



—T. W. Moppett.

LOOKING SOUTH FROM MT. DICKY COOPER TO MT. TWYNAM.

White's River

By T. W. MOPPETT

During my Kiandra-Kosciusko tour of 1936 with Miss Jean Trimble and Mr. Oliver Moriarty, we stayed at White's River Hut for one night. We arrived in a fierce blizzard, and the peace and calmness in the valley after the turmoil on top of the range, and the excellent ski-ing slopes, so captivated us that we all decided that we must come again.

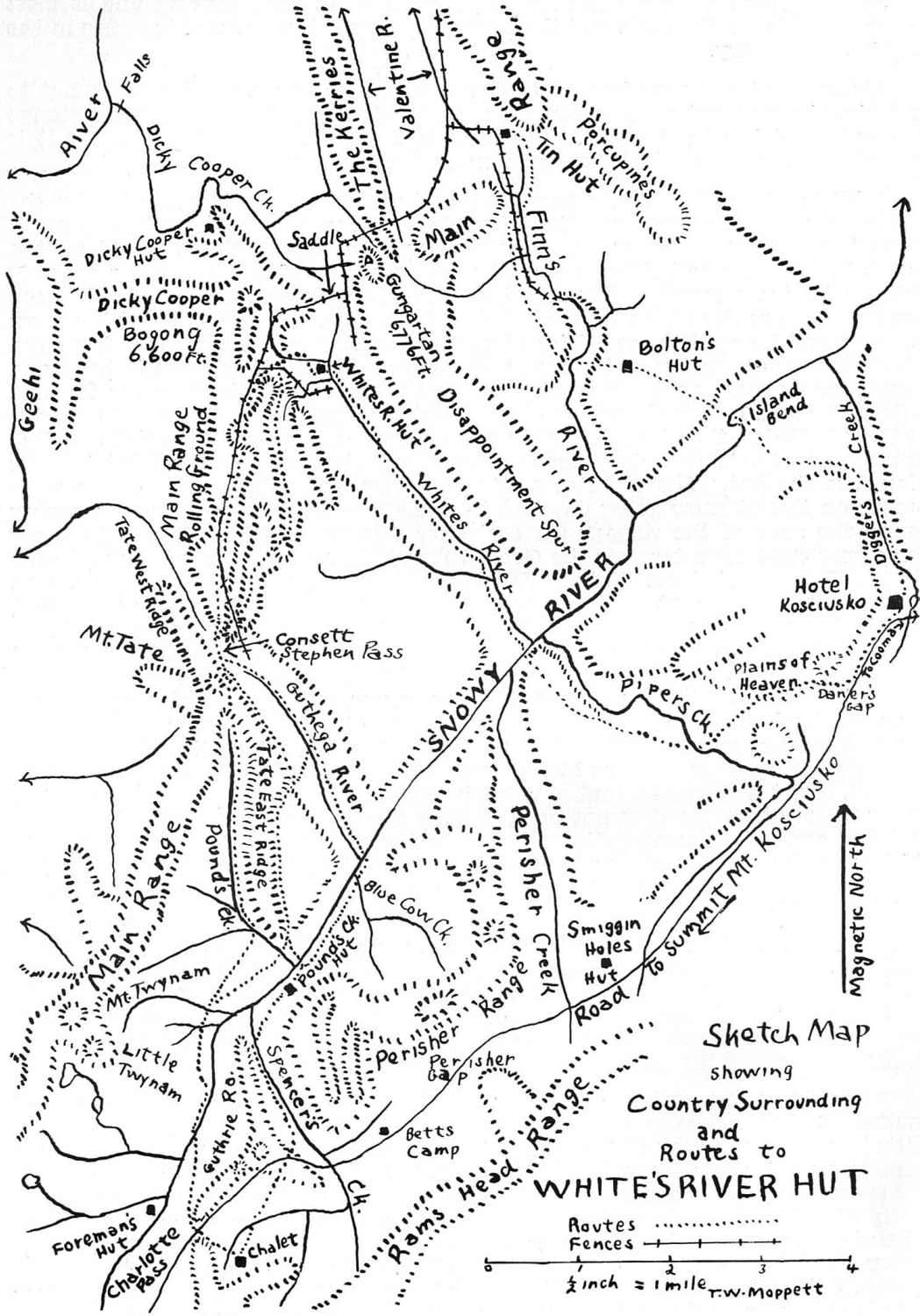
The following year, looking for a quiet holiday, with not too much pack-carrying, Miss Trimble and I decided that White's River was just the place. It was easy to persuade Miss Florence Allsworth, who had had her introduction to ski-ing during a three months' stay in Hobart the previous winter, to come along.

We were there for a week, arriving on Saturday, 11th July, 1937, having come across from the Hotel Kosciusko, via the Plains of Heaven, Piper's Creek, Snowy River, and White's River. We left the following Friday, 17th July, 1937, going via the Rolling Ground, Tate East Ridge, Pound's Creek Hut, Spencer's Creek and Bett's Camp.

For the most part we played in the valley around the hut, and went for short runs across to Dicky Cooper Valley and up on to Dicky Cooper Bogong and Gungartan—not bothering to go further afield.

We also slept, talked, read, wrote up the diary, took photographs, cooked, ate, washed up, emptied the rubbish tin, drew water from the creek about twenty yards from the hut, and brought in the wood we chopped down.

Incidentally, as dragging logs through the snow is heavy work, it is most important to conserve the supply of wood. Also, if it is used wastefully, there will come a time when there is none within easy reach of the hut. It should be



remembered that a big roaring fire is detrimental to good cooking and is most uncomfortable for the cook, and that, except on the coldest of nights, a fire in the hut is unnecessary.

Except that one usually does a lot more pack carrying, moving from hut to hut, the above is just about a complete list of what one does when "Main Range rattling", as it has been called. The term is, I gather, one of derision, but it is remarkable how comfortable an experienced party can make itself.

White's River Hut is in a very sheltered position, as it is protected by the whole bulk of the range from the blizzards which usually come from the south to west quarter of the compass. The south-western side of the valley above the hut is broken by small ridges and gullies, running down to the river, is sparsely dotted with trees, many of them dead, and in winter is always covered with deep powder snow, partly blown from the top of the range. After a blizzard the snow is damp and heavy, but soon dries when the sun shines brightly for a few days. Above the valley, on top of the range, the snow is always firm, usually hard and bumpy, and at times marble crust. There is a fine run of about two miles with a drop of about 1,000 feet from the top of Dicky Cooper Bogong, down to the edge of White's Valley, then left, under big rocky outcrops, keeping to the left of a line of trees, down to White-Dicky Cooper Saddle, and right again down White's River almost to the hut. The run starts off with some good schusses, then over some bumps on to soft snow going down to the saddle, then down the river, swooping round the ends of the ridges. On the other side of the Main Range there are some long runs down towards the Geehi River, with an easy route back up Dicky Cooper Valley and down White's Valley. 1937 was a poor snow year, however, there being generally at least two feet less snow than in the previous year, and, as this side of the range gets the full benefit of the wind and afternoon sun, there were plenty of rocks and scrub, and even grass, showing, so we did not try out the western runs. The side of White's Valley opposite the hut is steep and smooth. It is fairly thickly covered with snowgums, and the snow is much firmer than on the hut side, due to it getting more wind. The trees are far enough apart, however, to give excellent wood running. Apart from the absence of a steep downhill course, such as Mount Townsend provides, the ski-ing is every bit as good, if not better than that obtainable around the Chalet. It is more varied, easier to get at, as one does not have to cross the Snowy River for the best runs, and one can ski in comparative comfort in the worst weather. In addition to ski-ing in the vicinity of the hut, there are excellent tours to be done—across Gungartan to the Tin Hut, to Mawson's Hut, Grey Mare Bogong, Mount Jagungal, and Mount Tate.

There is much for which we have to thank our Australian Alps. There is the thrill of speed and the satisfactory feeling one gets, occasionally, when, ski-ing easily and confidently, one feels that ski and skier are one unit. There is the fresh invigorating atmosphere, and for the tourer the chance to get away with two or three companions to untracked snow and new country; to test his skill and stamina in finding his way about unfamiliar country.

One afternoon we climbed Dicky Cooper Bogong. The view to the south and south-west was the most striking I have ever seen. Tate and Twynam, with glittering snow and dark shadows, stood out boldly in the crystal clear air. Twynam, eight miles away, appeared at most, half that distance. In the foreground the snow sloped away gently to a sudden edge, over which were the black depths of the Geehi Valley. Beyond the Geehi to the right of Twynam, was mile upon mile of dark ridges, ending in a thin white line on the horizon, which was Mounts Bogong and Feathertop and the Bogong High Plains in Victoria. From Gungartan, 6,776 feet, the highest point on that part of the range, a most extensive view is obtained; north to Jagungal, south to Twynam, and east and west across the range and for many miles beyond, over dark hills and brown plains.

There are several routes to White's River Hut which are shown on the map accompanying this article. The best and only all-snow route is via Mount Tate and the Rolling Ground. The several variations of this route are clearly marked. When choosing a route it should be remembered that in bad weather it is best to keep to the sheltered eastern side of the range, and that, after warm weather when the creeks are open, the Snowy should be crossed as high up as possible. Personally, I think the best route from the Chalet is to climb over Charlotte's Pass, turn half-right and run down to the Snowy in a long traverse through the trees, cross and follow down the left bank to Pound's Creek, then climb up the northern arm of Pound's Creek, cross over Mount Tate to Consett Stephen Pass, then follow along the eastern side of the Rolling Ground, and run down the creek into White's River Valley. In very bad weather it might be preferable to traverse round the Snowy River side of Tate East Ridge. However, the north-eastern side of Mount Tate, where we found the avalanche, is very steep and covered with huge rocks. Although most people thread their way through these, I think it is far easier to run down to the Guthega River and climb up the valley. This should be regarded as a full day trip, and an early start is advisable as bad weather usually comes up about midday. Two other routes, shown on the map, are from the Hotel, one via the Plains of Heaven, Piper's Creek, and White's River, and the other via Digger's Creek, Island Bend, Bolton's Hut and Gungartan. The difficulties about these routes are the icy-cold crossings of the Snowy on submerged rocks, the steep, high, and rough sides of the Snowy gorge, and the fact that there is usually no snow, or, worse still, little snow for a mile or two on each side of the Snowy where ski have to be carried. I cannot recommend these routes unless the members of the party are strong and used to carrying packs over rough country.



HEAD OF WHITE'S RIVER VALLEY.

—T. W. MOPPETT.