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OCTOBER, 1948



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# THE LADIES' SKI CLUB BULLETIN

No. 18

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OCTOBER, 1948.

## EDITORIAL

THE winter of 1947-8 must surely be noteworthy as a season more fraught with frustration than any up to date, even including the War years. By the Travel Ban, which came down last October with a clang suggestive of more Eastern lands, many hundreds of skiers were cut off from their beloved mountains, and great was the envy of those lucky ones who were included in the Olympic training scheme organised by the S.C.G.B. L.S.C. members among the "Trainees" were Isobel Roe, Biddy Duke-Woolley, Buntly Greenland, Philippa Harrison, Joan Murphy, Doris Palmer-Tomkinson, and Elizabeth Gunn, of whom the first three are to be congratulated on racing at St. Moritz. Evie Pinching, who trained the Ladies, was later in the season involved in a "jeep" accident in Austria and fractured her spine. We are very glad to hear of her rapid recovery from so unpleasant an occurrence.

However, besides these fortunate few, a good many people managed to get themselves to the Alps by hook or by crook, the "hook" being chiefly the kindness of our good friends on the other side of the Channel. We were extremely touched by the generosity and friendliness shown to us on innumerable occasions, and only wish we could find words with which to express our gratitude.

Thanks to this generosity, some of the *Englische Damen* managed to remain in Switzerland for several races after the Olympics were over. Isobel Roe and Xanthe Ryder went to Villars but were dogged by misfortune; in one race the former sprained both ankles and the latter lost a ski and both sticks, but retrieved the ski and gallantly finished. Sheena and Vora Mackintosh and Elizabeth Gunn raced in the Wassergrat Derby at Gstaad, where Sheena did well in the Downhill, finishing 3rd against strong Swiss, French, and Norwegian opposition. Towards the end of February Sheena and Xanthe raced in the Grand Prix de la Ville de Nice at Auron, after which came the Arlberg-Kandahar at Chamonix on the 6th and 7th March.

For the S.D.S. International Damenrennen held at Grindelwald on the 9th-11th January, during the Olympic training, four of our racers were entered for the Riesenslalom only, as it was thought that our current state of training was inadequate for the Downhill and Slalom. Georgette Miller-Thiollière (France) and Celina Seghi

(Italy) tied for 1st place in this, with May Nilsson (Sweden) 3rd. Isobel Roe was 14th, Buntly Greenland 18th, Biddy Duke-Woolley 20th, and Vora Mackintosh 22nd. The "Ehemalige" ("Ex-Racers") class was won by Frau Dr. E. Schwabe-Ritter (Austria), with Birnie Duthie 2nd, Helene Zingg (Switzerland) 3rd, and Ella (Kini) Maillart (Switzerland) 4th. The Downhill was won by Georgette Miller-Thiollière with Hedy Schlunegger (Switzerland) 2nd, and the Slalom by Celina Seghi, who was first on the Combined result.

It was of course impossible, owing to the Travel Ban, to hold the L.S.C. Championship last season, but it is hoped to hold it next year some time in January, at a date when most people will be in Switzerland.

The continent of Europe, though it takes pride of place, is not of course the only part of the world where there are mountains to ski on, and reports reach us of activity in places as far apart as Australia, Scotland, Cyprus, and Box Hill, where members of L.S.C. have been disporting themselves with aplomb and no little success.

We would like to offer our heartfelt thanks to the Australian Women's Ski Club for their delightful idea of sending food-parcels to all the members of the L.S.C. These wonderful parcels make the whole difference in enlivening the dreary rations of to-day, and we are more than grateful for the generous thought, and for the time and trouble which it must have involved.

Here is an extract from a very charming (and not altogether deserved) letter received from Mrs. Vesche, the President of the Australian Women's Ski Club:

"I feel I must write to you and say how much I have appreciated the many letters from Members of the Ladies' Ski Club of Great Britain thanking us for the food parcels we have sent. They have been such awfully nice letters and though I cannot write to each individual I would like your Members to know that we are the grateful ones really—grateful for an opportunity of being able to do some small thing in return for all that the people of Great Britain have done for us during the War and even now. So we are proud and pleased that the scheme is in motion and working smoothly."

We are glad to welcome Miss T. A. Taylor and Mrs. Wittouck as new members of the Club, and Mevrouw Gratia van den Bergh-Schimmelpenninck van der Oye as an Honorary Member.

Our congratulations and best wishes to the following on their marriage:

Mrs. Marion Allen (*née* Steedman), now Mrs. Pixley.  
Miss Elizabeth Angas, now Mrs. Bancroft.  
Miss Biddy Armitage, now Mrs. Duke-Woolley.  
Miss N. P. Collins, now Mrs. Arbuthnot.  
Miss H. Palmer-Tomkinson, now Mrs. Skotzin.  
Miss Penelope Peck, now Mrs. Mabey.  
Miss Pamela Fitz-Gerald, now Mrs. Kemsley.  
Mrs. Wright, now Mrs. D. Morgan.

Felicitations also to the following on their arrival:—

A son to Mrs. McSwiney, born on October 3rd, 1947;

A daughter to Mrs. Neilson, born on January 7th, 1948;

A daughter to Mrs. Newall, born on August 8th, 1946, and a son born on April 10th, 1948.

A daughter to Mevrouw van den Bergh-Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, born on May 30th, 1948.

The L.S.C. can now boast of having five of its members on the Council of the Ski Club of Great Britain: Lady Blane, Wanda Forster, and Birnie Duthie, who were elected to the Council this year, Jeanette Oddie and Betty Macfie.

A point of interest from Scotland (referred to on another page) is the fact that the ski-school at Newtonmore sustained no casualties at all during a three months' season; this is thought to be connected with the absence of funiculars. The heavy casualty list in Switzerland last winter may have been due, to a great extent, to the very bad snow-conditions encountered during most of the season, but all the same, one wonders. . . .

This year your Permanent (we hope) Hon. Editor, Lady Chamier, is taking a well-earned holiday from editing the BULLETIN; any shortcomings therefore that will inevitably be apparent in the present issue will be due entirely to the incompetence of your Temporary Editor.

## LETTER TO THE L.S.C.

(Received too late for the 1947 Bulletin.)

TOWING HILL STATION, VIA CORRYONG,

VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA.

DEAR LADY BLANE,

July 13th, 1947.

Very many thanks for sending me the L.S.C. BULLETIN. We have here the largest ski book library in Australia and naturally we are anxious to keep everything up to date. The L.S.C. always sent me the BULLETIN before the war and I am delighted that you are continuing the practice.

Congratulations also on the BULLETIN. It's excellent and you've risen above paper shortage and all the other troubles that seem to go with book production in these times. It was good to see Ted Chamier's picture, and also to see that Biddy Armitage had not changed much since the days when she used to push rude notes under the door when I was having my German lesson from Miss Audemars in the Bellevue Hotel at Davos.

I spent practically the whole war as a P.O.W. of the Japs at Singapore. We had a ski club there complete with everything except snow and ski, and used to meet once a week and have talks on skiing. We had people who just about represented all the ski fields of the globe, including men who had skied in such places as Esthonia and Patagonia!!! We often talked about you all.

My first visitor in Changi when we were rescued was Enid Fernandez. She very kindly had a runner find me, and in no time I

throats were dry, for whatever we said and whatever we did our minds concentrated unmercifully on one thing—the Downhill Race. Every corner of the course was visualised and gone over a hundred times. Hot and cold shivers of fear and excitement ran up and down our spines. “I must get right forward at the Nose-Dive.” “I musn’t forget my goggles.” “I hope my wax is right.” “Have I got a handkerchief?” Our thoughts were flying backwards and forwards in sheer nervousness. Nothing must be forgotten. . . .

The crowd at Corviglia station was large and unruly; shoving, pushing, shouting—they had even broken a station window in their anxiety to get up the mountain and watch the race at all costs. In the end police had to help us fight our way through to the funicular as the crowd would not move a step for us even though we were competitors.

The start of the race was a complete contrast to all the noise and fuss of the station. It was out of sight of most of the spectators and a nervous hush reigned, broken only by the quiet voices of the trainers giving last-minute advice. Competitors were adjusting their ski; wiping their goggles; eating oranges; being rubbed by their trainers to stimulate their circulation. The sun shone brilliantly on the tense faces of the competitors, on the photographers setting up their cameras, on the Starter glancing at his stopwatch. It seemed incredible that this was to be an Olympic race.

The first competitor was in position and was nervously sliding her ski backwards and forwards. As we reached the top she was off. There was a click from a dozen cameras and shouts of “ski heil” as she shot down the slope and disappeared out of sight. I ate a lump of sugar soaked in brandy.

The next competitor was in position and then she was off. My nervousness increased as I realised that I would be the first member of our team to start. My back and limbs were rubbed.

Then the next competitor was off. Then the next and the next, while the nightmare of waiting for the start was intensified with every new departure. My number was called.

I was at the start. My mouth was dry. My knees were jelly. One last desperate résumé of the course. “Fifteen seconds”; the Starter has his arm on mine. I try not to shiver. “Five seconds.” “*Achtung! Fertig! Los!!*” There is a far-away cheer from my team and I am moving. I am crouching low; I am racing.

The wind in my face is real; the sun is real; the snow and my speed are real; this is the RACE!

Every turn appears as I remembered it and disappears beneath my swishing, flying ski. The crowd is only a haze of vague figures. I have thoughts, eyes and undivided will-power for the track alone.

I am approaching the dreaded Nose-Dive. “Keep forward”; I manage it successfully and dimly hear voices cheering me on. My legs have begun to burn agonisingly from the tension. I can’t relax.

“I must have *vorlage* for the next bump.” I am over it and gathering speed. I think “the snow is lovely. I must not fall.” I am more than half-way and taking the big *schuss* very fast.

“Take this corner high. Keep well forward.” The advice of our trainer rushes through my head. Only some 200 yards to go now. My breath is coming in sobbing gasps; my legs are like fire.

“Steady over the jump.” I am going too fast, I must check. But there’s no room, the path is too narrow. I do a colossal leap and come down into a hollow of deep snow. I catch an edge and fall; there is a disappointed “Oh!” from the crowd.

“Hell! Don’t waste time. Climb quickly to the top of the mound.” Over the summit and I’m moving again, pushing hard to regain lost time. Every muscle is aching with tiredness.

“Now this is the Finish. Take it fast. Keep forward over this last bump. You’re passing the Finishing posts. You’re through! It’s over!”

One last turn and I sank exhausted into the snow and felt life come flooding back into a numbed brain, numbed by the tremendous effort of concentration that such a race demands. Then, partly revived, I stood at the Finish with a welcome cup of hot “Ovomaltine” in my hand, watching tiny figures appear on the horizon and speed down the slopes which only a few minutes before I had descended myself. I could not realise that it was all over. This glorious day, this glorious race for which we had waited and trained for so long.

The sun shone on although the last competitor had been down. The snow lay silent, and the spectators began to move away laughing and chattering. But we stood still looking at the mountain, memorising greedily the slopes of a thrilling Downhill ski race.

#### OLYMPIC RESULTS

*Downhill*: 1st, Hedy Schlunegger (Switzerland) 2 min. 28.3 sec.; 2nd, Trude Beiser (Austria) 2 min. 29.1 sec.; 3rd, Rese Hammerer (Austria) 2 min. 30.2 sec.; 4th, Celina Seghi (Italy) 2 min. 31.1 sec.; 27th, Isobel Roe (England) 2 min. 47.3 sec.; 30th, Rosemarie Sparrow (England) 2 min. 52.3 sec.; 33rd, Sheena Mackintosh (England) 3 min.; 34th, Xanthe Ryder (England) 3 min. 01.4 sec.

*Slalom (Combined)*: 1st, Erika Mahringer (Austria) 118.1; 2nd, Gretchen Frazer (U.S.A.) 121.0; 3rd, Anneliese Schuh-Proxaufer (Austria) 124.3; 4th, Alexandra Nekvapilova (Czechoslovakia) 128.8; 23rd, Sheena Mackintosh (England) 149.9; 24th, Rosemarie Sparrow (England) 161.7; 25th, Isobel Roe (England) 163.6; 27th, Xanthe Ryder (England) 189.8.

*Combined*: 1st, Trude Beiser (Austria) 6.58; 2nd, Gretchen Frazer (U.S.A.) 6.95; 3rd, Erika Mahringer (Austria) 7.04; 4th, Celina Seghi (Italy) 7.46; 23rd, Isobel Roe (England) 34.91; 24th, Sheena Mackintosh (England) 36.00; 25th, Rosemarie Sparrow (England) 37.16; 27th, Xanthe Ryder (England) 47.10.

*Special Slalom*: 1st, Gretchen Frazer (U.S.A.) 117.2; 2nd, Antoinette Meyer (Switzerland) 117.7; 3rd, Erika Mahringer (Austria) 118.0; 4th, Georgette Miller-Thiollière (France) 118.8; 21st, Sheena Mackintosh (England) 150.9 (including 1x penalty); 23rd, Isobel Roe (England) 169.6; 24th, Bridget Duke-Woolley (England) 173.7. Bunty Greenland (England) gave up.

## THE BRITISH LADIES' SKI CHAMPIONSHIP, 1948

BY BIRNIE DUTHIE.

THE Championships were held at Scheidegg on January 6th and 7th. The Slalom, which was run first, was set by Ernst Gertsch, of Wengen, on the slopes of the Lauberhorn. The wind had blown away most of the snow so that the slope was a sheet of glittering ice very suitable to give practice to our Olympic ski racers.

On the top half there were two turns in particular which were testing to inexperienced skiers, while the lower half consisted of a series of almost uphill traverses which, on the sheet ice, was most successful in dividing the competitors with old ski and blunt edges from those with modern equipment.

Isobel Roe, the winner, did two well-controlled runs, and Biddu Duke-Woolley, who went first without a *vorlaufer*, did well to be such a close second.

The Straight Race was started from just below the Lauberhorn shoulder and passed across the Bumps and through the wood by the switch-back to finish a few yards above the wood path.

Snow started to fall about an hour before the start, turning an icy, difficult course into a slow and comparatively easy one. Bad visibility was the chief difficulty.

Isobel Roe again asserted a clear superiority over the other competitors. Doris Palmer-Tomkinson, who had come to grief in the Slalom, ran well to gain second place while Biddu Duke-Woolley, though 41 seconds slower, retained second place in the Combined results.

Both Pip Harrison and Rosemarie Sparrow, who had done well in the Slalom, were injured and unable to take part in the Straight Race. One of the most interesting results of the race was that Xanthe Ryder, who was fifth, earned a last minute reprieve from being discarded from the Olympic Training, and she made such good use of this extension that she was eventually chosen for the Olympic Team.

It was unfortunate that the travel ban prevented several would-be competitors, including an ex-slalom champion and also a member of the 1938 Ladies' FIS Team, from taking part in the race.

### RESULTS. STRAIGHT.

	Name.	Time.	
		m.	s.
1st.	Miss I. Roe ... ..	4	30.2
2nd.	Mrs. D. Palmer-Tomkinson ... ..	4	33.8
3rd.	Miss E. Angas ... ..	5	04.4
4th.	Mrs. B. Duke-Woolley ... ..	5	14.2
5th.	Miss X. Ryder ... ..	5	20.2
6th.	Miss B. Duthie ... ..	5	27.4
7th.	Mrs. B. Greenland ... ..	5	31.2
8th.	Miss V. Mackintosh ... ..	5	55.0
9th.	Hon. Mrs. Williams ... ..	6	21.2

### SLALOM.

1st.	Miss I. Roe ... ..	144.2
2nd.	Mrs. B. Duke-Woolley... ..	145.6
3rd.	Miss P. Harrison ... ..	145.8
4th.	Miss R. Sparrow ... ..	165.0
5th.	Miss V. Mackintosh ... ..	166.2
6th.	Mrs. B. Greenland ... ..	180.9
7th.	Miss B. Duthie ... ..	184.6

### COMBINED.

		(Total Points.)
1st.	Miss I. Roe ... ..	0.00
2nd.	Mrs. B. Duke-Woolley ... ..	16.24
3rd.	Mrs. B. Greenland ... ..	37.02
4th.	Miss B. Duthie ... ..	37.18
5th.	Miss V. Mackintosh ... ..	39.30

## THE GOMME SKI

BY ISOBEL ROE.

THE members of the Olympic Ski Team had the interesting job of trying out the first 30 pairs of "Gommes" ever to be made. These ski consist of a metal plate with a fine veneer of wood glued to the running surface, and several laminations of wood on the upper surface. The metal plate obviates the necessity for having steel edges fitted. The edge being part of the ski is extremely efficient and grips well on icy snow.

Another advantage of these ski is that they combine a soft-snow ski with a *piste* ski. They are very whippy, which makes them good on soft snow, but unlike the whippy all-wood ski they do not lose their powers of gripping on the *piste*.

Timed tests have proved the "Gomme" to be a fast ski. Over the first half-minute of the Olympic Downhill course Donald Garrow on "Gommes" was leading James Couttet by several seconds.

Naturally our "secret weapon" caused a certain amount of interest at St. Moritz, and one was bombarded with questions by the leading skiers of other nations. Then there was the story of the lost "Gomme"; a single ski which disappeared in the night never to be seen again. . . .

I am convinced that the "Gomme" is the ski of the future, and hope that the Export Drive will not always dispose of the lion's share.

## MEMOIRS OF A VETERAN

BY MOYRA WILLIAMS.

It is not, perhaps, everyone who, the year after writing an article for this paper beginning with the words "First Impressions," would have the temerity to offer one under the above title. But it is not, perhaps, everyone who would want to. Therefore, before going further, let me stop to point out the advantages of such a speedy evolution.

There must be moments in everyone's sporting career when she has turned her attention for one moment to considering, not how best to achieve proficiency, but why such proficiency should be achieved. What is the end in view? What is the point of tossing the caber further than another fellow, hitting the ball straighter, or covering the ground quicker? It is not utilitarian, for one of the essentials of a sport is that in the ordinary struggle for existence it shall be quite useless. Means of locomotion only become sports when they are obsolete and can be preserved in no other way. Ball games, as any amateur psychologist will tell you, are either symbolic or escapist.

The pleasures we derive from sporting achievements must, therefore, come from some other source, not hard to find when one really looks. It lies in the prestige and admiration we get from our fellows. Now the argument arises that if this prestige can be gained in any other way, short-circuiting the rather laborious process of having to excel at a sport itself, may one not achieve just as much pleasure from games with half the amount of work? And who, having an economical mind, will not admit the force of this point? Since the attainment of prestige without work is the prerogative of the veteran, it is to those who aspire to such an exalted rank that this article is especially dedicated.

In retrospect, I can recognise five steps which led me to this treasured goal. The first is, of course, age. Now age is not really hard to achieve, and to realise that it need present no barrier to the successful attainment of veteran status, one need but catch an unexpected reflection of oneself when setting out to catch the 8.30 a.m. bus on a cold grey morning. I will even go further, and say that those who are honest with themselves will realise that they are already veterans.

The second stage is achieved with the realisation that the time-honoured and still occasionally practised "Well-I-could-do-it-if-I-wanted-to" line must at last be dropped. The veteran—at least the nice veteran, and it is important to be nice if you want to be a veteran—does not pretend that she could do it. In fact, much of her charm in the eyes of those who are still struggling comes from the modest and frank admission which she is prepared to make of her own shortcomings, together with that delightful sense of never-being-too-old-to-learn which arises from a practical analysis of one's own mistakes. This the veteran may show in such timely remarks as "How silly of me to catch an edge there" or "I do wish I could get more vorlage,"

or even, if she wants to score a certain hit, "However did *you* manage to get down there so well?"

The third step is gained by showing that one is now concentrating on more serious topics, and regards the absurdly useless (and not always dignified) occupation of tearing down a hill, up which one has laboriously just been hauled, as a pleasant pastime, but a pastime only. This is our good old friend, "I-may-not-be-very-good-at-this-but-you-should-see-me-at . . ." robbed of the flavour of acidity with which it is so often tainted, and exuding instead the bouquet of a vintage wine. It may of course be elaborated. A soupçon of the underlying stress of one's working existence; a hint of over-strain, making its appearance felt now that one is at last able to relax; of undernourishment; or lack of sun-light; all have their uses.

The fourth and a very important phase, consists in reminding the public from time to time of how well one *did* when one could. A coveted badge used in lieu of safety-pin in some modest spot, from which it only becomes apparent when as by mistake one carelessly removes a piece of outer clothing, is an excellent means of achieving this end, and, as an attentive observer will remark, often used in the very highest circles. Should the would-be veteran, however, share my misfortune in not possessing any badge of rare distinction, it is possible in emergencies to compensate for the lack of quality by increased quantity. A mass of local badges (so long as the tell-tale words "Ski-Schule" are not too blatantly obvious on them) worn as a clanking breast-plate on the front of one's coat or sewn in series down its arms, will so dazzle the beginner with its rash of different names and colours that one's prestige may gain proportionately. One must, however, exercise care in carrying out this manoeuvre. For instance, the S.C.G.B. third class badge, although it may be borne with aplomb in places like Norway, is inclined to have a rather undesirable influence if sported on the nursery slopes at Mürren, where the onlookers' badge of Galdhøpiggen or Holmenkollen may be exhibited with confidence. On the whole, pin-on badges are therefore preferable, since they may always be changed to suit the circumstances of the moment.

The last of the purely personal tactics might be called the "Technical advance." If one's equipment is of the highest quality, one's clothes well-worn but exotic, or if, in the matter of boots and bindings, one can produce something built on the lines of those of the experts, but going just a little further, then one's claims to the title of veteran are assured. As, one day, I started to fiddle confidently with the three superfluous but pale grey straps which stretch from the tops of my boots to all available points of contact on my Kandahar springs, I noticed with a glow of satisfaction that all eyes, even those of several Swiss guides, were upon me. It was not, however, till I pulled myself nonchalantly erect—it was at the foot of the ski-lift, I remember—that it dawned on me that all and sundry were convinced of my prowess. Unwilling to spoil an effect so obviously to my advantage, it became necessary to look down again, swear lightly, murmur "Damn! I see I shall have to make another adjustment."

That's the trouble with these, although it's incredible the difference they make," and retire to an isolated glade. Nevertheless, a step had been made along the road to veteran status which I have never regretted. There are, of course, also innumerable gains to be made from a new kind of wax ("I don't know if it'll work. Johannes Schnitz suggested it to me—a kind of mixture between candle-grease, shoe-polish and black-lead"), while the possibilities latent in goggles and glasses of all kinds are only now being fully exploited.

As well as these five purely personal methods by which veteran status may be achieved, I have noted two others open for the use of groups; but these constitute a more highly organised procedure, as they entail a considerable amount of team work as well as individual skill. I can, however, recommend both of them from personal experience. The first might be called the British method, while the second is the prerogative of members of the S.C.G.B.

For the first method, the recipe is as follows. Take a large area of a foreign country—preferably one of the most beautiful. Single out a couple of the best runs, a railway carriage, an hotel, a restaurant or a shop. Into this area pour as many people of your own nationality as possible, ensuring that all are talking at the tops of their voices, and stir till any foreign bodies who happen to have remained unwittingly within the vicinity are driven out. The chosen area can then rightfully be considered yours, and the time before which you occupied it will soon be forgotten. If the group is mobile, that is to say a-ski, the procedure is little different. Noise is again the first essential, followed closely by speed and lack of control. Of course, there is always the danger that this treatment will annoy some, and cause a boiling over in neighbouring areas; while if the people displaced during your run happen to be others of your own nationality, the chance almost amounts to certainty. But all sport involves risks, and if the worst happens, veterans may demonstrate their superiority by stemming the flood of vindictive bound to ensue.

The S.C.G.B. tactic is an entirely original version of the "feint." It can seldom have been demonstrated more beautifully than during the first week of this year at Wengen, the organisers thus proving beyond doubt their claims to the titles of worthy veterans. Nothing, we all know, has a more undermining effect on an adversary than announcing a probable programme of attack which is never carried out. When no one knows until two minutes before their scheduled starts whether any of six programmes will take place, the effect on the struggling young skier is bound to be devastating; but the veteran can eat his hard-boiled eggs in a neighbouring Stube unmoved since not involved.

All of these five individual and two group methods of becoming a veteran may be employed with the full confidence that they will achieve the desired end; but if the student wishes to make doubly sure of success it is advisable for her to carry a number to the start of at least one big race in her life, so that in future conversations she may refer casually, but with complete truth, to the time of her racing prime. If she does not happen to be especially skilled at the sport,

I would personally advise her to miss out a control, twist an ankle, or lose a ski somewhere before the winning post, so that her time is not recorded; for although at the actual finish other people will be too busily occupied in doubting the accuracy of their own recorded times to notice those of others, there are (mercifully!) such papers as the L.S.C. BULLETIN in which these things are published, to be chewed over later, and to revive the smouldering embers of nostalgia when the immediate excitement has subsided.

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## THE 1948 A-K AT CHAMONIX

BY ISOBEL ROE.

FROM the British point of view the A-K was a case of the ten little nigger boys. Vora Mackintosh was the first to fall out, she broke her ankle. Then Sheena, who had gone to the South of France to race, got 'flu and was unable to return in time. Rosemarie Sparrow sprained her ankle and Elizabeth Gunn cut her leg on her steel edges. It was also very sad that Evie Pinching was not able to race, but I gather she is lucky to be alive after her motor accident. It therefore fell to Xanthe Ryder and myself to represent the Kandahar in the first A-K to be held at Chamonix.

This year the men and women had two different courses. The men's "Glacier" course was mercifully considered too difficult for us *Damen*. One imagined that, thanks to the easier course, the women's race might be a fairly civilised affair. But that was not to be. In true French style a number of excitable spectators perched on the top of the Brévent with a view of the entire course, gave a running commentary of disasters which were overtaking the unfortunate racers. Imagine the effects on one's rather shattered nerves to hear "*Ab Française, elle va bien,*" then awful sighs, next "*elle est tombée elle ne monte pas. Elle est encore pas montée.*" Then there was Marie Pierre who we were informed was being removed on a schlitten. Disaster had even overcome one of the Austrians who had turned three somersaults and given up. Later we heard that she had only broken a ski.

The unofficial commentary, combined with the official radio commentary which was in communication with the finish, was quite alarming. From the finish we had reports of dreadful falls. This was not very surprising as the course ended with a very fast schuss with no run out at all. Xanthe must have given both official and unofficial commentators something to talk about, as she had three bad falls, but in true British style she always "*montéd*" and in fact finished on one ski carrying the other.



The winner of the Downhill was Anneliese Schuh-Proxauf, in 2 mins. 12 secs.; she beat by 3 seconds the time of the vorlaufer, who had finished 33rd in the men's race the previous day.

Second was Trude Beiser, followed by Celina Seghi and Rhoda Wurtele who tied for third place. I am convinced that Celina Seghi is handicapped by being small and light and that she is really the best woman skier to-day. I feel that with more weight she would win downhill races with the same margin that she achieves in slalom races.

The Slalom was held at Argentière on the same slope as the 1937 FIS Slalom. It is not a good slope as it faces due south, and is covered with too many tree stumps and young larch trees. They had tried to clear a definite course, but in spite of this the whole thing was rather a maze of slalom poles intermingled with trees, shrubs and stumps. To make matters more difficult the new slalom rules do not require the poles to be flagged, instead they are numbered. Numbering presumably helps officials, but the racer does not really have time to read them, and would infinitely prefer the old flagging system.

The race was due to start at 9.30. When we arrived at 8.30 the course was very hard, but as the hot March sun reached the slope the icy ruts soon melted and became slush. In spite of these awful conditions the right people won. Celina was first, and with her usual determination she just made up the six seconds she was down on the Straight Race and so won the Combined for the second year in succession. Everybody was tremendously impressed by Andrea Mead, of America, who ran two beautiful runs and came in second.

One is always being asked which one considers the best technique. It is an extremely difficult question to answer. The French men did brilliantly in the Downhill, the Italians did well in the Slalom, and the Austrian women seemed outstanding as a team. After the race was over we were interviewed *en Français* by *Radio Français*. The first question was "now tell us about the technique Anglaise." Their faces rather fell when we replied that there was no technique Anglaise and that when in France we did (or tried to do) technique Française, in Switzerland technique Suisse, and that we were very much looking forward to returning to Austria and learning the technique Autrichienne.

## RESULTS

*Downhill*: 1st, Anneliese Schuh-Proxauf (2 min. 12.6 sec.); 2nd, Trude Beiser (2 min. 19.6 sec.); 3rd (tied), Celina Seghi and Rhoda Wurtele (2 min. 19.8 sec.); 14th, Isobel Roe (2 min. 40.6 sec.); 27th, Xanthe Ryder (3 min. 58.0 sec.).

*Slalom*: 1st, Celina Seghi (109.7); 2nd, Andrea Mead (114.4); 3rd, Trude Beiser (116.9); 4th, Anneliese Schuh-Proxauf (119.1); 9th, Isobel Roe (141.5).

*Combined*: 1st, Celina Seghi (5.15); 2nd, Anneliese Schuh-Proxauf (5.22); 3rd, Trude Beiser (9.01); 4th, Andrea Mead (9.49); 9th, Isobel Roe (37.73).

## SCOTLAND, 1948



DRUMOCHTER SLOPES WITH MARCAONACH IN BACKGROUND. RACE-COURSE OVER THE OTHER SIDE.



3RD CLASS TEST IN PROGRESS ABOVE DALWHINNIE.

SKI-ING IN AUSTRALIA



*Photos by]*

KOSCIUSKO COUNTRY.



KOSCIUSKO COUNTRY.

The toiling figure is a member of the L.S.C.,  
Agatha Devine.

*[Jill MacDonald*

SKI-ING IN AUSTRALIA



*Photos by]*

SNOW GUMS.



TRACK TO HOTHAM, VICTORIA.

*[Jill MacDonald*

## SKI-ING IN AUSTRALIA



Photo by]

KOSCIUSKO COUNTRY.

[Jill MacDonald



Photo by]

PACKING IN TO HOTHAM, VICTORIA.

[Jill MacDonald

The horse is being fitted with snow-shoes, in the hope (unfulfilled) of getting a bit higher up.

## SKI-ING IN SCOTLAND, 1948

By MRS. W. R. BRACKEN.

As there was no travel abroad last winter we decided to run a ski-school in Scotland and see what happened. Well, the answer was a great success, and we were able to keep the Balavil Arms Hotel at Newtonmore open for the whole winter and early spring.

We arrived on January 16th and left on April 16th, and there was not a day in those three months when the School did not operate (except by mutual consent for a day off) even though it was the mildest winter in Scotland for eleven years.

Ski-ing in Scotland is a much more strenuous sport than ski-ing in Switzerland as you have to walk up every yard you ski down. That did not seem to deter our customers, but I think that after their fortnight's holiday they had had plenty of exercise.

The train journey from London and back could not have been more easy, a night in a sleeper either way and you could be on your ski at 9.30 in the morning. The journey, however, from Glasgow was a much more formidable affair so one of our customers told us. The story was so funny that we asked him to put it down in writing. Here it is:

"Attracted by the announcement that Winter Sports were being organised at Newtonmore in the Highlands, I packed my kit and clamping my ski together, I set out from Glasgow one frosty January morning.

"At Buchanan Street Station I asked the porter to put my ski on the train for the North, and I was informed that passengers for Newtonmore travelled in the rear portion of the train. The porter promised to see that my ski went into the right luggage van, so, having some time to spare, I wandered off to the Buffet and fortified myself for the journey—with coffee.

"Almost as the train was due out I found my seat, and suffering from traveller's nerves I hopped out again and enquired of the guard if my ski were all right, only to be told that I should be in the front portion of the train. Collecting my gear, I dashed along the platform and just managed to scramble in at the front as the whistle blew. With a sigh of relief I settled down and had a smoke to calm myself.

"I saw large patches of snow on the countryside as the train steamed along, and after leaving Stirling, the hills to the North-West could be seen glistening with snow in the sun, and my spirits rose accordingly only to be dashed again when a ticket inspector came along and looking as though he had never heard of Newtonmore, told me that after all I should be in the rear portion of the train. When I explained that I had moved once already, he said I need not bother to change at Perth where the train split up, but could go straight on to Aviemore and change there since the front portion did not stop at Newtonmore. He said that non-stopping trains could be requested to stop at Newtonmore, but only by Sassenachs travelling from South of the Border. Under my breath I mumbled that maybe Home Rule might not be a bad thing for Scotland after all.

"I settled down once again, and after making sure, as I thought, that my ski were not put out at Perth, I went to have lunch in the dining car. Approaching the mountains beyond Perth I could see several peaks completely mantled in snow, and I congratulated myself on having the good sense and courage not to be prevented by the wretched foreign travel ban from indulging in my favourite sport.

"While quietly sipping a Drambuie with my coffee and glowing with anticipation, I was surprised when a second ticket collector rudely asked me what I thought I was doing on that train. I referred to the advice given to me by the previous inspector and was gruffly told that some people did not know what they were talking about. I must get out at Blair Atholl, he said. If I went on to Aviemore I would not get a connecting train back to Newtonmore for several hours, and in any case my ticket was not valid. Resigned to the inevitable, I asked the inspector if he would see that my ski were put out at the next station, but with a gleam of triumph he told me he had discovered them at Perth and had put them out there.

"Well, I alighted at Blair Atholl and was somewhat mollified by a flurry of snowflakes and a kind-hearted porter who invited me to keep warm in front of a non-Gaitskell fire in his shelter. He also said my ski were sure to have been put on the following train.

"Very shortly the train arrived and I sat back for the last lap of my journey through mountains clothed in white and as the engine puffed steadily over Drumochter Pass, I felt that perhaps in spite of everything, I was sure to get some good ski-ing.

"At Newtonmore a hurried examination of both the forward and rear luggage vans assured me that in fact my ski had disappeared, and I was left standing disconsolate and alone on the platform as the train steamed away into the gathering dusk with the horrible suspicion growing in my mind that in my haste and excitement I had labelled my ski to my customary hotel in Switzerland!"

Anyway, he arrived, and his ski followed next day. We chose the Balavil Arms at Newtonmore as it was one of the few Hotels in those parts which was open all the year round, had central heating, and served you with dinner instead of high-tea. In the early part of the season there was an abundance of snow, and the scene in the morning outside the Balavil was like that at any winter sports hotel in Switzerland. We had our own bus so could go further afield if necessary without any difficulty. Our nursery slopes were about five minutes from the hotel near Padre Wood's house. He was a very keen skier and most helpful in showing us around the mountains, though Patsy Richardson and Bill had a fair knowledge of them as they had both served with 52nd Mountain Division during part of the War.

To those who say that it is no good going to Scotland to ski as there is never any snow, the answer is "Nonsense." Although most of last season one could see very little or no snow from the train or the road, the corries are always full and afforded excellent ski-ing on perfect spring snow throughout the winter and spring. In fact, we had a letter from Major Willoughby, who was one of our

customers, and who raced in the Olympic Games this year, to say that he had enjoyed an excellent day's ski-ing in the Cairngorms on June 16th. Last year Padre Wood had very good ski-ing there in August.

In the early part of the season we skied mostly above Kingussie in the Pitmain Lodge district. There is a shooter's hut in the mountains there which makes a good place for lunch. The slopes are easy and varied for beginners, and if a more difficult run is required, Craig Dhu is full of interest and takes about one-and-a-half hours to climb. Later on, when there was not so much snow, we did all our ski-ing in the Dalwhinnie district. There are some beautiful corries in these parts which hold snow well into the early summer. "Bill's Gully" from Glas Mheall Mor down to just above Dalnaspidal provides you with 2,000 feet of first-class ski-ing, steep and amusing for one-and-a-half hours' climb. There is plenty of room in these corries, and this particular one is three or four hundred yards wide. We had a number of excellent race courses including one called Dorf-Tali after the run at Davos. This is above Drumochter Lodge and is very steep and narrow and the greatest of fun. We ran the MacMurren Derby down this course, a giant slalom of about 1,000 feet (see *Punch*, March 3rd, 10th and 17th). This race was held on the Sunday after the Scottish Ski Club Meeting, and a busload of Scotsmen stopped off on their way home to Edinburgh and entered for the race, which was won by Neil Mackenzie of the Scottish Ski Club. After the race, a good time was had by all at the "Loch Ericht" which was our "local" in Dalwhinnie, and was where we always stopped on our way home to keep the wet out. Our host, Mr. Matheson, told us that the locals always put a little port with their rum to take the fire out of it. This became one of our favourite drinks.

There was another very fine race course the other side of the railway to Drumochter down a mountain called "Marcaonach." We organised the Scottish Command Ski Championship on this mountain on April 11th. This was won by Major Willoughby.

Birnie Duthie and her brother paid us a visit, but it was unfortunate that conditions were not very good during their stay. We came across Alexis and Colin Fraser one day on the top of a mountain. They were on holiday from Edinburgh.

An interesting point was that in three months ski-ing we did not have a single accident, not even a sprained ankle, although 150 people passed through our hands and averaged a fortnight's holiday each. We think there must be something in walking uphill after all.

## PRÈS DE LA CÔTE D'AZUR

BY SHEENA MACKINTOSH.

It was unbelievable that we had come down here to ski! It felt very out of place to be dressed in *Vorlages*, sweaters and heavy boots while other people were walking about in big hats, summer dresses and sandals. Yet only the night before we had been glad of our warm clothes when we left the cold, bleak valley of Chamonix. Overnight, from the bitterness of winter we had emerged into the heart of throbbing spring.

Xanthe Ryder and I had come to the South of France on a lovely invitation to represent Great Britain at Auron in the "*Grand Prix de la Ville de Nice*." It had meant a long and tiring journey from Chamonix, but even as the train approached Nice and we saw the splendour of the Mediterranean with the snowy Alps in the distance we knew it was worth it, if only for a few days.

Auron is 60 miles north of Nice, and a bus had been arranged to take us there. It was a striking journey, wild and lovely. For a short time we drove beside the vivid blue Mediterranean that lay gloriously peaceful in the brilliant sun, inviting us tantalisingly to plunge into its sparkling waters. Then we turned from the sea towards the snow-clad peaks of the Southern Alps. The land was flat, and on either side the orchards were covered with blossom. There were trees of bright yellow mimosa, and we passed through groves of green olives, young vines growing row upon row in never-ending lines, and peasants picking fruit from the heavily-laden orange and lemon trees. It quickened our hearts and warmed our blood to see this plentiful promise of Summer, we, who had seen nothing but snow and mountains for months.

Gradually the country became rocky and arid, and we entered a mountain gorge. It was very wild and the road was hardly more than a dirt track that had been carved out of the cliff, and wound and twisted its way high above a clear stream that slithered between the rocks far below.

We drove through primitive French villages with narrow cobbled streets, whose inhabitants came out barefoot to stare at the bus. We began to wonder what sort of place we were heading for.

It became colder as we got further into the mountains. The rocks change from sandy pink to a deep purple, and patches of snow started to appear. After three hours we began to mount steeply until we felt we were almost level with the tops of the mountains, and there was snow on every side. Suddenly we rounded a bend and here was Auron!

It was indeed a skier's village, complete with two luxurious-looking hotels, ski shops and a restaurant. A red *téléferique* was just setting off up the mountain on its cable. Then it began slowly to dawn on us that it was true, we had really come to the South of France to ski!

Several countries had sent teams to compete at Auron. The

Austrians had been in our bus, and had sung and yodelled gaily most of the way. There were also representatives from Canada, Belgium, North Africa, and, of course, from France.

The "*Grand Prix de la Ville de Nice*," consisted of two Downhill races and a Slalom. Xanthe and I had time for only two practice runs down each course, so were delighted at not coming in last in any of the races.

The courses were prepared with considerable care, but the second Downhill course was a nasty run. It was narrow and steep, between trees, and the snow was very treacherous. A Canadian, while practising it, ran into a tree and injured his pelvis, and there were several more casualties during the race. The Slalom course was, as most of them are nowadays, icy and long.

Xanthe and I were amazed and quite overjoyed when, after the first day's racing, an anonymous man sent a bottle of champagne to our table because he had been "so well received in England"!

When the races were over the competitors were taken back to Nice where a big dinner and prize-giving had been arranged. England was presented with a large bronze medal representing a scantily-clad figure, which seemed somehow to match the Olympic medal with which we had all been presented at St. Moritz!

### RESULTS

*1st Downhill Race*: 1st, E. Mahringer (Austria) 2 min. 34.2 sec.; 2nd, Mlle. Demazières (France) 2 min. 37.0 sec.; 3rd, A. Schuh-Proxauf (Austria) 2 min. 39.8 sec.; 5th, S. Mackintosh (England) 2 min. 51.8 sec.; 11th, X. Ryder (England) 3 min. 26.6 sec.

*2nd Downhill Race*: 1st, E. Mahringer 2 min. 09.1 sec.; 2nd (tied), A. Schuh-Proxauf and Mlle. Demazières, 2 min. 24.1 sec.; 9th, S. Mackintosh 2 min. 50.0 sec.; 11th, X. Ryder 3 min. 09.4 sec.

*Slalom*: 1st Mme. Couttet-Schmidt (France) 111.4; 2nd, A. Schuh-Proxauf 114.7; 3rd, E. Mahringer 119.9; 8th, S. Mackintosh, 141.0; 9th, X. Ryder, 141.5.

*Combined*: 1st, E. Mahringer (Austria); 2nd, A. Schuh-Proxauf (Austria); 3rd, Mlle. Demazières (France); 6th, S. Mackintosh (England); 11th, X. Ryder (England).

## THE JOYS OF TRAVEL

BY OLYMPIC HANGER-ON.

SINCE travelling abroad last winter was *verboten* no special winter-sports trains were laid on and the journey was a case of endurance vile.

The journey out could be faced with some equanimity with the pleasant prospects ahead but, except for the last glorious meal at Basle Buffet-Bahnhof, there was no such compensation on the return trip.

The knowledge that you were to be immured for fifteen hours in a French train, with no restaurant car and appalling sanitary conditions, packed like sardines in corridor and carriage, was enough to make the stoutest heart quail.

At the outset the return trip began badly. The passengers were herded through two lots of customs and currency, and then penned into a corner of the station for two hours. The time of departure came and went, and though the train was waiting we were not allowed to board it until the authorities had guaranteed a thoroughly late departure. At last we fought our way on board, and our stout porter used his strength to good effect and secured two seats. Exhausted, we sank into them and surveyed our companions; two Swiss girls and two Italian men. It was not so bad after all, at least not for the next hour or so.

Not being a through train we stopped at every station and soon the fun began. Hordes of embittered French travellers invaded us, extremely vocal at only finding standing room. We decided that it was better not to understand the frank remarks, and never before have we endured such insults in silence. For over six hours through that night a party of rowdy young demobilised soldiers were our close companions. They jammed the carriage door open and proceeded to get drunker. One of them poured brandy down my dozing friend's neck and when I gave him a strong push and hurled his loaf of bread at his head I thought I would be lynched.

Soon the drink began to take effect, and one by one they passed out and were dreadfully sick with true Gallic abandon. The results may be imagined and, since the door was jammed, we tried to get the utterly detached and somnolent Italians to open the window. This they were reluctant to do and anyway it was one of those windows which creep shut again.

It is interesting to note that the ticket collector, on his periodic visits through the train, was too frightened of the hooligans to protect us, and indeed appeared to think that the whole episode was a delicious joke.

When the drunks disembarked other travellers surged in to replace them and assumed that we were responsible for the unspeakable mess. On our attempting to explain the matter one woman told us loftily that she was a woman of the world and that accidents would happen in the best regulated families.

We were later exasperated to discover that the two men had a

good command of the English language when they pressed papers on us to read. When we explained that we did not understand Italian they assured us that it did not matter as the pictures would explain themselves. Which they did, and they kindly watched over us to see that we missed none of the finer points which were so graphically displayed.

Let those who were not so fortunate in getting to Switzerland last season take comfort at having missed such squalor. And, as there had to be a ban on foreign travel, they may feel less envious on learning that the snow conditions this winter were the worst within living memory.

## THE CYPRUS SKI CLUB RACE MEETING

BY MARJORIE GREENLAND.

THE Cyprus Ski Club held its annual race meeting this year on the 27th and 28th March.

The events of the first day were the Team Race, Two Star Race and Slalom.

*Team Race.*—Teams were entered by Nicosia, Limassol, the Army and Visitors, and the race was won by Nicosia.

The course was very icy and competitors had to wait some time for it to thaw out sufficiently, but even then it was very unpleasant. One member of the Limassol team broke his ankle—when just through the finishing posts. After the race had started and several competitors had courageously clattered off over the ice, another member of the Limassol team tore his number from his chest and exclaimed: "I do not go down there!" Miss Tryce Taylor (a future member—we hope—of the L.S.C.\*) picked up the discarded number and raced in his stead.

*The Slalom.*—This was the first Slalom to be competed for in Cyprus and Mrs. Mackenzie (Scottish Ski Club) very kindly presented a cup. The course was set by Mrs. M. H. V. Fleming and Mrs. Marjorie Greenland, who with Mr. D. T. Antoniadis and Mr. Douglas Williamson formed the Race Committee. Snow conditions were very good for this race.

There were fifteen entries for the Mackenzie Slalom Cup (which owing to local pronunciation has become known as the MacFrenzy). It was won by Mrs. H. B. Duke-Woolley (Biddy Armitage) 53.8 sec.; 2nd, Miss Tryce Taylor 82.6 sec.; 3rd, M. Hagnel 84.05 sec.; 4th, O. R. Arthur 86.08 sec.; 5th, Mrs. A. Mackenzie 87.05 sec.

Mrs. Duke-Woolley, in each of the two runs, skied superbly. The German P.O.W. ski instructors at the Leave Camp (who ran

\* Miss Taylor has since become a member of the L.S.C.—EDITOR.

hors concours in the Club races) showed their respect by doffing their caps as she went down the Slalom, and a cheer went up from the watching Cypriots. A peasant, who had never seen ski-ing before, walked fifteen miles to watch the races, and as Mrs. Duke-Woolley disappeared down the Course he turned to a member of the Committee and said: "Ἀξίζει τὸν κόπον νὰ ἰδῶ αὐτήν" ("It was worth the trouble to see her").

On Sunday, the second day of the Meeting, three short races were held in the morning: the Novices, One Star and Junior Ladies. These were followed by the Cyprus Championship.

The Cyprus Championship is an Open Straight Race run from the top of Mount Olympus down the steep North Face and ending through a woodglade to Race Finish.

The L.S.C. Cup was run concurrently with the Open and was to be awarded to the first lady to finish who was not a member of the L.S.C.

The day was sunless with a howling gale on top of Olympus. Competitors waiting to start crouched unhappily under juniper bushes. From the summit of the mountain competitors ran straight along the ridge until past a control flag, and then turned sharp left into a gully which the racers took with fewer or more turns according to their ski-ing prowess. Light entertainment was provided for the onlookers when a Danish Leave Camp instructor, attempting to take the gully straight, fetched up in a tree and broke his ski; he climbed up to the top again, borrowed another pair of ski—and did exactly the same thing once more! He was last seen hanging upside down from the tree with his head dangling above the snow.

The condition of the snow remained good over most of the course except for the end of the wood-glade, which became heavy and very slow so that good wax and hard punting saved seconds.

The race was won by Mrs. Duke-Woolley in 1 min. 27.2 sec., running beautifully and very fast. 2nd, O. R. Arthur (1 min. 59.6 sec.) who thereby won the Residents Cup. 3rd, Mrs. O. R. Arthur (2 min. 3.3 sec.) who showed great pluck to enter at all, having barely recovered from a broken leg—a ski-ing accident of less than a year ago. She ran extremely well, choosing a very good line down the gully and held it without a fall. 4th, Miss Tryce Taylor (2 min. 4 sec.) who was thus the winner of the L.S.C. Cup; a good and well-deserved win. 5th, H. B. Duke-Woolley (2 min. 5.2 sec.). Mrs. Mackenzie (2 min. 10 sec.) though only securing eighth place held a very fast line down the gully but early in the wood-glade took a nasty fall and she took a long time to disentangle herself. There were sixteen entries.

A dinner and prize-giving took place after the races and this was followed by song and dance of a type which constituted quite the best value possible for the winding up of a very successful meeting.

As we now have a Slalom race in Cyprus it has been decided that the L.S.C. Cup shall be awarded in future on the Combined instead of for the Downhill only, as it was this year. Actually as Miss Taylor won both these events the precedent has already been set.

## A DAY IN THE SURREY HIGHLANDS

BY HELEN TOMKINSON.

THE snow was lying a foot deep on the ground, and I decided that, in spite of all household cares (the twins having chicken-pox, etc.), I would have at least one day's ski-ing. So I unearthed my sixteen-year-old ski boots, which had long been relegated to being climbing and walking boots, to mount my new Norwegian ski. Saying to my husband, "You can now take charge for the rest of Sunday," I left the house at midday to langlauf six miles to Box Hill, after a good send-off with a pint of Guinness from the nearest pub. The snow was beaten hard all along the road and it was easy going on ski as the ground only went slightly up and down. It was a very deserted road over heathland and through woods, and I really felt I was miles away in the heart of Siberia or somewhere equally remote. At the start I had imagined it would be very cold and had attired myself in all woollies possible, but soon I discovered what very warm work it was and had to stop and take some of them off.

Eventually I reached Box Hill village where all the small boys seemed to be out with their toboggans, and the milkman in his van laughed and thought I was quite mad. I also discovered, to my dismay, that Box Hill itself was still a long way further on.

In the end I got there and a truly Swiss scene met me; skiers all down the slope, beginners, tourers and all sorts of people, everyone in the strangest of costumes but everyone enjoying themselves as much as possible, including the lugers, who kept to a track down one side of the hill. The snow was perfect and the track was beaten hard right down to the bottom; ski-ing down it was rather like doing a human slalom, but it was all great fun. All sorts and conditions of ski and ski-sticks were to be seen; one eminent skier had had to resort to two twigs as she had left her sticks in Switzerland, but these substitutes did not seem to be hindering her much.

I was very much impressed by the hill and only wish we could count on getting three or four weeks snow a year. It would be such an excellent training and practice slope, and would be invaluable for getting people fit, as it is about a 400-ft. or 500-ft. climb to the top.

After having climbed the slope five or six times, I had tea in the hotel at the bottom, where there was a very Swiss atmosphere, with everyone doing full justice to their tea. I then realised that it was half-past five. I was right at the bottom of the hill and had to climb up it and walk six miles home. Reckoning that I might be home around nine o'clock, I stumped wearily up the slope for the last time, buckled on my ski at the top and started my long slog home. However, just as I was leaving Box Hill village a car overtook me and very kindly gave me a lift most of the way, so, in the end, I arrived home rather stiff and weary at about half-past seven, after an excellent day.

## SKI-ING IN AUSTRALIA

BY JILL MACDONALD.

It has been said that the area of winter snow in Australia is as great as Switzerland. Though I find this difficult to believe, there is a considerable area of Alpine country, but it would be unkind to compare ski-ing here with ski-ing in Europe. I must freely admit that it is not nearly so good. We have not got the high mountains to give us the long steep descents, nor have we got the many amenities that go with the sport over there, but for all that our own mountains have an appeal peculiarly their own.

Mt. Kosciusko, 7,305 feet, the highest point on the continent, lends its name to the plateau which is the centre of ski-ing in New South Wales, while looking from there across the Victorian border, Mt. Hotham, Mt. Feathertop, and the Bogong High Plains can be seen as smoky yellow smudges on the high horizon. Further away and out of sight, Mt. Buller is within week-end driving distance of Melbourne.

In Europe, when ski-ing first became popular as a sport, mountain roads and villages, and such facilities for its development, were ready made. In this country we had nothing but the mountains, uninhabited and rarely visited except by the drovers who shepherded cattle on the summer grazing leases, and brought them out before the snow. Yet even as long ago as the last century, there was ski-ing of a kind, though it was more a utility than a sport. It dates back to the gold rush days, when the township of Kiandra on the north end of the plateau—now little more than a few tumbledown shacks—had a population of round ten thousand, among whom there must have been some Scandinavian emigrant who taught others how to make and use a primitive ski, with no bindings other than a toe strap. Many are the tales told of the men who rode these snow-shoes, or Kiandra butterpats, as they were alternatively called; tales of winter exploration, or of snow-shoeing out mobs of cattle caught on "the tops" by the early set-in of winter.

But it apparently took on as a sport too, for I believe that the old Kiandra Ski Club, now defunct, laid claim to being the second oldest ski club in the world, a wide claim, but one supported by an Austrian who was out here before the war and claimed to be a member of the oldest ski club in the world.

Since then the popularity of ski-ing has grown apace, and such notable instructors as Friedl Pfeiffer, Ernst Skardarasy, and Toni Walch have been to this country, and left their mark on the local technique.

It takes as long to go from Sydney to the Chalet Kosciusko as it does to go from London to St. Moritz by train. Melbourne to Hotham is shorter in distance but just as long in time, for a night has to be spent below the mountain, and the next morning skiers and their gear have to be packed up by horse, about twelve miles or as far as snow conditions allow, and the remaining few miles done on ski.

Transport throughout the mountains is considerably complicated

by the fact that no roads are kept open in winter. Hotham has its horses, Kosciusko depends on tractors, and both methods are much at the mercy of the weather. Roughly speaking, the further you get into the mountains, the better are the ski fields, but with every step the problems of transport and accommodation grow, and so regrettably little has been done to make a lot of the best country readily accessible.

At Kosciusko, the Chalet at Charlotte's Pass is the last outpost of civilisation, as you might say, and once outside its radius the only shelters along the Range are the huts put up by the tenants of the grazing leases, for the use of their stockmen. They are primitive indeed, just one or two rooms with a few bunks and an open fireplace. On a tour, food has to be carried or else sent out by packhorse in the summer.

In hut life, domestic duties are as insistent as ever, but on fine days they are apt to be forgotten, and returning at nightfall there is found to be no water and no wood, the latter a serious omission with the possibility of the temperature going to zero. I remember one year when our wood supply, cut in the summer, was buried under so many feet of snow that it was easier to chop a tree than to dig for it, and to reach water in the little creek a ten-foot hole had to be dug, and a luckless member of the party sent to the bottom to hand up the buckets. The ice-blue dusk invariably found grey figures wobbling buckets back and forth from the creek, while from the hill behind came the ring of a blunt axe on dead snow gum, and then the woodsmen ski-ing dangerously with their booty clasped in their arms.

Along the western foot of Charlotte's Pass flows the Snowy River, and beyond that stretches the Main Range. Out there lies a world of snow entirely different from the rolling country that forms the approaches from the east. Once on top of the Range there is a tremendous feeling of space, for before you lies spread the whole of Australia. Immediately below, the white slopes fall away sharply, until the snow peters out, and the spurs and gullies lose themselves in the dark scrub 6,000 feet down. Beyond the dark scrub the country smooths away, until the pale grasslands of the Murray Valley merge into the indescribable blue of distance.

Over on these western slopes it is possible to get 2,200 feet of continuous downhill, as against a few hundred feet on the hills round the Chalet. Much of the Range is virgin snow, and the hidden valleys have never heard the swish of ski. There is a great fascination in peering over the back of a ridge and wondering what the descent folding away below will reveal, maybe wondering if a snow-filled gully will provide a happy landing, or if it is of the type gleefully described as bottomless, meaning that the snow ends in rocky ribs that tumble into a gorge an uncomfortably long way down. Fascination, too, in shooting down the crest of one of those long buttress spurs, lured on by the desire to know what lies below, and anyway forgetting time in the joy of the descent, until suddenly the dark scrub, which was so remote, is but a stone's throw ahead, and behind the mountains stretch up to meet the sky.

So there are compensations to be found in a day of perfect



weather spent ski-ing on the Range, and it is often only on the long climb out that my thoughts turn wistfully to the Parsennbahn.

When I mention a day of perfect weather, I speak of it as something rare and precious, for these mountains are cursed with bad weather. There are all sorts of scientific reasons why they attract all the winds that blow, the chief being their extreme exposure, for there is no considerable hill between them and the coast of Africa, to say nothing of the South Pole, whose blizzards must surely practise on Kosciusko's slopes. Consequently the snow on top of the Range is converted into sheet ice and carved into all sorts of intricate patterns, so that the first hundred feet of downhill is like ski-ing over a corrugated iron roof. Every rock is encased in ice, that builds back into the prevailing wind until the most weird hobgoblin shapes come into being.

An average season lasts from mid June until early October. Some are good, and some bad, and if I have seen seasons of almost continuous blizzard, that puts down such a depth of snow that it is possible to ski on the big drifts as late as Christmas Day, I have also seen weeks on end of cloudless, still weather, when we have offered up prayers for the bad days which would bring fresh snow.

One of the features most noticeably absent from the local scene is the pine tree; however the eucalypts have found an answer in the snow-gum which perseveres up to an altitude of 6,000 feet. In the distance their foliage is copper-brown, and they carry into the Alps a tone of the land's sunburnt colouring that is strangely attractive against the snow. Their smooth trunks are twisted in swathes of pink, cream, and olive green, for all the world like an old fashioned lollystick, colours that change with the changing light and shadows, and are never more lovely than when the day is full of falling snow flakes. Indeed their reactions to weather are infinite, and they seem to reflect every mood of the sky. On grey days when a tearing wind proclaims the approach of a blizzard, the woods are forbidding. Far away you can hear the trees moan before a fresh and fiercer gust, and the grey icy ground is littered with twigs and leaves, being blown like waste paper. Then again there is a thaw and a sudden freeze, and you come out one sunny morning to find every leaf encased in ice. In a faint breeze the trees tinkle like a million chandeliers, and as you brush by there is the brittle sound of breaking glass.

I have spoken mostly about Kosciusko, which is the country I know best. To say it is the best, would be a statement violently repudiated by the Victorians, who are devoted to Hotham and its steep fluted valleys, not to mention the Tasmanians, who are developing centres of their own about which I know little.

There is an intense though friendly rivalry between the states, and this finds an outlet in the inter-state races, for both men and women, which take place every second winter, alternately in Victoria and New South Wales. No Olympic contest promotes more lively competition, though the ski-ing judged by European standards is not high.

I conclude by saying, come and try ski-ing in Australia. You can always be sure of a great welcome.

## LETTER FROM KYRENIA

FROM BIDDY DUKE-WOOLLEY.

A LETTER reminding me of my promise to write an article for the BULLETIN on "The Olympic Training," or some such subject, has just arrived; but it only makes more evident the impossibility of thinking back clearly to six months ago and remembering what impressions stood out in my mind. As soon as I try, the mental pictures become just a fading background to the very different scenes that I have been looking at ever since then. It is rather like being a very bad crystal-gazer who is uncertain whether she sees the past or present in her crystal, while in actual fact it is a useless hotch-potch of both.

Thus, when I try to recall the scene of the English Ladies' Team working and striving on the Corviglia Slalom slope, it becomes at once confused with the sight of a Cypriot goat-herd chivvying and goading his mixed flock of sheep and goats down a hazardous defile.

Likewise my memory of Jeanette, Rosemary and Arnie in one of their deep conferences on important matters fades out, and three Greek Orthodox priests in black robes and with long white beards take their place.

These Pan-like figures with cloven hooves and pipes to their lips that come slaloming shyly through the olive groves, can they be Jimmy, Donald and Peter? Did Soss ever *schuss* the Nose-Dive wearing a *yashmak*? I don't think so, but it's all very confusing, and surely Sheena's new *Vorlages* weren't a bit like these Turkish trousers?

Then in the village here there is a delightful little Greek girl whose name is Xanthe and she has the same big blue eyes, but I have never seen her take them out to wash them so one can't be really sure. . . .

There has, unfortunately, been nothing in my life since of equal embarrassment to blot out the painful memory of the day when, with an ear-splitting report, my trousers divided into two disconnected legs. The knowledge that the Brazilian men's team was massed on our left, and the Norwegians on our right only added to the heartless merriment. I still attribute my halting gait to the fact that I subsequently skied right down to the village with my legs crossed.

I watched a Cypriot football match this afternoon played in clouds of choking dust to roars of happy laughter from both sides; it conjured up the delightful memory of Rosemarie's infectious giggle coming out of a hectic flurry of snow, and the picture of Bunty laughing away as she cast her safety bindings with happy abandon to the winds. How right they both were because surely even the Olympics were "a Game."

Only St. Moritz itself is still quite vividly clear. The feeling of excitement, tension and culminating effort which was packed into that mountain village for one crisp, glittering week is not easily forgotten. It was all so exhilaratingly alive that one felt the village itself might turn a *geländesprung* out of sheer high spirits.

The streets at tea-time when the day's training and competing was over were a fascinating sight. The numerous teams of nearly every country in the world strolled up and down in the bright lights of the shops; to the eye it was a kaleidoscope of national flags on the different team uniforms, and to the ear a tower of Babel.

But even with the St. Moritz picture I find my visual memory confused, as a couple of supercilious camels are apt to come sneering out of the "Chesa Veglia," and the frozen "Bad" melts and warms into the deep blue of the Mediterranean.

As I look back even the Olympic flame leaping high above the ice-stadium seems to flicker in rhythm with the small flames of my outdoor charcoal brazier over which I crouch, stirring our evening meal. I remember the serried ranks of the teams as they marched across the Stadium, and can hear the cheering crowds, but I look up from my fire to where across the evening sky flies a great skein of migrating cranes journeying from northern Europe to the warmth of Africa. They keep in their lines just as we did, and their beating wings and harsh cries almost drown the babel of the crowd. . . .

#### FINANCE, 1948

"Please may I share your bath? I'll give you 75 centimes?"

"I know you 'ave no monney, you can 'ave my dirty water for nodding."

#### LINE

"I get so far forward now that I can't see the points of my ski behind me."

#### SPRING

"I shouldn't go ski-ing just yet darling, wait till the sun has dried the snow a bit."

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When winter wears  
 its holiday face . . .

. . . the glitter of sun on snow—the flash and flurry of skis down smooth white slopes—the calm beauty of peaks against a blue sky . . . winter holidays will soon be here, and it's fun to start making plans.

Passport and ticket problems can safely be left to the travel agent, but your winter sports outfit . . . ah, that's another matter! On this absorbing subject also you need the advice of specialists. You'll find it at Simpson's of Piccadilly, together with the finest selection of ski clothing, both for men and women, and all the exciting accessories which make this kind of shopping a stimulating prelude to enjoyment.

Note for your diary . . .

October 4th—opening of Simpson's special Winter Sports Department . . . (Mark this as the date when your holiday really begins!)



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