46</sup>

One of the workmen was killed by a fall of earth; a social event was held to raise money for his family in the Oddfellows Hall at Jindabyne.<sup>47</sup>

The structural frame, claddings and linings were mostly complete by the winter of 1908, when the first skiers began to arrive "The first party of visitors to the Hotel Kosciusko included several of those who had been in the Kiandra parties: on that now famous first night in the partly-built hotel the Kosciusko Alpine Club was formed from the Kiandra Visitors' Club [formed from a tour group Hunter had taken to Kiandra in 1905/06]. Mr Pearson went round the bare corridors of the new building beating a gong to summon all present to the billiard-room."<sup>48</sup>

The Kosciusko Hospice was completed in February 1909<sup>49</sup> and officially opened on 8 June 1909 by the Governor Lord Chelmsford at a function attended by the Premier Charles Wade, the leader of the opposition James McGowen, and the former Premier Sir Joseph Carruthers.<sup>50</sup>



Hotel Kosciusko Sketch Plans 1907 (NSW Dept Planning)

<sup>46</sup> SMH 30 November 1907

<sup>47</sup> Petersen, George Snow Revelry July 1955 as reproduced in *George Petersen's Kosciusko* 1993, p37

<sup>48</sup> Percy Hunter obituary, ASYB 1934

<sup>49</sup> SMH 9 January 1909

<sup>50</sup> Petersen, George Snow Revelry August 1955 as reproduced in *George Petersen's Kosciusko* 1993, p40

Demand for winter accommodation at the Hotel Kosciusko quickly grew. By 1913 a further 49 bedrooms were added and a liquor licence had been transferred from a Dalgety Hotel. The Hotel Kosciusko would be progressively extended through its life, and serve as the centre of skiing in the Snowy Mountains up until its destruction by fire in 1951.



New Betts Camp c1910 (State Library of NSW)

### ***Meanwhile up the Hill . . . a New Betts Camp and the Summit Road is Completed 1907 - 08***

Whilst the Charlottes Pass accommodation house had been abandoned, a staging point was still required where tourists could leave their cars and transfer to horseback for a trek around the newly built Lakes (Walk) bridle path to Mt Kosciuszko.

The 1902 hut at (Old) Betts Camp was too far from the new road to serve this purpose, so it was decided to build a new hut adjacent to the road crossing of Betts Creek.



New Betts Camp 1912 (Watkins, Museum Vic)

The new hut was exactly the same design as Old Betts — two rooms (albeit somewhat larger), both with an exterior door, and a fireplace on the right hand end of the building. Construction was completed by June 1907 when it was reported “*A hut has been erected on the new site of Betts Camp.*”<sup>51</sup> Drawings of the hut supposedly dated January 1907 indicate the original two rooms may have been completed earlier but, confusingly, other aspects of the design appear to date from changes made in early 1908.



New Betts Camp 1924 (unknown)

During 1907 the government made another significant change to its tourism plans for Kosciuszko — the motor road would be extended all the way to the summit, albeit the road above Charlottes Pass would be of a reduced width of 12' (3.6m versus 4.8m lower down the range). For the next two summers, the mountains “*resounded to the blasts of the road makers*”.<sup>52</sup>

Old Betts Camp was used as a staging post. The front room was kept available as a shelter, whilst the back room was “*occupied with stores for the men employed on the new Government road*”.<sup>53</sup>

Similarly Wragges Observatory was used as a base by the construction gangs. “*A blacksmith is at work right on the top of Kosciusko, sharpening the roadmen's tools; he has no shelter from the wind, but plods along with his work heartily. He, like many other workmen and drovers, is showing the effects of constant exposure to the sun in that rare atmosphere.*”<sup>54</sup> Sun wasn't the only problem. In the last week of December 1907 “*23 road men had sheltered on Saturday night at 'Wragges lookout', snowed up. A reserve party of six left Thredbo this morning with provisions. A guide's horse at Betts' Camp was frozen; also several draught horses belonging to the road contractors and other parties on the road. The men forced their way out yesterday. Constable McInnes, of Jindabyne, left this morning to render assistance.*”<sup>55</sup>

A few weeks later, in January 1908, the NSW Premier stayed at New Betts Camp whilst enroute to Mt Kosciuszko on a bicycle and reported “*The accommodation is somewhat primitive . . . the privacy is not all that could be desired. Since our return, I have managed, with the Government*

<sup>51</sup> SMH 8 June 1907

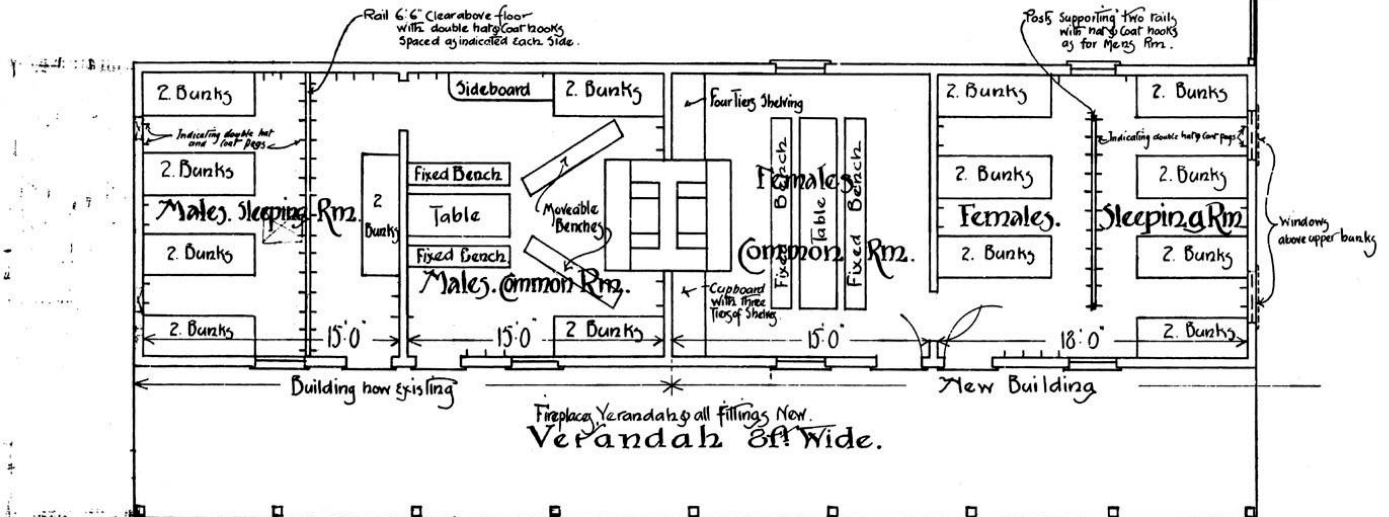
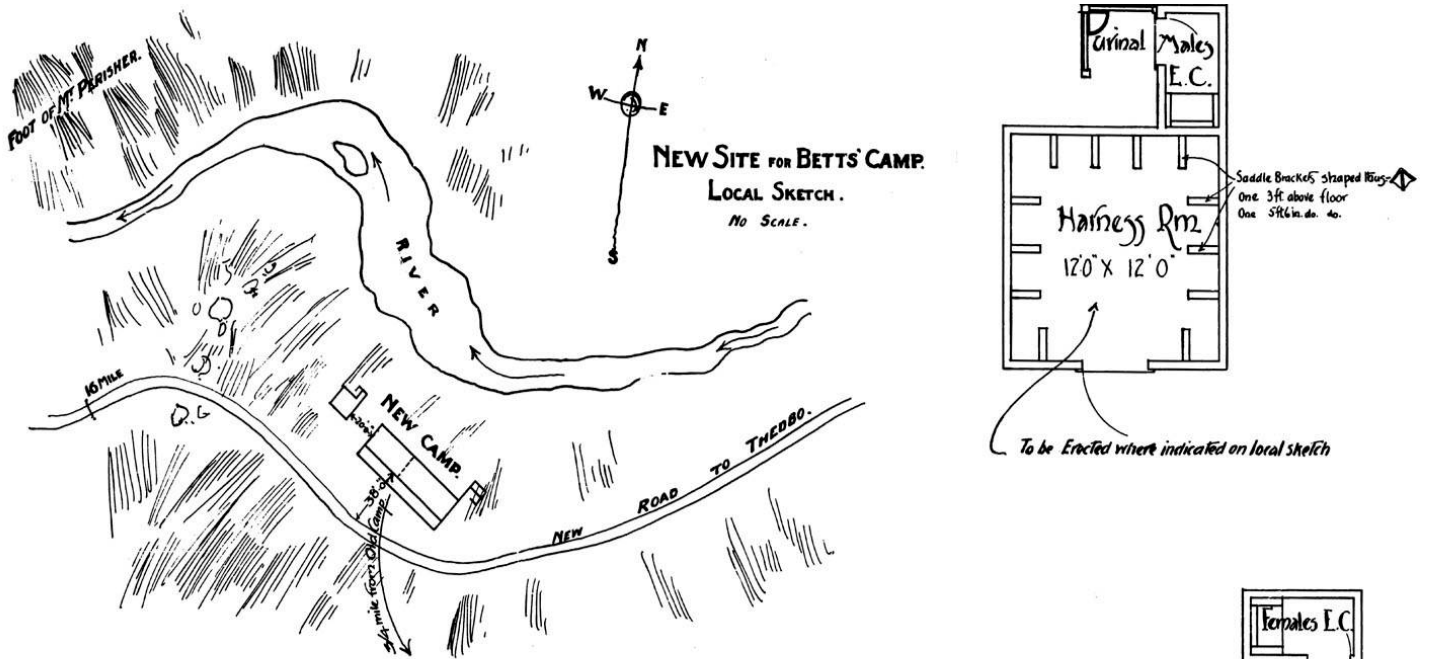
<sup>52</sup> SMH 3 March 1909

<sup>53</sup> SMH 3 March 1909

<sup>54</sup> SMH 5 February 1908

<sup>55</sup> SMH 31 December 1907





New Betts Camp showing 2 rooms built 1907 at left and 1908 extension at right (NSW Dept Planning)

Architect, for the erection of another room, detached from the present building, for the use of lady travellers. A few jugs and basins and stands will also be provided, and when these alterations and additions have been made, there should be no difficulty in any lady undertaking the trip."<sup>56</sup>

The works doubled the size of the hut to four rooms – now with a common room and dormitory each for gents and ladies - and added a verandah along the road frontage. A harness room was attached to the gents' outhouse, whilst a stable, set of yards and fenced horse paddock was erected on the south side of the road a few hundred metres east of the hut. The additions were underway within just eight weeks of the Premier's visit.<sup>57</sup>

New Betts Camp was subsequently described as "a strongly built hardwood cottage, about eight miles from the summit, and situated on the banks of Spencer's Creek, where there is splendid fishing. . . The beds are like little canvas bunks, arranged as on board ship, and there are abundance of mattresses and bed coverings."<sup>58</sup>

<sup>56</sup> SMH 4 January 1908

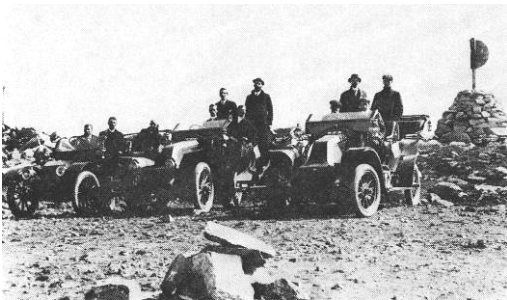
<sup>57</sup> SMH 22 February 1908

<sup>58</sup> *The Queenslander* 11 April 1914

Some visitors were less appreciative: *"Instead of people having to pay 2s[hillings] for the doubtful privilege of enduring a single night at this place, the Government department which runs it should give a bonus to everybody who will stay in it . . . The outstanding feature of the camp is its blowflies. Clothing, sugar-bags, meat-bags, bread-bags, are all fair game to the Betts' Camp flies . . . and the smoke which sifts from the fire through the place is ineffectual to keep the buzzing pests in check."*<sup>59</sup> And then *"But, horror! The ancient Britons who let the smoke escape through a hole in the roof were better off than we! None of its own smoke would the expensive granite fireplace consume. With all the windows open to the gale we snatched a comfortless meal, and forgot our troubles amongst abundant blankets."*<sup>60</sup>



Parliamentary party trip to the summit April 1911, at Betts Camp (above) and on the summit (below)  
(Kosciusko Alpine Club)



In March 1908, the Kosciusko Road was completed from Charlottes Pass to the summit.<sup>61</sup> *"The honor of being the first motorist to reach the summit of Mt Kosciusko . . . [goes to] Mr EF Millar, of Melbourne . . . for he climbed to the summit on a Leon Bolice car on March 13th, and again subsequently on the 17<sup>th</sup>."*<sup>62</sup> Three days later, Mr Herbert Garratt (or Garrett) of Sydney, accompanied by the Governor of New South Wales, Sir Harry Rawson, became the second party to drive the road to the summit.<sup>63</sup>

The following month the Governor-General Lord Northcote, a party of MLAs and Mr Merrett, president of the local shire council, motored to Charlotte's Pass, then rode on horseback to the summit via the bridle track around the lakes: *"When ascending the mountain . . . the opportunity being taken of naming one of the most prominent peaks, overlooking Lake Albino [sic], after his Excellency Lord Northcote . . . and a narrow defile encircling Mount Northcote was named Northcote Pass, and the gorges which Mount Northcote overlooked were christened Lady Northcote gorges. The health of their Excellencies was drunk amidst the greatest enthusiasm. His Lordship responded . . . that he would always carry kindly remembrances of the generous people of Australia."*<sup>64</sup>

Garratt returned to the summit the following month, having deferred an attempt with W Phillips to break the 25 hrs 40 mins record for driving from Melbourne to Sydney.<sup>65</sup> *"Mr Herbert Garratt . . . owns a very fine Fiat 15-20 car — an Italian make of motor. . . The party left Sydney . . . on April 22 in two cars, . . . The following morning, Sunday, they started for the top, calling at the Hotel Kosciusko, 16 miles from the top, on the way. The party had a look through this very fine tourist resort, which has been built by the Government. One mile after leaving, they got into the snow. The remaining 15 miles they ran through snow which varied from a couple of inches deep to 6ft to 10ft in the drifts. Wragge's Hut on the summit was safely reached at 12 o'clock, and with very keen appetites, getting on the lee side of the mountain, a fire was lit with fuel brought up in the cars, and bacon and chops were soon grilling. Snow was melted for billy tea and the party enjoyed a hearty lunch. Whilst the meal was in progress a snow storm came on and in half an hour, on going to look for the cars there was no trace of them — they had been snowed over. Fortunately the shovels had been taken to the hut, and with these the party were soon able to dig out the buried cars. The return journey was then commenced, and after some very heavy travelling Thredbo was reached that evening. On returning, the party went on to Cooma and were highly amused to read in the local paper that*

<sup>59</sup> SMH 22 February 1908

<sup>60</sup> *The Argus* 11 April 1908

<sup>61</sup> *The Advertiser* (Adelaide) 16 March 1908

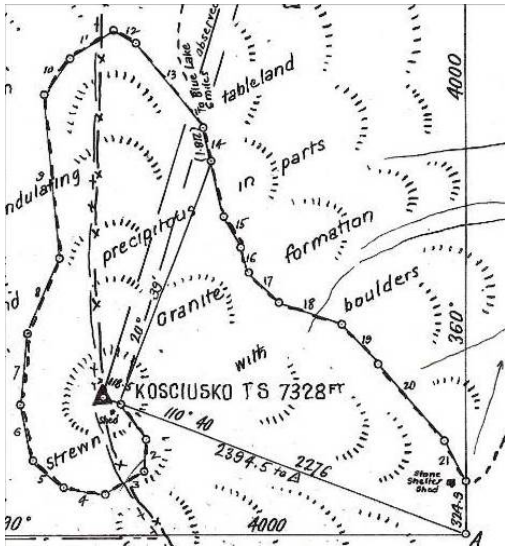
<sup>62</sup> *Traralgon Record* 12 May 1908

<sup>63</sup> *Traralgon Record* 12 May 1908

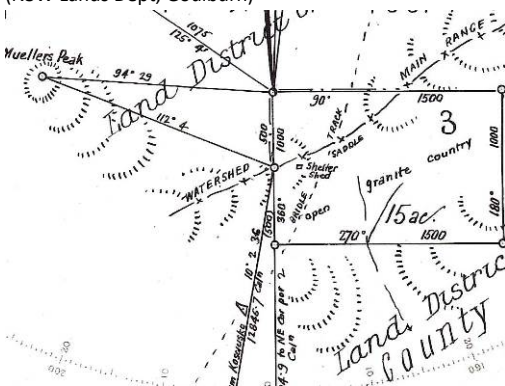
<sup>64</sup> SMH 11 April 1908

<sup>65</sup> *Traralgon Record* 5 June 1908

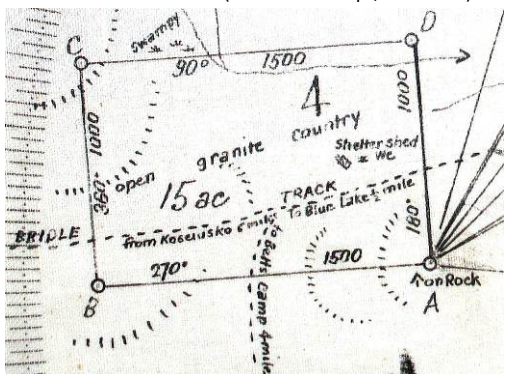




Wragges Observatory & Rawsons Pass Shelter Shed as shown on plan of portion 2, Parish of Kosciusko 1910 (NSW Lands Dept, Goulburn)



Moraine Pass Shelter Shed as shown on plan of portion 3 Parish of Kosciusko 1910 (NSW Lands Dept, Goulburn)



Blue Lake Shelter Shed as shown on plan of portion 4 Parish of Kosciusko 1910 (NSW Lands Dept, Goulburn)



Blue Lake Shelter as shown on 1909 Kosciusko map

a party of madmen had passed through in motor cars intending to try and get to the top of Kosciusko at that time of the year.”<sup>66</sup>

### Stone Shelter Sheds on the Lakes’ Track 1908

When the Accommodation House was proposed in 1906, an additional shelter hut was proposed close to the summit: “Part of the arrangements for making, the ‘roof of Australia’ more easily accessible is a shelter, where sightseers may take refuge if, while on the mountain top, overtaken by a snowstorm or enveloped in a fog. The building, for the construction of which tenders have been invited, will be located some distance beyond Charlotte-place [Pass].”<sup>67</sup>

The idea was retained through to January 1908 it was reported: “There are being erected rough but secure shelter shed houses under the summit of the mount, and at Albino and Blue Lakes, which will be available for tourists in the event of sudden rainstorms, unexpected snowfalls, or mountain fogs. These it is expected will be completed by the end of March; which . . . guarantee, that the comfort of travellers is being provided for, while every precaution has been taken to protect tourists from undue risk.”<sup>68</sup>

The shelter sheds were not intended for overnight use other than in emergencies. Approximately 2.7 x 3.6m in size, they featured walls of granite, a steep pitched corrugated iron roof, a pair of small windows and an earth floor. There was no fireplace, but a supply of firewood appears to have been kept inside so visitors could have a fire outside. The Shed at Blue Lake had an outhouse.

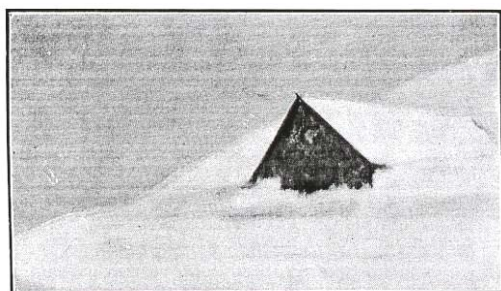
Few references to the shelters survive, mostly in media articles from c1910: “Then next day [from New Betts’ Camp] . . . You may take a quiet, sure-footed mountain pony, and go by the bridle track across the infant Snowy River, from Hedley’s Tarn, to Blue Lake, and by Carruthers Peak . . . Lake Albina, to the summit, with its dirty hut, scrawled over with trippers’ names [Wragges Observatory] . . . be sure to mark, besides the excellent bridle track, wide enough and gradual enough for the most timorous horseman . . . the little shelter sheds of native granite, with wooden windows and doors, which Government has wisely provided for the chance sojourner whom the sudden storms of this lonely region may take unawares.

“It surprised me to hear that for some recondite official reason it has been decreed that these shelter sheds shall be locked and the keys kept at Betts’s. Suppose, leaving Betts’s, you forget to ask for those necessary keys, or suppose, coming up from the Murray, you don’t know; or don’t choose, to ride eight miles to get them. Then if Kosciusko pours fog or snow or blizzard or rain upon your devoted head, even though a shelter shed be within a hundred yards of you, it might as well be at Cooma, or in Macquarie Street. This should be altered if it be so; I can hardly believe so absurd a regulation exists. There is no furniture to destroy or injure; there are no loafers or

<sup>66</sup> Clarence and Richmond Examiner 3 June 1909  
<sup>67</sup> SMH 15 September 1906  
<sup>68</sup> SMH 24 January 1908, Barrier Miner 1 February 1908



Rawsons Pass Shelter Shed 1926 (Bill Strong, flickr)



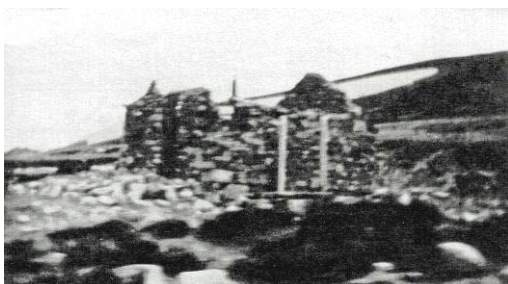
THE HUT ON THE SADDLE BELOW THE SUMMIT OF KOSCIUSKO IN A BLIZZARD.

Rawsons Pass Shelter Shed (ASYB 1928)



THE SADDLE AT THE FOOT OF KOSCIUSKO.  
In the distance is seen the precipice of snow down which a party fell in 1914 when trying to leave the top in a mist.

Rawsons Pass Shelter Shed (ASYB 1928)



Shelter Shed ruin (E McGufficke)

*'dossers' on Kosciusko . . . the climate is a trifle rigorous for those lotus-eaters.'*<sup>69</sup>

The little shelter sheds do not appear to have survived long. There are no records of a visit the Moraine Pass hut, whilst the Blue Lake Shelter was reported to have been struck by lightning in 1910 before being partially rebuilt: *"Near the [Blue] Lake is a stone hut, crushed beneath a weight of snow. From the appearance of the stone one could see it was of modern build, and our guide informed us that it had only been erected three years, and, notwithstanding its strength, had succumbed to the snow and storms of the wind-swept hills. Portions of the crushed in roof and stone had been used to make a shelter hut for some boundary rider who was glad to find shelter.*

*"Nestling up close to the shadow of the hut was a lonely grave enclosed with rocks and covered with mountain daisies. A monument was erected at the head, a smooth stone most nearly resembling an obelisk. Inscribed in perfectly legible, if rough looking characters, was the inscription: 'Sacred to the memory of Kosciusko Boundary Riders,' and while we were preparing to pour floods of eloquent grief on this lonely monument we found that the humorist had intruded into even this marvel land of solitude. This was erected by one of the boundary riders, a lonely figure whom we afterwards met, and who told us to say if asked 'It is Charlie Wood's grave' (his own name) 'and he died of the blues.'*

*"The remainder of the journey to the summit was a series of climbs, but we gallantly stuck to our steeds . . . There is a huge cairn upon the mount, but Wragge's Hut, the remains of which can be seen, was destroyed by lightning on Christmas Day. The air is exhilarating, and the party found themselves racing down the mountain side as fast as the nature of the descent would permit to the last patch of snow. . . They snowballed and did all the mad things they wanted to do for a few brief minutes, and then enjoyed billy tea — the sweetest nectar after their experiences — at a little stone hut erected at the foot of the peak itself. While resting we were shown Dead Horse Ridge, where a number of horses perished in a snow storm and their bleached bones are heaped in profusion to tell the tale . . . We resigned our mountain ponies — which found their own way back to Bett's Camp, and which are allowed to remain in the open at night in order to keep them hardy — and completed our homeward journey through Charlotte Pass back to the hotel in the coach."<sup>70</sup>*

The Rawsons Pass Shelter survived at least to the end of the 1920s: *"The only shelter is a Government hut, and it is the most cheerless structure of its kind I have ever looked into. There is no floor, for instance, and the ground within seems never to dry."<sup>71</sup>* This report indicated the shed was still in existence at the time Laurie Seaman and Evan Hayes skied to the summit in 1928, indeed they must have skied past it. Perhaps it was no longer weatherproof, or filled with snow. The story is all the more tragic to think some form of shelter likely

<sup>69</sup> SMH 3 March 1909

<sup>70</sup> *The Queenslander* 11 April 1914

<sup>71</sup> *The Argus* 18 August 1928



existed half-way between where the two men met their ends after becoming separated.

The partially rebuilt Blue Lake Shelter appears to have survived into the 1930s, being shown on a 1937 Lands Department map.

### ***The Payback from 1907 – 10***

The overall cost of tourism infrastructure at Kosciuszko, including the new Kosciusko Road, the Creel, Hotel Kosciusko, New Betts Camp, Lakes Walk bridle track and shelter sheds was reported in parliamentary debate to have been the order of £40,000. A 1909-10 Tourist Bureau report to parliament<sup>72</sup> — prior to winter recreation taking off and the Hotel Kosciusko achieving reasonable occupancy rates — claimed that tourists to the Yarrangobilly Caves and Kosciusko were spending £25,000 to £30,000 per annum.

Thus within a few years of completion, it appears the road and associated facilities were generating an annual return in regional development equivalent to their construction outlay. Caruthers' gamble had borne fruit.



BETTS'S PLAIN FROM THE PERISHER GAP.  
Winter view of Spencers creek valley with New Betts Camp in the centre (ASYB1928)



New Betts Camp c1910 with the first party to ski up the summit from the Hotel Kosciusko (ASYB 1928)

### ***Winter Tourism Takes Over 1910 - 14***

Within a few years of completion, New Betts Camp was staffed with a resident caretaker for the summer months and locked up at other times. This may have commenced as early as 1908, when it was reported *“the camp itself is well-kept, but it involves too much work for one man”*.<sup>73</sup>

The first ski ascent of Mt Kosciuszko from the Hotel Kosciusko was made on 17 July 1910: *“wearing gum boots on Kiandra skis and with sugar bags loaded with food and spare parts, four of us — Oscar Paul, Arthur Pitt, John Cosgrove and myself [Dr Herbert Schlink] reached the summit for the first time via the hotel route in three days, sleeping at Betts Camp on the outward and homeward journeys.”*<sup>74</sup>

In July 1911 the Tourist Bureau decided to run a coach service to Betts during the early winter and spring, to provide skiing opportunities when there was not skiable snow at the Hotel.<sup>75</sup>

From 1912, demand for winter use of New Betts Camp began to exceed summer use. The hut was provisioned each winter with supplies and provided with a resident caretaker, who took quarters in one of the four rooms and was managed from the Hotel.<sup>76</sup> Betts became an overnight destination for tours from the Hotel and would soon become a popular staging point for skiing to the summit, such as the following account of the Reverend W Fisher:

*“At the end of June I found myself enjoying a week's holiday at the Hotel Kosciusko . . . Since the snow had fallen no visitor had made the trip to Betts' Camp, so, finding a kindred spirit in the person of Dr AT Chapple . . . I decided with him to attempt the journey to Betts' Camp, and, conditions being favourable, to make a dash for the summit of Kosciusko. Accordingly, on the morning of Wednesday, June 26, we strapped on our rucksacs and cameras, shouldered our ski, and started from the hotel, one might say without undue exaggeration, with flags flying and*

<sup>72</sup> SMH 19 August 1910

<sup>73</sup> SMH 22 February 1908

<sup>74</sup> Schlink, Herbert - ASYB1956 p44

<sup>75</sup> *Queanbeyan Age* 28 July 1911

<sup>76</sup> *Queanbeyan Age* 8 March & 7 June 1912

*band playing, and the encouraging cheers of the assembled house party. The snow on the track to Daner's Gap was hard frozen, so we decided to walk the first mile and a half uphill, not yet being experts in the gentle art of herringboning and side-stepping as expounded by authorities on ski-running.*

*“At the top of the Gap we fastened on our ski, and started on the run down the track. . . The doctor had donned the orthodox gum boots, which suited the ski very well, and made the pace in front. I had put on an old pair of climbing boots, with putties, thinking they might prove useful . . . But the heels were not adapted for ski straps, and I had some trouble in keeping them properly in place. . . about 1 o'clock, when we halted to do justice to the excellent burden thoughtfully provided by the hotel. Then photographs were taken, and we set forward again. . . A fairly easy run down brought us to our haven of refuge, Betts' Camp, where Mr and Mrs Trafford gave us a warm welcome, and saw to the comfort of the inner and outer man. . . twelve hours would be a fair time allowance for the ascent and return . . . daylight from 7 am to 5 pm gave us 10 hours, the only thing to do was to take advantage of the moon, which . . . might give us a couple of hours light before daybreak.*

*“So at 4 am on Thursday I turned out . . . There had been no heavy fall of snow such as we feared, and there was sufficient moonlight to enable us to travel in safety. Though the hour was so early, Mrs Trafford insisted on cooking us a substantial breakfast, and after the usual delays with recalcitrant ski, we got away soon after six. The clouds had again gathered, and it was a weird experience stumbling along by the light of the waning moon, with the morning star greeting us as we topped the first rise. It was impossible to miss the track . . . well defined by large poles at hundred-yard intervals, so we went steadily on up to Charlotte's Pass. . . At the top of the pass the doctor, who proved the more expert with the ski, very nobly made an exchange, and gave me the lighter and more manageable pair. After the change we made better going till we reached the Snowy River, of which there was no sign except a dip in the snow-covered plain.*

*“We now started on the ascent to Dead Horse Ridge, and presently discovered that the snow was harder, and that it was possible to walk on it . . . Accordingly I discarded the skis. . . As we skirted the slopes of Mount Etheridge a magnificent sight met our view. The sun shone brightly. Etheridge with its curiously-shaped isolated rocks, each covered with a mantle of snow, looking like some enormous sea monster, was on our left.*

*“In the gap above Lake Cootapatamba stood the shelter hut, and in front towered Kosciusko, in his dazzling mantle of white, with Wragge's hut and the cairn standing sharply out on the summit . . . But soon our old enemy the fog had us in his grip again. The slope became steeper . . . The ski had to be left behind. Hitherto we had always been able to see our line by the poles on the track, but just before the steepest pinch we were left with no landmark at all to guide us. The shelter hut was swallowed up in fog, and no friendly pole beckoned us on. . . keeping as straight a line as possible, we persevered, and soon found ourselves on the level ground before the shelter-hut. This was standing like a miniature fort, entrenched, with a moat and rampart of snow. The door was open, and snow lay inside in places two or three feet deep. It was now 11 o'clock, and we felt we had earned a meal. Fortunately there was wood, an axe, and a billy. With perseverance a fire was lighted, and hot tea rewarded our efforts. Refreshed and rested we set out for the summit, which we reached after an easy climb in about half an hour following the track. About half-way up we again got above the mists, and looked out on as fine a cloud effect as can well be imagined. . .*

*“At the summit we found Wragge's hut, almost covered with snow, and the interior hung with icicles, making a most beautiful picture. Photographs were taken of the hut and the cairn, though operations were much hampered by the moisture condensing on the lens and turning to ice at once. On descending we took the straight line for the shelter-hut, and reached it in 10 minutes; and at 1.30 started back for Betts' Camp. We safely negotiated our nasty traverse,*



*picked up the ski, and followed our tracks to Dead Horse Ridge. The mists had now cleared away, and from this point on till our arrival at the hotel next day we enjoyed the clear blue sky and the keen, frosty air that gladden the hearts of the mountaineers. . .with conditions more in our favour made good time to Betts' Camp, which we reached about 6 o'clock . . ."*<sup>77</sup>



Incidents on the unsuccessful attempt of Lord Denman, then Governor-General, to reach the Summit of Kosciusko in 1912. The middle picture is the interior of Betts' Camp.

Governor-General Lord Denison's party inside New Betts camp 1912 (ASYB 1935)

In the finest Victorian tradition of seeking adventure through travel to remote areas, epitomised in the contemporary reporting of Shackleton's, Mawson's and Scott's quests in Antarctica, skiing to the summit of Kosciuszko became an appropriate challenge for gentrified and be-suited skiers to prove their mettle. The local service staff were not of quite the same origins:

*"Lord Denman, who was Governor-General from July 1911, to May 1914, stayed at the Hotel during the winter season, and with others made an attempt on skis to reach the summit of Mt Kosciusko.*

*"An old identity of the early days of Kosciusko, was the wall-eyed Crawford. It was his job to take parties to Betts' Camp from the Hotel, and was therefore engaged as a guide and handyman to the Governor's party. He drove Scott's dog team with one of Scott's South Pole sleighs, which was loaded with food for Betts' Camp. The sleigh was later placed on the wall in the hallway at Kosciusko, but was unfortunately destroyed in the Hotel fire.*

*"The party arrived at Betts' Camp during very bad weather and settled down to wait for a fine break to try and reach the summit, but this was not to be. They were detained there for three days whilst the blizzard raged. During this time Crawford settled down before the fire, telling yarns, and almost put the fire out with the volume of his expectorations. The Governor was a good sport and took conditions in a philosophical manner. He was even amused by Crawford's familiar approach of calling him 'Your Ex'. Eventually the summit trip was abandoned and they were compelled to return to the Hotel."*<sup>78</sup>

### **Postscript: New Betts Camp 1914 - 63**

In 1914, Dr Herbert Schlink, HF Shorney, and J Jacobson skied from the Hotel Kosciusko via New Betts Camp to the summit in back in 15 hrs and 15 mins, establishing the summit record. The record would be a focus of competitive skiing over the next 30 years, with teams setting off in well before dawn so as to return before the snow was softened by the sun. By the Second World War, Ken Breakspear had cut the record down to 6 hrs 1½ mins, the Betts' caretaker Frank replenishing him with *"orange juice and sugar"* on the way out and *"coffee with plenty of sugar"* on the return leg.<sup>79</sup> From the mid 1920s Betts became a staging point for a whole new ski challenge — the long tour between Kiandra and the Hotel.<sup>80</sup>

The hut was progressively upgraded with the front verandah being enclosed in 1920; *"those who have had to shovel their way into the hut at the end of a tiring uphill climb will know how to appreciate Mr Lamble's (Kosciusko Hotel proprietor and hut caretaker) thoughtfulness in taking precautions to keep the snow off the verandah."*

The following year, the verandah was subdivided to create an airlock and a couple of lavatories, hot and cold piped water was installed, and new heating stoves were installed in the dormitories. The flues are evident in photos showing the end walls of the hut.

<sup>77</sup> SMH 12 July 1913

<sup>78</sup> Petersen, George; *Snow Revelry* September 1955 as reproduced in *George Petersen's Kosciusko* 1993, p42

<sup>79</sup> Moriarty, Oliver *The Summit Record* ASYB1939, p125

<sup>80</sup> Kiandra to Kosciusko trips passing through Betts in 1926, 1927, 1929 and 1932. ASYB various.



New Betts Camp (ASYB 1928)



New Betts Camp (State Library NSW)



Courtesy "Sydney Morning Herald." Airplane over New Betts Camp (ASYB 1933)



Dog team at New Betts c1930s (Kosciusko Alpine Club)



New Betts Camp (Arnott 1998)

The hut was not without its deprivations "most supplies ran out even earlier than last year, and the hessian bunks were even more decrepit. Furthermore, one of our members was again forced to sleep with his boots and skis on his feet owing to a lively imagination which foresaw the consequences of a fire."<sup>81</sup> "The food at Betts Camp is always good — an acknowledged fact by those who have been there — and always the same. You call rely on having no bread, because they've run out and no chops for the same reason."<sup>82</sup>

New Betts Camp became a base for search and rescue operations on the main range, including the tragic search for Seaman and Hayes in August 1928. A telephone line was installed between Betts and the new Seaman Memorial Hut in 1929, and the following year was connected to the Red Hut, Pounds Creek Hut, the Black Hut at Smiggins and the Hotel Kosciusko.<sup>83</sup>

In 1928, the caretaker/cook at Betts was 'Mac'.<sup>84</sup> The role was subject to extended periods of isolation and far from salubrious: "A party of us reached there, one evening, pretty late. The wind was moaning round the hut, and it was just getting dark. . . We crowded inside, forcing the colony of rats to retreat in confusion into the bread bin, and there in the kitchen we found the man in charge sitting in a corner completely overcome by the solitude. He was, however, overjoyed at seeing us, and cheered up a lot. After tea though, he got quiet again, and finally told us some yarn about the telephone ringing violently at midnight, although the unfinished line only went as far as the middle of the plain."<sup>85</sup>

Contrary to all expectations,<sup>86</sup> New Betts Camp became even more popular as an accommodation house following completion of the first Chalet at Charlottes Pass in 1930. Much of the demand was due to the area around Spencers Creek becoming the venue for club skiing competitions, the NSW ski championships, and the intervarsity events between NSW, Victorian and South Australian universities.

"During the overcrowded period at the Chalet during the last two years, Betts Camp has accommodated the overflow, being used during the 1933 season for the accommodation of the visiting Melbourne University Ski Club. During these periods, a man from the Hotel is in permanent residence, supplying the weary Chalet journeyers with a very welcome cup of tea."<sup>87</sup>

"Betts' Camp is coming back into its own. It has had a hard life. Once the goal of adventurous pioneers setting forth from the Hotel into the great white silence, it had then to suffer the indignity of being a mere rest shelter for those on their way to the glittering palace at Charlotte's Pass. . . 1937, however, saw the old place with a hot shower and other

<sup>81</sup> ASYB1929 p65

<sup>82</sup> ASYB1930 p162

<sup>83</sup> ASYB1929, p119

<sup>84</sup> ASYB1929, p22

<sup>85</sup> ASYB1931 p7

<sup>86</sup> ASYB1932 p61

<sup>87</sup> ASYB1934 P59





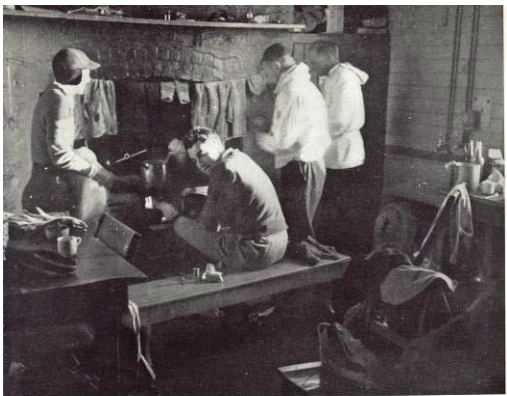
New Betts Camp (State Library NSW undated)



New Betts Camp (State Library NSW undated)



New Betts Camp 1941 (Australian Alpine Club)



Betts' Camp—6.30 a.m. Colin Wyatt  
New Betts Camp interior (Wyatt ASYB 1944)

*modern conveniences, and, under Frank's imperturbable administration, it was continually occupied the whole season.*<sup>88</sup>

During the 1930s, stables were constructed at the Chalet. Possibly the old stables from Betts were relocated to the Chalet. The base for summer horse-riding operations certainly shifted from Betts to the Chalet.

On the night of 7 August 1938, the Chalet burnt down. New Betts Camp became a staging point in what became known as *"the retreat from Moscow"*:

*"By 3 am nothing was left of the Chalet, except the four chimneys, the kitchen range, and a mass of twisted iron and pipes. The detached tin sheds were still intact, the woodshed, tractor, garage, feed shed, ski-lift shed, and the cow-shed. . . The guests and staff were distributed in these sheds, and settled down for the rest of the night . . . The Betts' Camp residents responded nobly and came over to render assistance. They went back to Betts' and brought over tinned cafe-au-lait and soup. This was brewed in a kerosene tin and served in the tins which originally held it. The brew was not very appetising, but at least it was hot and welcome.*

*"As soon as light came, those who had full clothes and equipment were gathered into parties of suitable size, and set off for Betts'. In an hour everyone had left. A responsible group followed last, to see that no one dropped out or got into difficulties. With dawn came a change in the weather, which soon was a fair blizzard with low visibility. After breakfast practically everyone pushed on to the Hotel . . . A party from the Hotel met most of the refugees near Piper's Gap . . . hot drinks and soup were available at Smiggins' . . .*

*"The staff had a much rougher spin than the guests, as their clothing was not suited to the conditions. Most of them were only able to get into their ordinary staff uniforms and shoes . . . Very few of them could ski, so their transference to Betts' Camp and ultimately to the Hotel was difficult and very unpleasant; they were forced to walk from the Chalet to Betts' Camp and later, on Monday, through snow conditions which were difficult' enough to ski."*<sup>89</sup>

In 1942 the Hotel, Chalet and New Betts' Camp was closed down for the remainder of the Second World War. Betts was the first to be reopened — in the winter of 1944 by the NSW Ski Council — whilst the Hotel and Chalet remained dormant until the following year.<sup>90</sup>

1946 was a year of heavy snow. Entry to Betts Camp was via a 40' (13m) long tunnel<sup>91</sup> and the pressure of snow almost destroying the hut *"heavy snow drifts began to move down the slopes above and pressed on to the building; in fact it was a small avalanche, arrested by the building. One night, loud cracks and noises scared the caretaker, old Frank Corbett and his wife, the chimney in their room and in the centre of the building began to give way. During the next blizzard there were more cracks and the building had a slight tilt. Late at night, old Frank could*

<sup>88</sup> ASYB1938 P61

<sup>89</sup> Biggs, JE *The Chalet Fire at Charlottes Pass* ASYB 1939 p2-5

<sup>90</sup> ASYB1944, p23/25

<sup>91</sup> *The Argus* 27 August 1946



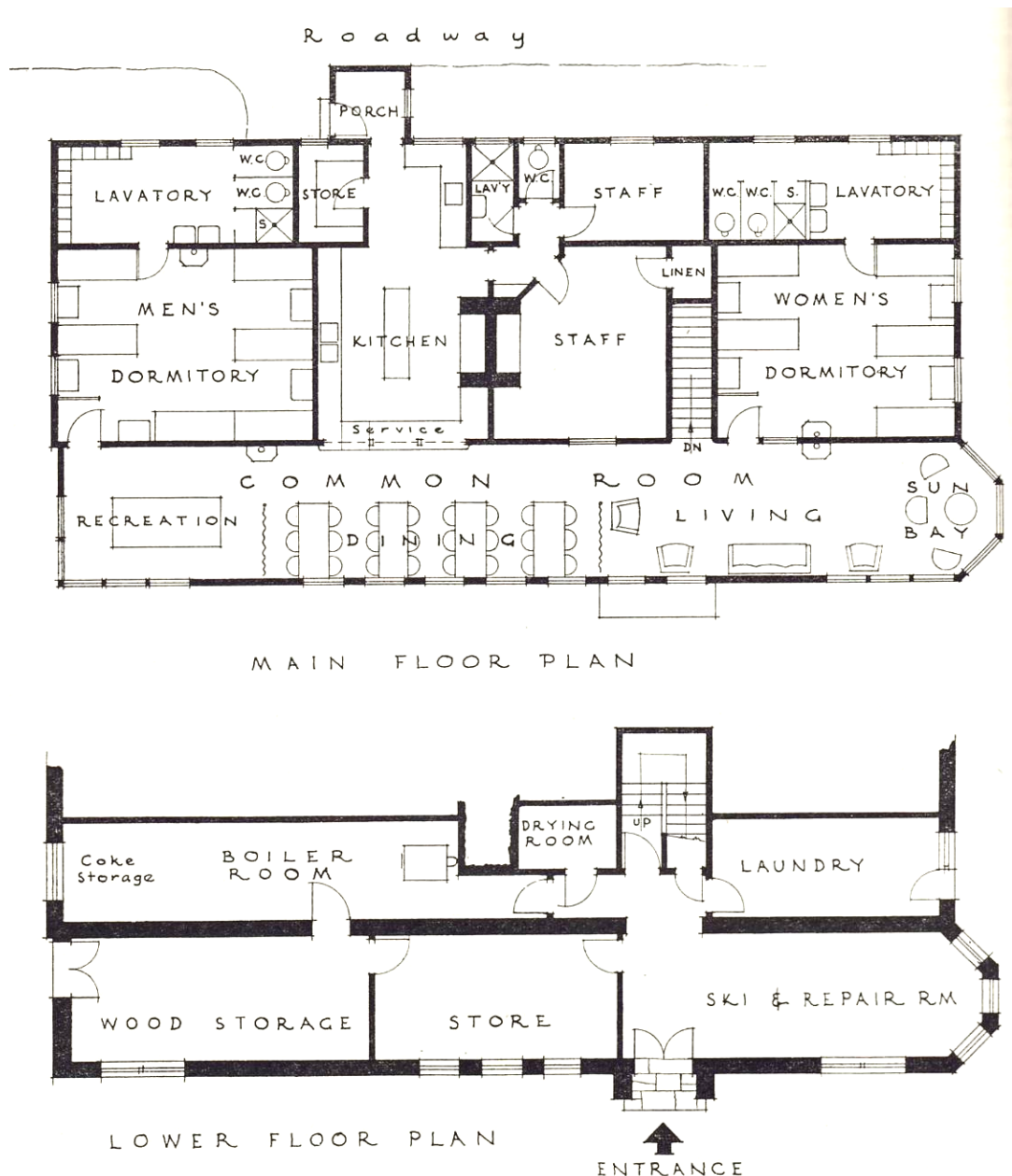


Skiers shovel snow off the roof of Betts Camp during the heavy snow of 1946 (*The Argus* 27/8/46)

stand it no longer — he cleared out, he said there seemed to be creaking and groaning all around him.

“Fortunately there was no further movement or damage, although all the doors were forced out of alignment. I remember when I skied up and made an inspection, someone had placed a spoon on a long string beside one door, making a plumb line; the door was then out of alignment eight inches. The massive size of the masonry and brick chimney had saved the building from being pushed over.”<sup>92</sup> “However that master of salvage, Mr George Day, with the aid of two tractors, has now restored the old hulk to an even keel.”<sup>93</sup>

By the late 1940s New Betts Camp was facing an uncertain future. Development plans were emerging for hotels and private ski lodges across the Australian Alps, which would offer far more comfortable accommodation and be built and operated by the private sector on leased land. Several proposals were developed to modernise Betts Camp, but nothing came to

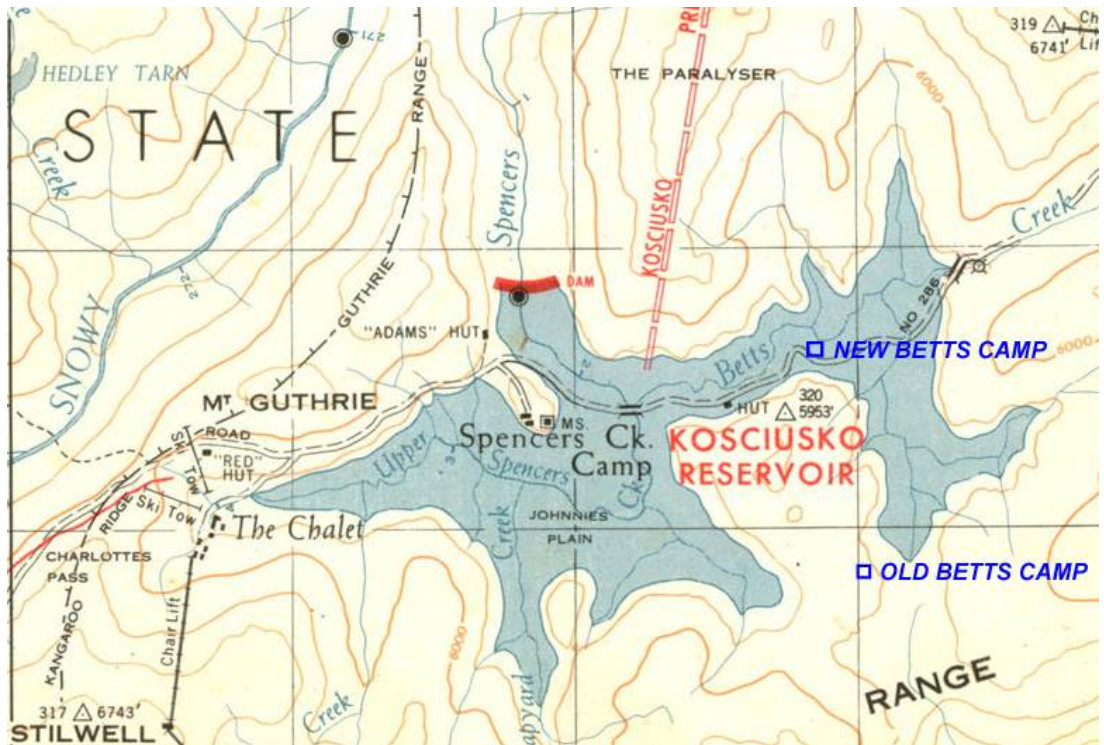


An unbuilt proposal for alterations and additions to New Betts Camp (ASYB 1948)

<sup>92</sup> Petersen, George; *Snow Revelry* February 1957 as reproduced in *George Petersen's Kosciusko* 1993, p98

<sup>93</sup> ASYB1947 p47





Proposed submersion of New Betts Camp (SMA Geehi 1"/mile 1962)

fruition, and the government was keen to move away from operating accommodation houses.

There was a short reprieve following the loss of the Hotel Kosciusko to fire in 1951, when demand for accommodation at Betts Camp boomed again, with the tariff £7 per week.

However the respite this was brief and by the mid-1950s Betts was again in decline. Private ski lodges were springing up across the range, and the crudeness of Betts was attractive only to a few diehards and 'Main Range Rats'. Worse still, the Snowy Scheme proposal for a reservoir on Spencers Creek was going to inundate Betts. Maintenance was wound back and in January 1963 the Kosciusko State Park Trust demolished New Betts Camp.<sup>94</sup>

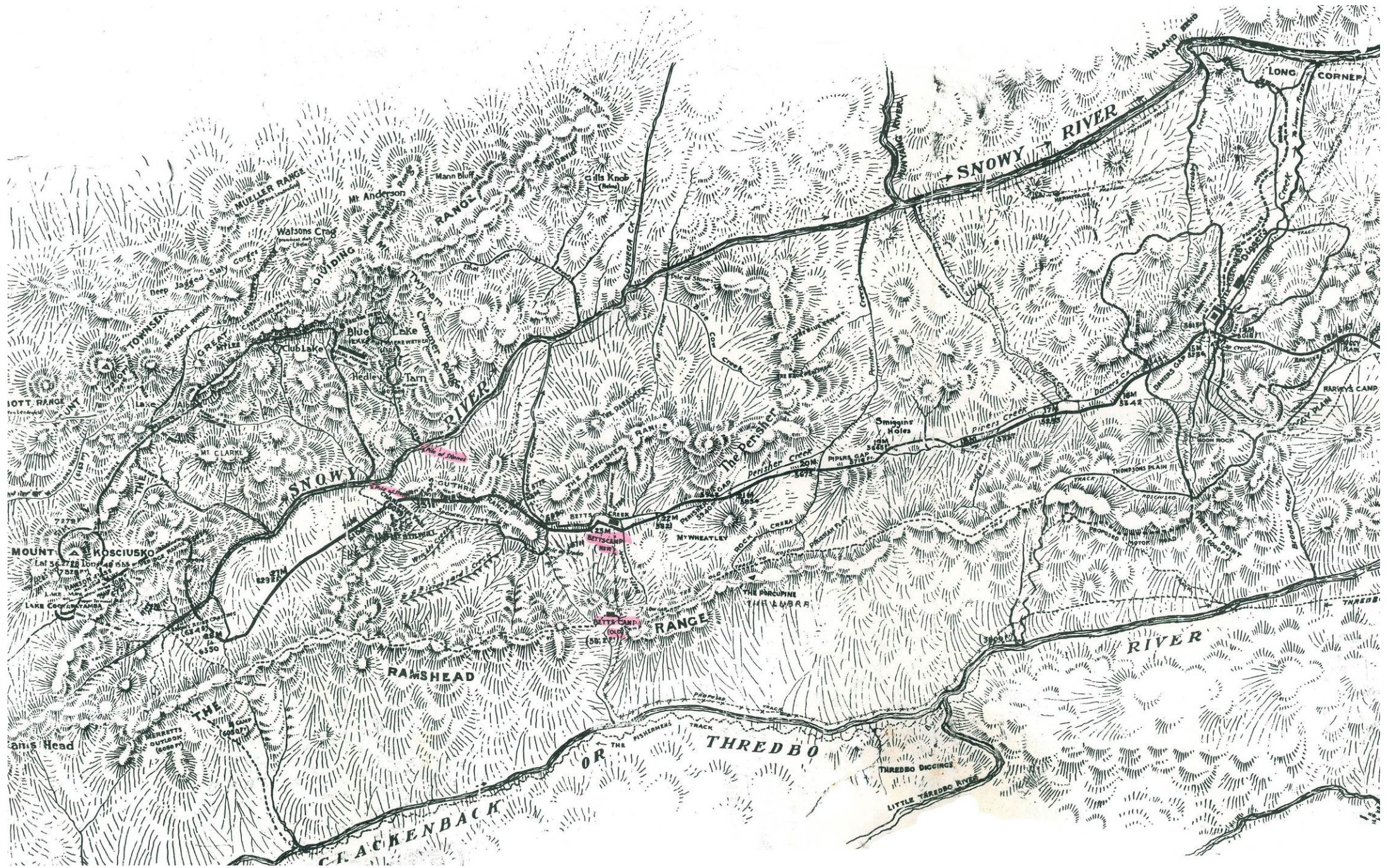
The proposed Kosciusko Reservoir was cancelled a few years later.



New Betts Camp being demolished in January 1963 (ASYB 1963)

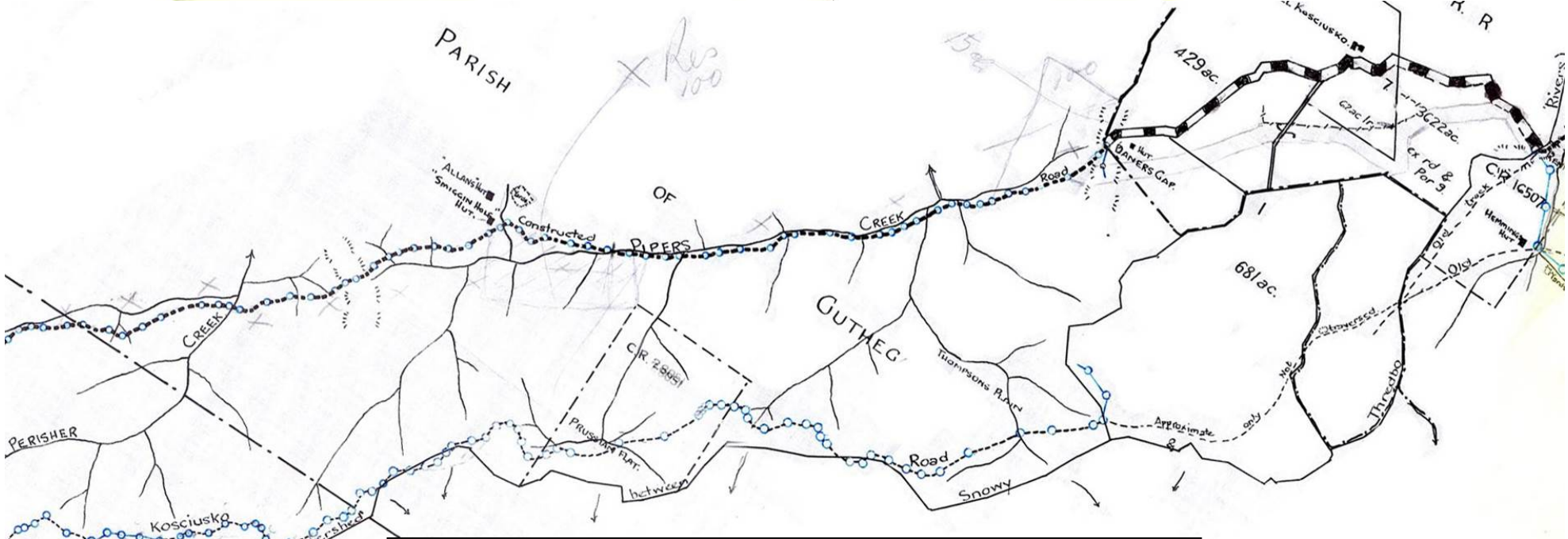
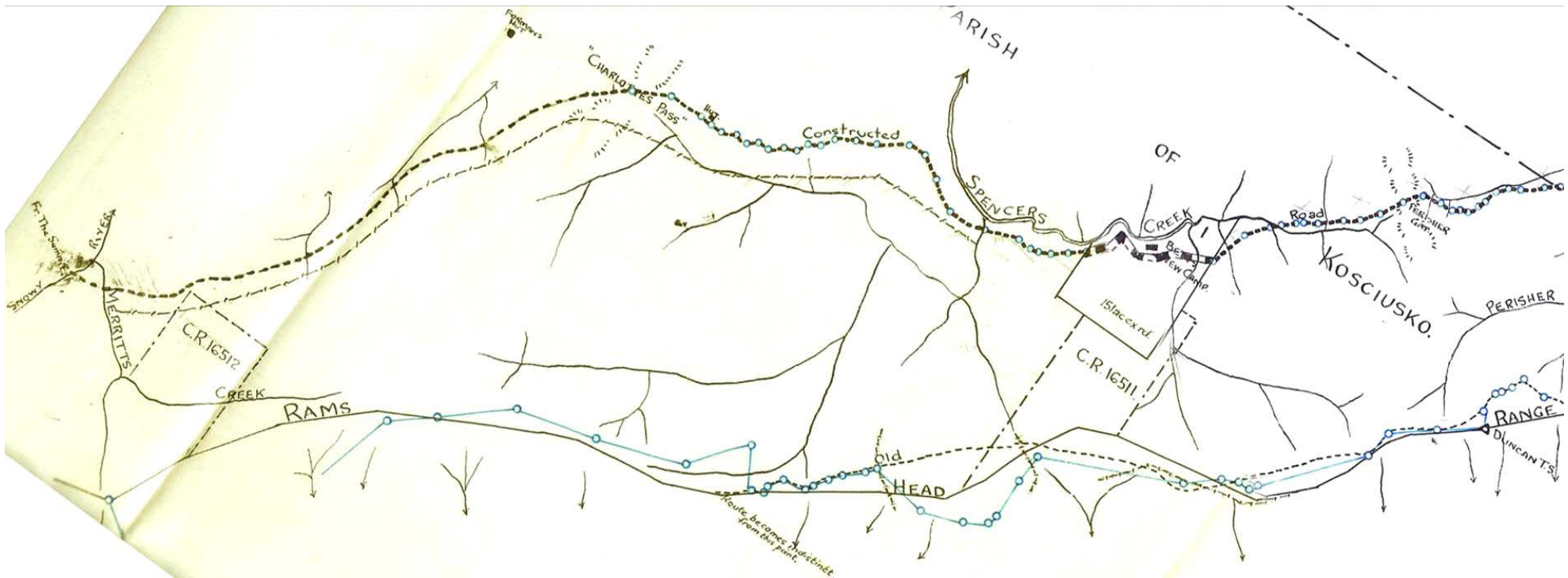
<sup>94</sup> ASYB1963



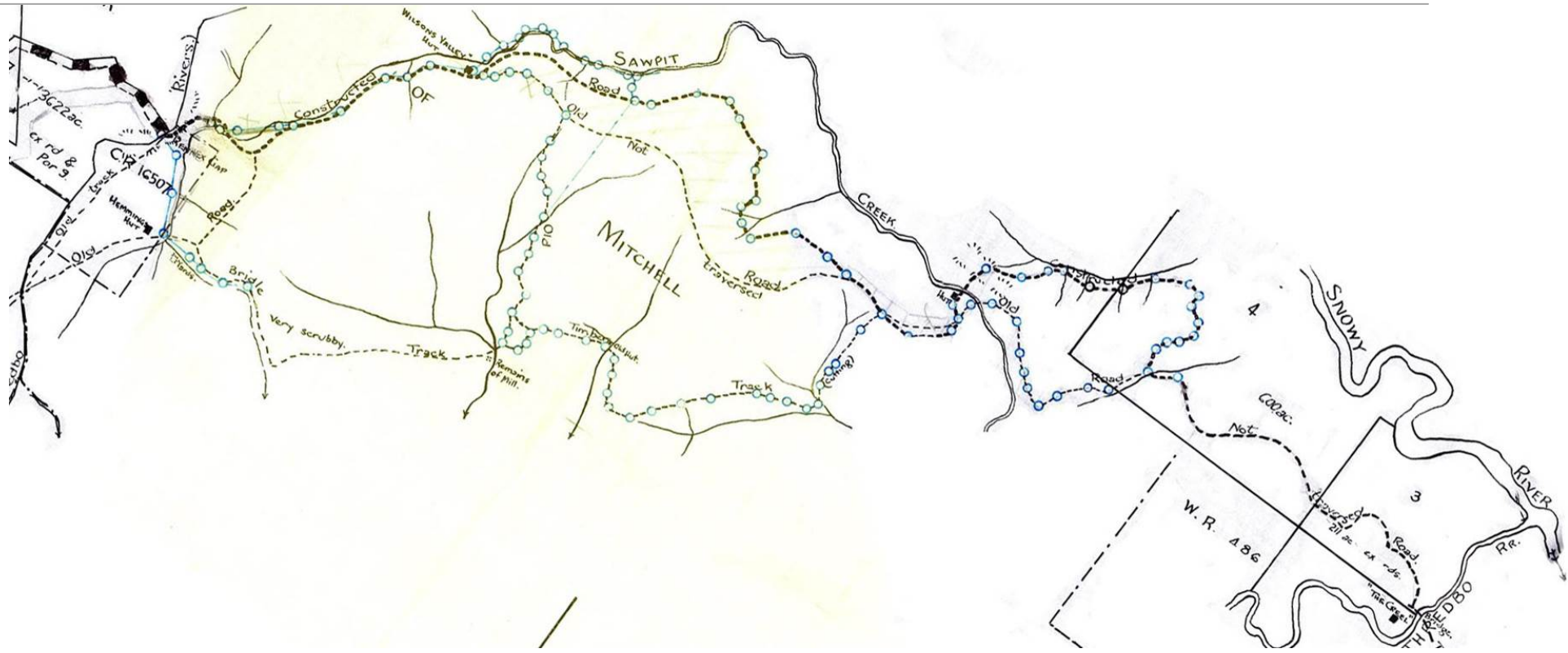


Extract from 'Kosciusko and Surrounding Districts' 1909 showing New & Old Kosciusko Roads, Old & New Betts Camps (NSW Lands Dept).





**1929 Survey of the New Kosciusko Road parts 1 & 2 (NSW Lands Dept, Goulburn)**



1929 Survey of the New Kosciusko Road part 3 (NSW Lands Dept, Goulburn)





**Old Kosciuszko Road Alignment (sheet 1 of 2)** based on historical maps, airphotos and fieldwork undertaken by Craig Doubleday KHA 2008-11 (D Scott 2011, basemap NSWDLPI)



