

LADIES' SKI CLUB BULLETIN OCTOBER, 1946

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# THE LADIES' SKI CLUB BULLETIN

No. 16

Vol. II. Pt. 8.

OCTOBER, 1946.

#### EDITORIAL.

LOOKING back to last autumn with the horrors of peace fairly upon us, some method of escape to the snows seemed to be the ruling motif of most of our lives. Early on I took stock of my resources and dependents, and decided it was futile even to dream of it, resigning myself to envying those whom I felt sure would get there somehow. As a result of this phlegmatic attitude the Fickle Jade relented and I found myself in Norway the end of February bear-leading a British Ladies' Team to race in the Norwegian Victory Races. It was surprising how many of our lasses got themselves visas, invitations and jolly good excuses, and once more boarded their "boards" in the old familiar places. Two of our "prominents," Jeannette and Helen, leaving, the one her hospital bed and the other her quiverful of children, arrived at Zermatt on the pressing invitation of the Swiss to do their piece in a very Giant Slalom, and found Doreen and Bernie already there, "booted and bindunged."

Babs Bracken seems to have beaten everyone by a long head and arrived in St. Moritz with the first flake, and was later seen at Scheidegg with the last crocus. Alas—my latest news is that she has gone in for repairs, having torn her Achilles tendon—a long and tiresome job, but we hope it will put her right for the coming season.

Evie Pinching and Wendy Sale Barker—our Pro's—again made news in the "Shiny Papers." Our President, Di Lindsay, and Greta Raeburn were at Murren. Lois Butler went to Sweden in March for ten days and was ski-ing at Åra, which is opposite Trondheim, on the Norwegian border. She then went later to Scheidegg and got four days at the Concordia Hut. Mrs. Hepworth at Scheidegg, Mrs. Anson, Mrs. Hadow in Chamonix (and others I am sure who have omitted to send me their news)—and the Norwegian Team—Isobel Roe, Pip Harrison, Bunty Greenland, Biddy Armitage, Marion (Steedman) Allen, with your Hon. Ed. as (almost) non-playing Captain.

From all the accounts the Swiss gave a most royal welcome, as did the Norwegians, making everyone feel that our return had been long waited for, and everything possible for our comfort and happiness was arranged. It was a brilliant ray of sunshine after our seven years of cloud.

Since our last war-time Bulletin we regret to record the death of three of our members—Dr. Violet Rendall, who was at one time President of our Club and well known to you all—the Lady Myrtle Balfour and Lady Trustram Eve. We wish to express our sorrow and sympathy with their families.

Marriages are as follows:-

Viscountess Carlow is now Mrs. Nugent; Miss Di Crewdson is Mrs. Tommy Lindsay;

Mrs. Burt is now Mrs. Lewellyn and has gone to America

with her American husband; Mrs. Hollins is now Mrs. N. King;

Miss Esme Hewetson is Mrs. John Pearcy.

We offer our warmest congratulations and best wishes for their future happiness.

Fraulein Elsa Roth of the S.D.S. has been made an Honorary

Member of our Club.

The following future skiers have been produced:-

Helen Tomkinson, a son; Mrs. Devine, a daughter; Nancy Kenneth Smith, a daughter; Marjory (Tulloch) Garrett, a daughter; Lois Butler again a grandmother.

Four of your Members are now on the Council of the Ski Club of Great Britain, i.e., Mrs. Greenland, Mrs. Oddie, Miss Elliott and your Hon. Ed. Miss Elliott has been nominated as one of the two Vice-Presidents of the S.C.G.B. and will be attending the FIS Congress to be held at Pau in August. Your Editor has edged her way in also, having been asked to represent Canada—I hope to give you any interesting particulars in a postscript later.

The S.D.S. have very kindly invited the British Women Racers to join with them and the Dutch in their Training Period from

January 6th-17th, 1947.

THE LADIES' SKI CLUB RACE will be held in due course, the date and place will have to be announced later.

#### EDITORIAL POSTCRIPT

I have just returned from the FIS Congress at Pau, which I may tell you confidentially, turned out to be a "minor U.N.O." The French Ski Federation gave us a truly marvellous time in very lovely surroundings, but in case you think it was all fun I may say we worked several days till after midnight. Weather was on the whole very good, and we several times had a bathe in the rollers of the Bay of Biscay at Biarritz.

The items that will interest you are as follows:—

There will be no FIS Races until 1948, and they will be held probably in Switzerland, unless they are the Olympic Games instead.

It has been decided that owing to the importance of women's races, a Ladies' Committee has been elected to deal entirely with all questions connected with women's races. Fraulein Elsa Roth is on it, and so are Doreen and I. The other places are filled by Norway, Poland, Finland and U.S.A.

Gratia Van der Berg (Schimilpennick) is on the main FIS

Committee.

An attempt was made to abolish the Straight Race for women and sabotage it into another Slalom. This we stoutly resisted and won. I hope you approve.

# THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE Annual General Meeting was held at the Goring Hotel on January 19th, at 6 p.m., followed by Cocktails.

Miss Bernie Duthie was in the Chair in the absence of the retiring President, Lady Raeburn. Twenty-one members were present. The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed, and were followed by the apologies.

The President had sent a report which was read, and was as follows:—

DEAR L.S.C.,

I am very sorry not to be at our General Meeting to-day and do apologize, but Digby is on leave and we have two other visitors and I can't get away from household chores. I have loved my very long time of office as your President, but you have a much more energetic new one than I have been lately, and she is full of marvellous ideas, I know, and has all my best wishes.

If it had not been for Amy, the Club would certainly have had to fall into abeyance during the war years, and how she did all the extra work in addition to all the organization and also operational duties and her very heavy Y.M.C.A. work, I do not know. We all, and especially myself, owe her our gratitude.

Miss Collins, also, has had so many exacting duties, and it was good of her to give the time to keep us in the paths of financial rectitude and even affluence.

The BULLETIN was a triumph over great difficulties, and I am sure that we all agree that it was quite the most entertaining of the Ski-ing Year Books that came out during the war, and I hope that its success has been some compensation to the unfortunate editor for all the exasperation she must have felt with the many delays of the contributors.

With my love and good luck to the L.S.C. May we meet on the snows again before too long.

GRETA RAEBURN.

The accounts for the year were passed.

Mrs. Lindsay was elected President, Mrs. Oddie Vice-President, Lady Blane re-elected Hon. Secretary, Miss Collins Hon. Treasurer, and Lady Chamier Hon. Editor.

It was decided to hold the next Annual General Meeting in November, 1946, thus bringing the Club meetings back to the usual date. It was also decided that this Annual General Meeting which had been held in January, 1946, should count as having been held in November, 1945, so as to make the elections in order. Miss Biddy Armitage was elected a member of the Committee.

## BRITISH LADIES' TEAM IN NORWAY, 1946

THE first British Ski Racing Teams to go abroad since the war visited Norway at the invitation and expense of the Norwegian Government to compete in the classic Holmenkollen Victory Meeting at the end of February. In point of fact, the Men's Team consisted solely of Peter Lunn, as Captain and team combined. The ladies were more representative in number, namely, Mrs. Marion Allen (formerly Steedman), Miss Biddy Armitage, Mrs. Bunty Greenland, Miss Pip Harrison and Miss Isobel Roe, with Lady Chamier in charge and representing the Council of the Ski Club of Great Britain. Mr. Arnold Lunn, "father of slaloms" and Representative-in-Chief, also accompanied the team and was carefully cherished by the damer during the voyage. It had been explained in a leading London daily that this team of ladies could only be regarded as a "gesture" but as events turned out, the "gesture" was a good one.

Beginning with a reluctant train which had to be towed out of King's Cross an hour after its scheduled time and arriving in Newcastle four hours late, we found Biddy (who had come from Cheshire) practically suspended over the side, making up her mind whether she ought to get off the ship, or make the trip alone. She greeted us with great warmth. Having located our very luxurious cabins we repaired to the dining-salon where a most magnificent repast greeted us—such things as lobster mayonnaise, large hams and pork chops, making our unaccustomed eyes fairly spring from their sockets. We threw ourselves into the fray, caring nor wotting not of what lay without the Harbour Bar. Scarcely had we settled down replete when gale warnings were being broadcast by the B.B.C. in all directions. I leave the rest to the gentle reader's imagination. Suffice to say that the recumbent position was strictly observed all the next day. Marion was discovered gazing pensively at a sea-sick remedy of the suppository type and murmuring "How in the world am I going to swallow that?" Biddy, our Red Cross nurse, staggered hastily into my stateroom at 5 p.m., lay down flat on the floor still more hastily, saying "How are you, chaps?" to the ceiling. Encouraged by her valour I rose and accompanied her to a hasty evening meal at which only one other female was present. The ship's gymnastics having ceased on our arrival at Stavanger at 6 a.m. next morning a pallid group assembled for breakfast and were promptly confronted by photographers. "I am the First of May," said one young man cryptically, and proceeded to cross-question us. We discovered he was a reporter for the Socialist newspaper "1st of May," and was anxious to know if our proletariat was addicted to ski-ing and other sports. He was discouraged to hear that their love of sport was mostly spectatorial and inclinded to dog-racing.

Finding the luggage and ski in the stygian darkness of the quayside, rounding it up, getting it weighed and checked (here the "First-of-May" proved very helpful—he was still with us), Arnie's rucksack, without any label of course, getting left behind, the train held up while we retrieved it—finally into the train and on our way

to Oslo. There was no restaurant car so throughout the day we leapt out at every wayside station to stay the pangs with glasses of milk and single-decker sandwiches in the Norwegian style—filling, but not lasting—and very jaded we all were when Oslo was reached at 10 o'clock that night.

Oslo welcomed us with open arms and a battery of cameras. We were all accommodated in private houses and our hosts were there to greet us and whisk us away in cars to their very comfortable houses. From that moment everything was arranged for us down to the smallest detail of ski maintenance. It was most interesting for us to be in the midst of people who had their country occupied by the Germans for five years, and still kept their courage. With their menfolk arrested, imprisoned or sent to Germany, their houses occupied, their children compelled to study German in the schools, their possessions requisitioned—in spite of the thousand and one insults to which they were subjected and the hardships they endured they kept up their hearts, looked to England for deliverance and annoyed and infuriated their enemies. If a Bosch entered a tram-car, Norwegians rose and stood outside; notices appeared making this verboten if a sitzplatz was available, so they got off at the next stop. A young boy was reading a copy of The Times (somehow dropped by aeroplane). A German soldier demanded furiously "From whom did you get this paper?" "Get it from? I don't get it from anyone. It comes, regularly," was the answer-a spirited bit of imagination leaving the German speechless with anger. One of our kind hosts always wore a small gold and enamel pin with a number on it—his prison number for three years—of which he is extremely proud.

The team, sadly out of practice after seven years, was given the services of Tom Mursted, who is their leading Ski Instructor and runs the Ski School. Free access to the ski-tow and passes on the Holmenkollen Railway were given, and any equipment lacking was supplied at once. Everyone took the greatest interest in the Engleske damer and everything they did so that the minor-tragedy-ofa-Passport provoked a gust of laughter throughout Oslo. Here it is: We were all lunching in the Hut on the ski-tow slopes when someone produced all our Passports, returned that morning from the Norwegian Embassy. One of our number, a firm believer in the minimum of equipment and let the other fellow carry the lunch, lacking the bum-bags we all wore, thrust her passport down the neck of her jersey for safekeeping, and to obtain greater comfort and breathing space, gave it a hitch around to the back. Resuming my ski outside a few minutes later I saw my charge approaching me with a look of frozen horror on her face and whispered hoarsely "my Passport." Eyeing the direction of her approach I perceived a queue outside the customary wooden shed we all know so well, bearing the significant legend "Kvinner" (Norse for Damen), and all too well I realized what had happened. My lass had joined us from "foreign parts" and before my eyes arose a picture of the struggle for foreign visas stretching into infinity. It must be rescued at all costs-not a

moment to lose. Quickly, jam the door of the cubicle to discourage further clients! My worst fears—a 15 foot drop—obviously a sanitary squad job—our few Norwegian phrases unequal to the occasion. "We are in great trouble," I trumpeted. "Does anyone here speak English?" Instant response from a large gentleman in the background, while everyone else pushed forward to listen. I feverishly explained and dragged him into the hut to pass it on the proprietors, who obviously must have someone in the background capable of coping with alfresco sanitation. In spite of his assurances that all was understood and that the passport would be produced in the morning I felt his translation was lacking—the proprietors were too unmoved. This proved to be the case when we telephoned in the morning, but others explained with greater clarity and it was returned unblemished—thanks to a temperature of 20 degrees below

freezing.

Five days only of training and the Rodkleiva Internasjonalt Slalomrenn took place. For the ladies, out of twenty-three starters, Isobel Roe made our best time, finishing in 13th place with Pip Harrison 15th. Biddy Armitage 16th, Marion Allen 17th and Bunty Greenland 20th (she had a bad fall and climbed back). The winner, of course, was our old friend Laila Schou Nilsen. This was not too bad for a start and the papers were kind and made all due allowance for the Engleske damer. A big dinner party of all the ski-ing world was given that evening at Frognerseteren Restaurant on the top of Holmenkollen, speeches were made, healths drunk, the S.C.G.B. Cup was presented to the Norwegian Ski Club who in turn presented it to the Swedish victor, and then dancing became the order of the evening. The S.C.G.B. President, Mr. Aitchison, who had arrived by air in time to see the Slalom, was there and made the presentation. A speech by Herr Einer Bergsland, allowing Arnie an avuncular but not a paternal interest in Slalom, struck a new note, but was ably replied to by the latter. The more dashing skied home down the mountain by moonlight—no lives were lost.

After this came the Norwegian Langlauf Races and the Holmen-kollen Jumping Contest on Sunday. We had very special seats for this, and wrapped up in fur coats kindly loaned by our hostesses, watched a most thrilling spectacle. 100,000 people crowded this great Stadium—it was closed all during the war—the entrance of King Haakon was most impressive, and the Championship was won by the youngest brother of our old friends, Berger and Sigmund Rudd. Every evening the Team were invited to supper parties given by various hostesses, and on our last day festivities started at the British Embassy at 6 o'clock and went on in several stages to the very small hours. It was quite restful to leave on the Tuesday for Rjukan where we were to compete hors concours in the Norwegian National Championships.

Rjukan is famous for its Heavy Water Factory sabotaged by our Cloak and Dagger Boys during the German occupation. It is an amazing place, weird and macabre beyond words, built in the bottom of a gorge with 3,000 feet of frowning cliffs towering over and is a

maze of giant pipes and pylons. The Factory itself is at the far end of the gorge and is surrounded by steam and an air of mystery. The International Racecourse is several miles out of the town and begins, for the men, on the slopes of Mount Gustav above the treeline with a long schuss. From the treeline where the damer start, the course is very steep and narrow, and cut through the woods in a series of thirty hairpin bends, where the utmost control is necessary, and giving it much more the character of a tight giant slalom over terraces than a Straight Race as we understand it. We were housed in a hut high up in the sun on the opposite mountain side, called Fjellstua—six of us in a room with double tier bunks, quite comfortable and warm, with good food and a 'bus service arranged in the mornings to take us all as near the course as possible. When we got to the foot of the mountain we changed from the closed 'bus to open lorries. At the end of half an hour's journey up the precipitous side in 22 degrees below, we were glad to get out and get on ski to restore our frozen limbs.

The team practised very hard, climbing three to four hours' worth a day in doing the Course twice. It paid, and the results of the *Damer Utforrennet* on Saturday showed the following order:—

- , ,	7 11 0 15			mins.	secs.
(1)	Laila Schou Nilsen		•••	2	2.4
	Isobel Roe (hors concours)	•••		2	15.2
(2)	B. Niskin			2	15.3
		•			
(01)	Kilbo			2	37.3
	Pip Harrison (hors concours)				38.7
(11)	Halvorsen				39.4
	Biddy Armitage (hors concours)				16.2
	Marion Allen (hors concours)			2	22.7

There were twenty-three starters.

In the evening we attended a large banquet with the usual speeches, held in the local cinema. The Slalom was held next day on the same course, Harrison and Roe tying for 10th place, and thus giving Roe 5th place in the Combined. The Norwegians were delighted with this and gave us a great ovation at the prize-giving.

The Men's Championship was won by Arentz, who is seventeen years of age and still at school. Opheim, who was first in the Downhill and 2nd in Combined, arrived at the Course wrapped in fur rugs on a luge, as he had 'flu and a very high temperature. He climbed several thousand feet and ran down to win the event, then retired to his rugs and luge and was given hot drinks during the Ladies' Slalom. He then rose and slalomed with good effect to get 2nd in Combined, appeared in the evening for his prizes and retired to Hospital—a stout-hearted achievement indeed.

We left next day in a large 'bus for Kongsberg, with the "Kongsberg boys," and there were picked up in a large car and taken to Norefjell, where we were decanted at the foot of the Course and had a three-hour climb up to the Hotel. A small horse and sleigh

accompanied us with our luggage. It was quite dark when we reached our objective. The Hotel was more pretentious than our Mountain Hut and not as comfortable, as hot water was at a premium and nowhere to dry clothes, except on a minute radiator which was never warm. It was snowing hard and very cold (20 degrees below), and we went down the Course for the first time in deep snow. It was lovely-much better than the International Course at Rjukanquite difficult and very steep, but had some most interesting features: a lovely steep face running into a narrow gorge between high rocks, and an exceptionally bumpy finish. We had great difficulty in persuading the Norwegians not to over-control it as to the Norse loeperne anything uncontrolled means to take it straight no matter what is at the bottom. We practised hard doing the Course twice daily, which meant four hours' climbing for some of us. New snow two days before the Race made the Course in marvellous condition, and I decided I could no longer resist the urge to race. All our friends from Oslo arrived and everyone was palpitating. The wireless starting apparatus wasn't feeling too fit and the Damer from Oslo were late, but finally we got started. Laila, of course, took her usual place.

1					mins.	secs.	
(1)	Laila Schou Ni	lsen	 	•••	2	40.1	
	Niskin		 		3	00.3	
(3)	Pip Harrison		 	• • • •	3	OI.	
(4)	Isobel Roe		 	•••	3	03.	
(5)	Marion Allen		 •••			35.	
(12)	Chamier		 		4	35.2	

Biddy Armitage's time was lost owing to a technical hitch with the wireless, but taking her approximate time of starting and her overtaking of two competitors, it was agreed unofficially that she made very exceptional time and would have been placed 2nd behind Schou Nilsen. It was indeed a bit of bad luck for Biddy.

We stayed on several days after the Race but a heavy thaw set in and the open country higher up became breakable crust. Our final descent of the Race Course on our way down to return to Oslo was in heavy sog and we felt we had had the best of things. Our last two days in Oslo were hectic, and we had a great send-off from the Oslo Docks. As the *Bretagne* pulled slowly out into the stream and the gulf between us and our good Norwegian friends widened, the old familiar cry of "loype, loype," rang out from lusty throats. Alas, our course was clear, and set for England, but the happy memories of our Norwegian holiday will still be with us in our hungry and control-ridden country.

## SWISS HURDLES

BY DI LINDSAY.

On a particularly horrible day in January—one of those days when everything seems to go wrong—I decided that if I did not get to Switzerland I should in all probability murder some quite inoffensive shopkeeper, and then cut my own throat—neither of which, in my sane moments, I particularly wanted to do. As a compromise I went along to see Jeannette Oddie, and we decided that it was absolutely essential for our welfare and sanity to ski again. Neither of us had the remotest idea how we were going to accomplish this feat, but were equally determined to defeat any "powers-that-were" who might wish to stop us. I was a lap ahead of Jeannette—I had a beautiful new Passport.

We laid various plans, but each time the "money bogy" raised its ugly head; then suddenly things took a better turn—the S.C.G.B. arranged for Jeannette and Helen Tomkinson to go to Zermatt on an invitation from the Swiss to take part in some of their Races, and at the same time I received an invitation from Dr. Mosca of Mürren, and Peter Hofmann of Interlaken, so we arranged to travel together on March 12th. I simply could not believe that after seven long years we were practically there—we did not realize our difficulties were only just beginning. We had less than a week to get everything ready and Helen arranged to take Jeannette and me in her car to the various Embassies to collect the necessary visas. Rather late in the afternoon we set forth, our first port of call being the Swiss Legation—fairly simple, a nice easy form to fill in and not very much delay. We then went to the French Embassy, where to our horror there appeared to be hundreds of people, all waiting for transit visas and suggesting the title "Queue for Liberty," up which we climbed very, very slowly, with the time getting short, and still the Belgian and Luxembourg visas to contend with, not to mention Cooks, before they closed. Jeannette then had the brilliant idea of going to the other two Legations and collecting the forms, returning in due course to find us still static. Extraordinary how unmanageable a form can be when one is trying to write in a queue, using the wall as a background. The Belgian form reduced all three of us to a state bordering on lunacy. None of us had the remotest idea where our respective in-laws had been born, or the year, or where and when they were married! But the Belgian Foreign Office shows an insatiable curiosity in these events. We guessed hopefully at their present ages and by a process of elimination endeavoured to arrive at the year they were born. Arithmetic seemed to be no one's strong point, certainly not mine. Eventually kind people came to our rescue (thinking, no doubt quite rightly, that we were congenital idiots) and did neat and tidy little sums. One man remarked kindly: "I think you must all be skiers." I am still wondering what he meant! Finally, clutching our passports with one more cherished visa, we tore to the Belgian Embassy only to find our precious forms were filled in incorrectly. Eventually that was put in order, and

hot, tired and dishevelled we sped to the Luxembourg Legation. They were on the point of closing, but took pity on three distraught women, and in a very short space of time we emerged triumphant. Meanwhile, Helen had performed a masterpiece of organization with Cooks. We arrived there, dizzy with exhaustion, again just as they were closing, and with a sigh of relief deposited our passports in their friendly hands, secure in the knowledge that in a few days we would have our tickets and sleepers. My own troubles, however, were not over. Twenty-four hours before we were due to leave I had a wire from my husband—despite all his efforts he was unable to get leave from Germany to go to Switzerland—so Helen and Jeannette proceeded without me. He did arrive in England eventually, and

getting permission we went out together a little later.

The journey via Ostend and Brussels was extremely comfortable and incredibly slow. We did depart and arrive at our various destinations at the scheduled times—an operation I had forgotten trains were capable of doing. Arriving at Basle very hungry and thirsty we went straight to the buffet, where we saw the most wonderful food. To our horror we remembered we had no Swiss francs, so nearly in tears we retired to the train and went on to Berne. Here we met Tom Fox who had been lent 20 francs by a friend, and to our undying gratitude he shared it with us. We had a most excellent meal and to round it off we ordered three glasses of kirche. Unfortunately the bill and the kirche arrived simultaneously and we realized if we drank the kirche we would have no money to pay our porters. An agonizing decision—our first kirche in Switzerland after seven years! We bravely and regretfully returned it!

During my stay I spent some time in Mürren, a few days in Scheidegg and then, all snow having vanished, Greta Raeburn and I went on to Vevy, which was quite lovely; then to Berne, a town I have always loved, where we did some real peace-time shopping. I can never remember enjoying Switzerland so much, and the kindness and hospitality shown us by all our Swiss friends was quite indescribable. To be able once again to return to the mountains and ski-ing, together with such a welcome, went a long way to

compensate us for the years between.

# INTERNATIONAL SKI MEETING AT ZERMATT

## March 14th-25th

By HELEN TOMKINSON.

No better place than Zermatt could be found for one's first return to the Alps after seven years' enforced absence. The whole panorama was quite breath-taking. Jeannette Oddie and I arrived in Zermatt after a journey of 2½ days from England, a journey of extreme interest to us as the train from Brussels to Berne went through the battle area. We very soon saw why it took seventeen hours to cover this distance as every bridge, large and small, had been destroyed by bombs or explosions, and therefore the train had to crawl over temporary bridges. To us it seemed quite extraordinary that they even allowed passengers to travel on this line.

On arrival in Basle we were met by the most charming Swiss girl, a member of the S.D.S., who had been instructed to meet us and show us to our right train for Berne. As we had a little time to wait, she took us into the station Buffet and gave us tea. We could not help gasping when a trolley of cream cakes was brought to us.

In Berne we were met by Helene Zingg, the President of the S.D.S. Here we had to spend the night and Helene Zingg very kindly took us out to dinner. By getting up at 5.30 a.m. we were able to catch the 6.30 a.m. train to Zermatt, thereby enabling us to get some ski-ing that day. In Zermatt we found the real racing atmosphere as the S.A.S International University Meeting was at its height.

The day after our arrival we watched the Slalom and were interested to see that the style in the last seven years had not altered, in fact, the only thing we could see was that it had grown a little more untidy. When there is a very large entry for the Slalom, as there was in this event, the Swiss have evolved the system of having two different Slaloms side by side and making each competitor do one run on each. A good idea for getting through a large entry.

The Czechs, Austrians and Italians all had full teams there and we were very interested to see that the Czechs were now very good skiers, but the Austrian team were the individual winners. This team had all been drawn from Innsbruck University which we gathered was the only one open in Austria. As they were staying in our hotel, we talked to them quite a lot and their one idea was when were the British returning to Austria to ski. James Palmer-Tomkinson was the only British competitor. He did very well, winning his class for the Straight Race and being third in his class in the Slalom.

Our first attempt on ski was in a blinding snow storm with Jeannette Oddie on ski much too long for her, which she borrowed from the hotel porter. We walked to the new ski lift which goes up the Blauherd and wondered if we would ever manage to get up the lift without falling off. We succeeded, however, in reaching the top. Our descent was slow but sure and to our surprise we were

not too stiff afterwards. The next day, when the sun shone, ski-ing proved much easier. In our seven years of absence the Swiss have certainly discovered ski-ing and the general standard of ski-ing in Switzerland has gone up, but I do not think that the Kanona class

has improved beyond what it was before the war.

The official opening of the week was held on the Monday, all competitors meeting outside the church and countries being lined up in alphabetical order. Doreen Elliott, who had been invited by the Swiss to be a member of the Jury for this meeting, carried the Union Jack. Jeannette Oddie and I marched behind her. We were marched into church where they held a short Mass of Thanksgiving for peace. We then marched through the village street to the Stadium which they had built at the end of the village with the wonderful background of the Matterhorn behind it. There were then ten nations represented—America (Army Team), Great Britain, Spain, Sweden, France, Holland (a sporting effort from a flat country), Poland, France, Czechoslovakia and Switzerland-and we were grouped in front of the platform from which Colonel Guison, President of the S.S.V., made his speech of welcome. Then followed three other speeches, and the ten National Anthems were played whilst the corresponding flags were hoisted. We finished the ceremony by again marching through the village.

That afternoon the S.D.S. held a Tea Party for all the women racers. There were four countries represented: France, Switzerland and Czechoslovakia having entered full teams. This was an extremely good idea as it meant that everyone got to know each other. It was interesting to meet the famous Georgette Thoelier, who is supposed to be a second Cristel Cranz. She certainly has extremely nice and very strong style, but she proved disappointing at this meeting.

At this meeting a Giant Slalom had been arranged for the women competitors as the Swiss feel that an ordinary Downhill Race has become too dangerous. This was held on the Blauherd run (off the ski-lift) and had a descent of about 2,000 feet with forty or more gates which were only slightly wider apart than in an ordinary Slalom. This proved far more exhausting than any straight race and we came to the conclusion that the solution to the problem would be to return to the ordinary straight race, but to have it heavily controlled.

Olivia Ansonia, of Switzerland, won, just beating the best

French girl by two-tenths of a second.

The Men's Race was held over the same course, only it was far longer and it had only about five controls on it. This was won by Edi Rominger, of Switzerland, who was eight seconds ahead of anyone else. It was a good course though it had slightly too much wood-path in it, and for the time of year it appeared to finish a bit too low. This was probably the cause of the rather heated arguments that went on beforehand as to the time of the start.

The Slalom was held on a steep but rather too evenly steep slope, the men running first and then the women. The individual winners were Carl Molitor and Olivia Ansonia, both of Switzerland.

To end the week we again had a meeting in the ski-stadium, a



BRITISH LADIES' TEAM IN NORWAY.

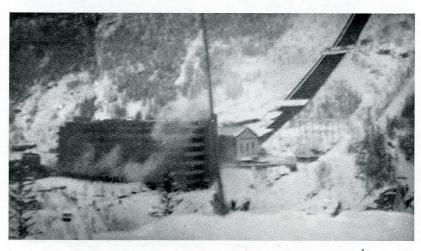
(Left to right) MARION ALLEN, BUNTY GREENLAND, BIDDY ARMITAGE, (LADY CHAMIER, O/C. Troops), PIP HARRISON AND ISOBEL ROE.



ALSO PRESENT — OUR SINISTER FATHER.



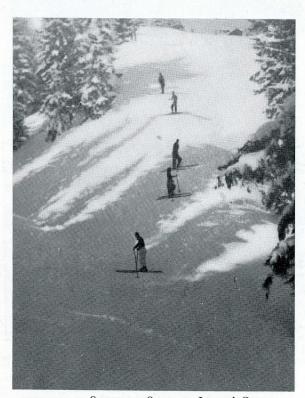
Isobel Roe taking 2nd Place, hors concours, to Schou Nilsen (below) in the Norwegian National Championships at Rjukan.



"Heavy Water" Factory, Rjukan, showing terrain similar to Race Course, 3 Miles Away.



HUT AT NOREFJELL, 2,400 FT. ABOVE LAKE, LEADING OFF TO



THE TOP OF SCHUSS AT START OF LADIES' COURSE.



HELENE ZINGG (President of the S.D. retary of the S.S.V.) AT ZERMAIT.

few brief speeches, prize-giving and the striking of the Flags. That night there was a dinner for all competitors which ranked with the best of FIS celebrations.

The French edges were of interest as they were set out from the edge of the ski by about 2 mm. This enabled them to turn very sharply on ice.

The organisation of the meeting was excellent in every way and only fell down by not having electric timing for the Giant Slalom.

The Swiss could not do enough for us and their one idea is to have the British back in Switzerland. Zermatt is a very fine centre from every point of view—ski-ing, scenery and atmosphere in the village. It has one railway, the Gornergrat, which now runs to the top (10,280 ft.) and which will, next year, only take 40 minutes to go up. This gives one many different runs down, and of course opens up wonderful country for glacier tours. There is also a very long and steep ski-lift (nearly 3,000 ft. in 13 minutes) from which there are two main ways down, and from which there is much scope for the keen wood-runner. This they intend lengthening next year.

We cannot thank all concerned with our trip sufficiently, and would especially like to mention Elsa Roth, Helene Zingg and other members of the S.D.S. who did so much to make it so enjoyable. We were very pleased to bring home from the S.D.S. their kind invitation for British women racers to join with themselves and the Dutch in their Training Period from January 6th-17th, 1947.

## SWITZERLAND, 1946

By B. DUTHIE.

A MONTH of determined and persistent organisation was necessary before going to Switzerland but at last everything was arranged.

[Ed. Note.—We would like to hear more of this.]

We left the house at 6 a.m. on a very stormy day and the doubts in our minds were quickly realised on hearing at Victoria that a

technical hitch was causing a thirty minutes' delay.

After this delay we boarded the 'bus for Northolt Aerodrome with sighs of relief, but our hopes sank again when the news came through that B.O.A.C.'s 'plane for Paris was cancelled. We were going by Air-France, but we pessimistically enquired what happened to the passengers' reservations when a 'plane was cancelled and were told that our names would be added to the bottom of the waiting list and that we might hope to go about three weeks later.

More depressed than ever we sat down to await the decision from Air-France. At about 11 a.m. it came—we were to go—everyone piled into the 'plane, full of excitement and relief, but having got there we sat and cooled off, mentally and physically, for another hour. Finally at 12 noon, we actually rose into the air and proceeded to battle our way through a terrific storm. It cleared a little as we neared Le Bourget, and we were able to see Paris under a thick blanket of snow, and soon we were landing on the snow-covered aerodrome with a series of terrifying bounces.

Here we found that we had missed our connection to Zürich and with only £5 and 50 French francs in our pocket we anticipated that the real difficulties of the journey would begin. However, we were in luck for we were allowed to continue our journey in a 'plane belonging to Swissair which had brought in a load of Chinese delegates and was returning empty to Zürich. We felt like millionaires with

a private 'plane all to ourselves.

The weather improved and we flew all the way above a thick cottonwool blanket of cloud and our first sight of Switzerland after seven years was of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau piercing the

clouds and glowing pink in the setting sun.

From the moment we set foot in Switzerland the S.D.S. came into action. It was rather like having one's childhood dreams of finding a fairy godmother come true; to think of a wish was to have it arranged.

We stayed at Mürren, Wengen, Zermatt, Klosters, and Davos and never before had we shaken hands so often or received such a welcome; invitations out to dinners, teas, drinks and coffee flowed apace. Freikartes or cheap fares appeared like magic and also invitations from friends to stay with them in their chalets.

At first it seemed to us that nothing had changed, but gradually we began to notice little things. The tightest of tight vorlage trousers were universally worn; windjackets had padded shoulders to give them a better shape and many had no form of waist fastening but were worn loose after the style of the Swiss railway porter's blouse. We christened them maternity shirts. The best and smartest skiers mostly favoured a one-coloured outfit and the Swiss Ladies' Team looked very smart in their black vorlages and sweaters, and we noticed that various shades of all grey and even green were popular. Caps, when used, were worn on the back of the head, with the peak turned up in the American fashion. Sticks, if anything, were even shorter than before the war, while Kandahar bindings were universally worn with the rear hooks placed so far back that to raise the heel at all was impossible.

We were told by doctors that spiral breaks of the leg were also most fashionable and that casualties amongst the Americans, many of whom were beginners, were stupendous.

We could not help wondering if there was some connection between the tight binding (easier though it undoubtedly is to ski on) and the broken legs, especially as the old dash-and-crash type of skier seems to have disappeared.

We thought the average skier much improved on hard snow. They can proceed down the icy track (which can now be found on every well-known ski-run and which is called the *piste*) in a steady stream, at good Q2 speed and in a good position, with very little stem and practically no falls. To leave the *piste* appears to be considered rather dangerous so we did not see anyone ski on soft snow, unless they were approximately of Q1 standard.

One day we skied down Tschuggen Glade and overtook a guide and his party. They kept to the *piste* on clattering sheet ice, while we went on untracked, unbreakable crust with an inch of powder snow on top. The amazement with which we regarded their choice of line was not one whit less than the amazement we appeared to cause them. At Mac's Leap we swished gaily off to the right and left them grimly clattering down their nice bit of blue ice. The *piste* craze has its advantages!

We heard much talk of the new technique, new records for courses, and new women racers better even than Cristel Cranz, and at first we listened open-mouthed.

We were given very varying descriptions of how to do this new technique, and kind friends demonstrated for us, but to our inexperienced eyes they either seemed not to do what they said they were doing or else they did what they said and fell down. We decided that the old technique would do for us until we could see the best racers at Zermatt.

By the end of the Zermatt meeting we had decided that in our opinion the new technique consisted of the ability to move the balance of the weight more forward when required. This has been made possible by the firmness with which the bindings now hold down the heels of the boots on to the ski. In other words, the forward position is obtained not only by the normal vorlage position of knee and ankle, but by the actual forward lean of the whole body while relying on the binding to hold the skier up.

We only saw this super forward position used at fairly low speeds, such as occasionally at the end of the turns in a slalom and frequently for demonstration purposes while teaching the christiania. The technique of the experts, when moving fast, seemed to us entirely the same as in pre-war years.

Skiers of Q2 standard are taught to use the side-slip and christie as the mainstay of their ski-ing instead of the old stem. For the medium skiers this is indeed a new and better technique, but for

good skiers there is nothing new about it.

The usual racing line on many courses has altered; more direct lines have been found and corners, paths and bridges improved, all of which makes the comparison of record times an inaccurate way of judging and comparing the ski-ing of past and present racers.

Two members of the L.S.C. raced in the International Giant Slalom at Zermatt: Jeannette (Kessler) Oddie and Helen (Blane) Tomkinson. Their times were the longest, but not by much, and their sporting effort met with much approval and appreciation from S.D.S. members. Considering that it was only their fifth day's

ski-ing in seven years it was a good performance.

We often found ourselves feeling like Rip Van Winkles and asking and being asked surprising questions. For instance, after ski-ing for two days with an S.D.S. friend at Davos I found myself asking, "Who won the Women's Parsenn Derby this year?" She gravely replied, "I did." Horrified at my blunder, I hastened to offer my congratulations and then stupidly said, "And who won last year?" Fortunately, she had a sense of humour. This time she replied with a wide grin, "I did."

Amongst questions asked were, "What does L.S.C. mean?" Also, "What is that little silver ski with A.K. on it?" and, oh, Mardens! in Klosters I was asked, "Is the little black bat you wear a ski-ing badge?" Another one was, "You are American, yes?" and then in tones of utter astonishment, "English! but you seem to be good skier and have already the new technique!" It was quite a relief to find that everyone still knows who Arnold Lunn is.

All good things come to an end, and with our last few francs we bought three lovely Camembert cheeses. Then a final touch of kindness was added to our homeward journey when we each had a large slab of the heavily rationed chocolate and a pair of silk stockings thrust into our hands by friends who had come to Klosters station

to wave good-bye.

The journey was without incident, except that over the Channel a curious and rather unpleasant smell became noticeable. Several people in the 'plane started to fidget and look around for the cause. I think it remained a mystery to our fellow passengers, but not to me, for from my seat I could see Doreen furtively eating very ripe Camembert cheese.

## SWISS LETTER

DEAR T-,

At the last L.S.C. meeting you asked for news from any of us who got to the Alps this spring, and in case some of your sheetanchors have failed you, here are a few items you may wish to toy with.

Wanda and I stole out at the end of February to Wengernalp. There wasn't much snow even then, and three weeks of brilliant sunshine in March reduced it a lot. Everyone said it was the worst winter season they had had for years. But the sun was what we wanted and we managed to find plenty of ski-ing. When Doreen and Birnie came over from Mürren on their way to Zermatt we had our first run down the Tschuggen Glade since 1939. It was snowing and there were no tracks, which was rather fun, and after Mac's Leap we even lost our way for a while. Jeannette came over from Zermatt after the racing and we had some perfect spring ski-ing and ate our lunch on the terrace in blazing sun day after day, Jeannette becoming more kipper (I mean copper) coloured every hour. Then Di arrived from Mürren with her husband, nursing a wretched knee she had twisted on her very first run.

There were so many old friends to talk to, and so many beloved spots to revisit that we hardly drew breath. The Swiss were darlings. They behaved as if they had been crossing off the days for our return, and food and drinks "on the house" were the order of the day. The snow continued to vanish, but we went on trying to ski to Inner Wengen, slaloming round the little manure heaps and langlaufing through drifts of crocuses in order to drink chocolate and eat meringues with real whipped cream with Mary in her Kiosk at the bottom. We had some memorable runs from Eigergletcher down Black Rock. There was still a ribbon of spring snow down the middle, and on either side an Alpine garden where I one day picked fifteen different plants in flower, including a very fragrant pink daphne.

Later on when the Wengen fields were filling with alpine meadow flowers the hill behind Wengernalp became alive with gentians, and Mr. and Mrs. Konzett's little girls would fill bowls to decorate the hotel. The Wengernalp shut after Easter, after a last tremendous party which lasted all night and included Lois Butler and the Brackens. We were wondering what to do next when some of us were kindly invited by Christian Rubi and the S.A.C. to be their guests at a course of ski mountaineering at the Concordia Hut. This was most interesting and instructive, in spite of a heavy Foehn which never stopped for the whole week, causing much of the programme to be abandoned. Even so, much ski-ing and climbing was done, first in blizzards and thick heavy, new snow, and then on breakable crust which gave an extra thrill to roped ski-ing. The S.A.C. all used the new Büchi army compass and the large-scale new maps which are excellent.

After this young Fritz von Almen asked my husband and me to go with him over the Oberaarjoch to the Grimsel, but the Foehn started again and we gave up the idea and went to a Swiss wedding

instead. I don't know if you have ever been to a Swiss wedding, but if you haven't and you are invited to one, I suggest you sleep and starve all the previous day. We were invited for 9.30 a.m., when the thirty assembled relations and guests were given coffee and cakes before setting off in cars for the Grindelwald church. The bride was Beni Konzett's daughter and she looked charming in her long white dress and veil, with her little step-sisters as bridesmaids in pale blue. There was a simple and beautiful service, and then we all drove back to the Bahnhof Hotel to drink the bride and bridegroom's health. Then we drove to the Harder Hotel in Interlaken where we all drank the bride and bridegroom's health in champagne. Then we drove on to Sigriswil above the Lake of Thun, where we drank the bride and bridegroom's health in red and white wine and a lot of other things, and ate a most succulent luncheon which went on for three hours. After some speeches and dancing we drove back to the Bahnhof hotel where we had a wonderful supper (I could not remember what we drank!) followed by Swiss waltzes till 2 a.m., when the happy couple left for Interlaken. When I told Hans Brunner about this party he said it was nothing to what happened at his wedding.

We spent the last few days of our holiday partly with Mr. and Mrs. Fritz Borter at their home in Interlaken, and partly at the Eiger in Wengen. Wengen was deserted except for its proper inhabitants, in the short gap between the seasons, and we talked with Swiss friends about the past and the future. We heard how prepared they had been in 1940; how every man had his rifle and even the women learnt to shoot; how they all listened to the B.B.C. and to our bombers overhead going to and from Italy, and how once the pilots had been heard talking on the "intercom" about "O God, and the Bumps." Now all Wengen keeps cows and pigs and everybody works like mad to grow enough potatoes for the winter. The Swiss are still rationed for nearly everything, but the mountain people grow so much of their own food that they can do themselves well, and in the hotels the food is wonderful. Their big headache is the staff shortage.

Before I stop I must tell you something about the ski-schools. You know how good they were before the war, but they are much better now. I believe there are ninety schools in Switzerland, all under a central organisation. The teaching is clear and teachers are enthusiastic; they practically all speak some English, and another good point is that the children have their own classes and get a lot of attention. I didn't notice anything revolutionary in the technique, but there has been a great improvement in the methods of teaching. The swung Christiania in soft snow will always be difficult to learn, but rigid bindings with diagonal tension are a help, and a danger, too, of course. The experts say that the perfect binding has yet to be invented.

I hope that you were able to get to Norway, and I am looking forward to hearing how you all got on.

Yours,

ROSAMOND HEPWORTH.

BY JEANNETTE ODDIE.

Now that the Swiss have taken to Mass Ski-ing one has to be rather careful where one goes at weekends if one wishes to avoid the crowds. So on a Sunday in March, Bill, Babs and I set off on the 9 a.m. train for Eismeer. To our horror the Valley population were there, too ... three train-loads of them. The scramble on arrival had to be seen to be believed and we thought that the best thing to do was to wait till the crowd thinned out, so we stood at the window and watched the masses. But, of course, the crowd did not thin out as we had arrived on the first train and just as we thought it was getting better another train would arrive and it became worse than ever again. It was a wonderful hot sunny day, and as we did not want to miss the best of the snow we finally decided to try and get off.

Down the winding tunnel we went through thick clouds of dust and out on to the glacier. It was difficult to find space to put on one's ski as every available inch of snow had a "body" on it, most of them paying absolutely no attention to the dangers underneath, and sitting or walking about as though it was a solid slope. Above us the snow was perfect and there were just a few tracks made by parties who had come down from the Joch. Below there was a solid stream of skiers, good, bad and indifferent. We finally got away and as far as the narrow part went well. Then, at the bottle-neck where one must keep to the track we tried to stake our claim in the waiting queue (shades of the fishmonger's in Chelsea!). But the Swiss have not learnt to queue as we have, and they jostled one, knocked one down, skied over one . . . they did not care. One woman who was hurling herself down the slope, falling all over the place, chose to fall at Bill's feet and when he ventured to warn her of the dangers of going through into a crevasse, she replied, "Oh, it does not look dangerous."

Just as we were about to start down there was a thundering roar and part of the serac above came down. Automatically the three of us stepped backward with our hearts in our mouths, but the general reaction was to push forward to get a better view, and one comment was "O, que c'est magnifique!" We thought that some of the crowds below must have been caught, but as the cloud cleared we saw that it had fallen beyond the tracks, so all was well. Although our legs were still shaking, Bill insisted on pushing on as once at the bottom of that part we would be able to get away from the madding crowd ... and what a relief it was to do so. To be once again sailing down that wonderful open expanse—wonderful even though the snow might have been in slightly better condition. We lunched beside a rock at the bottom of the glacier, in brilliant sunshine, looking back on the slopes where the black dots struggled and bumped and jostled among one another. Meantime, we were thoroughly enjoying our sandwiches washed down with a large quantity of Chianti.

After lunch we set off once more, down the steep part to the second glacier. This time our legs were weak from a different cause, for red wine at that height has a delightful effect. By this time the snow was getting very soft and slow and we trickled down the very gentle incline to the top of the moraine, and all too soon we had to remove our ski for lack of snow. I have never seen so little snow there before, and scrambling down over the crevasses was a most exhausting job. We must have walked for at least an hour before we came to the usual place to remove ski, and we were thankful to put them on again at the bottom and langlauf along to Grutch and bacon and eggs—luckily for us it was not a meatless day.

## SWISS HOLIDAY, SPRING 1946

BY WANDA FOSTER.

THE thrill of arriving back in Switzerland after seven uninterrupted years in England—not knowing quite what to expect—is difficult to describe. I was uncertain whether the snow and the mountains could still hold the same glamour and sparkle I always associated with them, and most important of all, whether the easy friendliness of the Swiss could have outlasted such a long period of comparative isolation.

Any misgivings on the former, however, were swept aside as the train climbed from Lauterbrunnen to Wengen and I saw that lovely countryside intact, and sunny, just as we had left it so long ago. I felt grateful to the Swiss for having held it all in safe keeping. To make everything perfect, the Swiss themselves gave us a wonderful welcome and showed us much kindness during our stay.

One of the first things that struck me on re-entering the ski-ing world again was how nice all the women looked. Everyone now wears vorlage trousers and a gay windjacket—worn, incidentally, much longer than of yore. On the first fine day I saw what I thought were hundreds of pretty girls in an "interesting condition" ski-ing in long loose linen maternity jackets. On making inquiries, however, I heard that it was only a new fashion in ski clothes, the purpose of which was to produce a kind of Chinese Mandarin effect, but I am afraid it does not always come off—the effect, I mean.

The general standard of Swiss ski-ing has gone up enormously, very many of them attaining to about Second Class S.C.G.B., and a large number of them are very good. The standard is, indeed, a little frightening until one begins to query their fortitude in soft or difficult snow, but one's doubts on this point must remain unanswered as it is practically impossible to find the ordinary Swiss skier putting him- or herself to this test. This may be due to the great dearth of soft snow resulting from the erection of more and more ski-lifts wherever they can be put up (the Lauberhorn for example). Lovers of soft snow need not despair, however, as there is plenty to be found if they look for it.

There are very few good new ski in Switzerland, but plenty of sticks and other equipment of improved design. I noticed most of the good skiers had laminated or split-cane ski. I have a pre-war laminated pair which I could have sold for enough Swiss francs to give me another ten days' holiday.

At home one hears a lot about the new ski-ing style said to revolutionize the whole technique. It is true all skiers do the Swing Turn in some form or other according to their individual standard of ski-ing, and it must be easy to learn as even the beginner of a few weeks seems able to absorb its rudiments and is able to enjoy a run very much sooner than in the old days. It appears to differ very little from what I was taught in 1938 and 1939. It is equally effective on hard or soft snow and once mastered lends an added zest to running because of its speed and rhythm. Straight racing has become very fast and I heard a rumour that women's races in the future were going to be controlled like long open Slalom; there have been so many broken legs that mothers will not let their daughters race.

A word of encouragement to the skier approaching middle age. [ED. Note—and those of us who are bien arrivée.] I think that most of us who went out this year found that we were soon back at our individual standards of seven years ago, but without the stamina for long distances non-stop. One of the effects that war has had on Switzerland is to popularize ski-ing among the Swiss. The Government started a movement of ski-ing for all, and I am told that at least an eighth of the population has taken up the challenge, whereas before the war the resorts had to rely very largely on foreigners to fill their hotels they are now flooded with Swiss. The week-end traffic from Berne and other towns is quite terrific. Heaven knows what it will be like when the foreigners return in bulk and the Battle for Accommodation begins, but somehow the Swiss will rise to the occasion, as they are determined to welcome us back. Their kindness to us this year was something we shall never forget. Even if the Hotels are packed and the slopes like Hampstead on a Bank Holiday, who cares—there are smiling faces to greet us and the shops are full of all the lovely things we have nearly forgotten, including that greatest joy to us all—SILK STOCKINGS.

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Richardson, Mrs. J. (née Allan), '28. Robertson, Mrs. (née Campbell), '28. Roe, Miss Isobel, '38. Rudd-Clarke, Mrs. (formerly Curteis), Scott, Miss B., '30. Sherer, Miss M. C., '31. Sheridan, Mrs. Brinsley (née Carter), Smith, Mrs. Kenneth (née Barry), '39. Snowden, Mrs. (née Paterson Brown), Somerville, Mrs., '29. Spence, Mrs. (née Walter), '31. Stirling, Mrs. (née Wedderburn Wilson), '34. Stroud, Mrs. W. (née Gossage), '28. Templeton, Viscountess, '29. Tomkinson, Mrs. W. R. (née Blane), Topham, Miss P., '31. Tulloch, Mrs. A. (née Walker), '36. Turner, Mrs. (née Schuster), '23. Young, Mrs. James (formerly Bingham), '39. Vansittart-Neale, Miss P. M., '31. Watson, Miss S., '35. Wright, Mrs. A. (née de Mussenden Leathes), '37. Wright, Mrs. James (formerly Gordon-Lennox), '29.

If there are any mistakes in members' names or initials they are asked to notify the Hon. Secretary, and also change of address.



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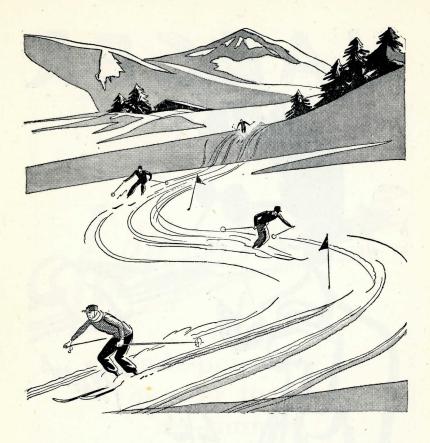
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