

NSW SKIING DURING THE LATE 1930's AND THE 1940's

The major NSW skiing venues in the late 1930's, were at the Hotel Kosciuszko near Jindabyne, the Kosciuszko Chalet at Charlotte's Pass and the historic gold-mining township of Kiandra. None of these sites was easy to reach, particularly in Winter, when the trip from Cooma often involved many kilometres of travel over snow-covered roads. Kosciusko Alpine Club members were actively ski touring the entire range between Mt. Jagungal, the Brassy Mountains and the Chalet at Charlotte Pass in the 1930's and 1940's.

Few present-day skiers would be aware that there also was a ski field located north-west of Berridale, called the Brassy Mountains, that was quite popular in the 1940's. It was skied by several well-known Skiers, including Elyne Mitchell, Leon Smith, Ken Breakspear, Frank Leyden and Alan Andrews. Kosciusko Alpine Club (KAC) members were actively ski touring the entire range between Mt. Jagungal, the Brassy Mountains and the Chalet at Charlotte Pass.. To cater for this demand in the Brassy Mountains, the Alpine Hut was built during the period 1939 – 1941 by two local contractors and was operated as a non-profit Proprietary Company.

To provide a realistic description as to the quality of the skiing near the Alpine Hut, we present excerpts from the daily skiing diary entries written by **Frank Leyden**, plus his photographs, to provide Frank's impressions of skiing in the Brassy Mountains Area, based on his diary observations recorded each day. Explanations and context, that have been provided by Warren Peck, are printed in italics.

SKIING THE BRASSY MOUNTAINS (NSW) IN THE 1940's

The Brassy Mountains were skied by several Kosciusko Alpine Club members, including Elyne Mitchell, Leon Smith, Ken Breakspear, Frank Leyden and Alan Andrews. Elyne Mitchell recorded the details of her adventurous 1941 holiday at the Alpine Hut, in Chapter 10 of her 1942 book, *Australia's Alps*. She noted that Alpine Hut was then the only one of its kind on the Range. It had accommodation for 18 skiers, plus a cook and a cook's offsider. Every Saturday during the ski season, it was planned that the incoming party would ski together with a guide into the Alpine Hut from the Snowy Plains House, which was located at the end of the access road from Berridale. As Elyne Mitchell discovered in 1941, the promised guide (and the draught horse to pull a sledge with their packs) rarely materialized in the very difficult conditions experienced by ski clubs during World War 2 (1939 to 1945). Interest in the Alpine Hut faded in the 1960's and its operating company was wound up in 1968. Sadly, the hut itself was destroyed by a fire in 1979.

The following excerpts from **Frank Leyden's** daily skiing diary provides his general impressions of the skiing in the Brassy Mountains near the Alpine Hut in the 1940's. Explanations and context provided by Warren Peck, are printed in italics.

SKI HOLIDAYS AT THE ALPINE HUT IN THE 1940's

The usual means of access from Sydney to the Alpine Hut was the overnight train from Sydney to Cooma, then bus to Berridale, where the local garage man met parties headed for Alpine Hut and drove them to the snow-line at Snowy Plains. Depending on snow depth, the

Gungarlin River Crossing about one mile from the Snowy Plains House and 8 miles (12.9 km) by track from Alpine Hut (Photo No. 1), was often the limit for vehicle access in August. Even skiing the seven miles (11km) from the Snowy Plains House at 1450m altitude to the Alpine Hut at 1670m altitude, was a challenge in an area without roads.

Ski runs had been cleared on the slopes of Big Brassy (summit 1945m elevation) behind the Alpine hut, which also provided a base for skiers heading for the vast area of excellent ski fields to its north that included Mt. Jagungal (2061m), the highest Australian mountain north of the Kosciuszko Main Range.

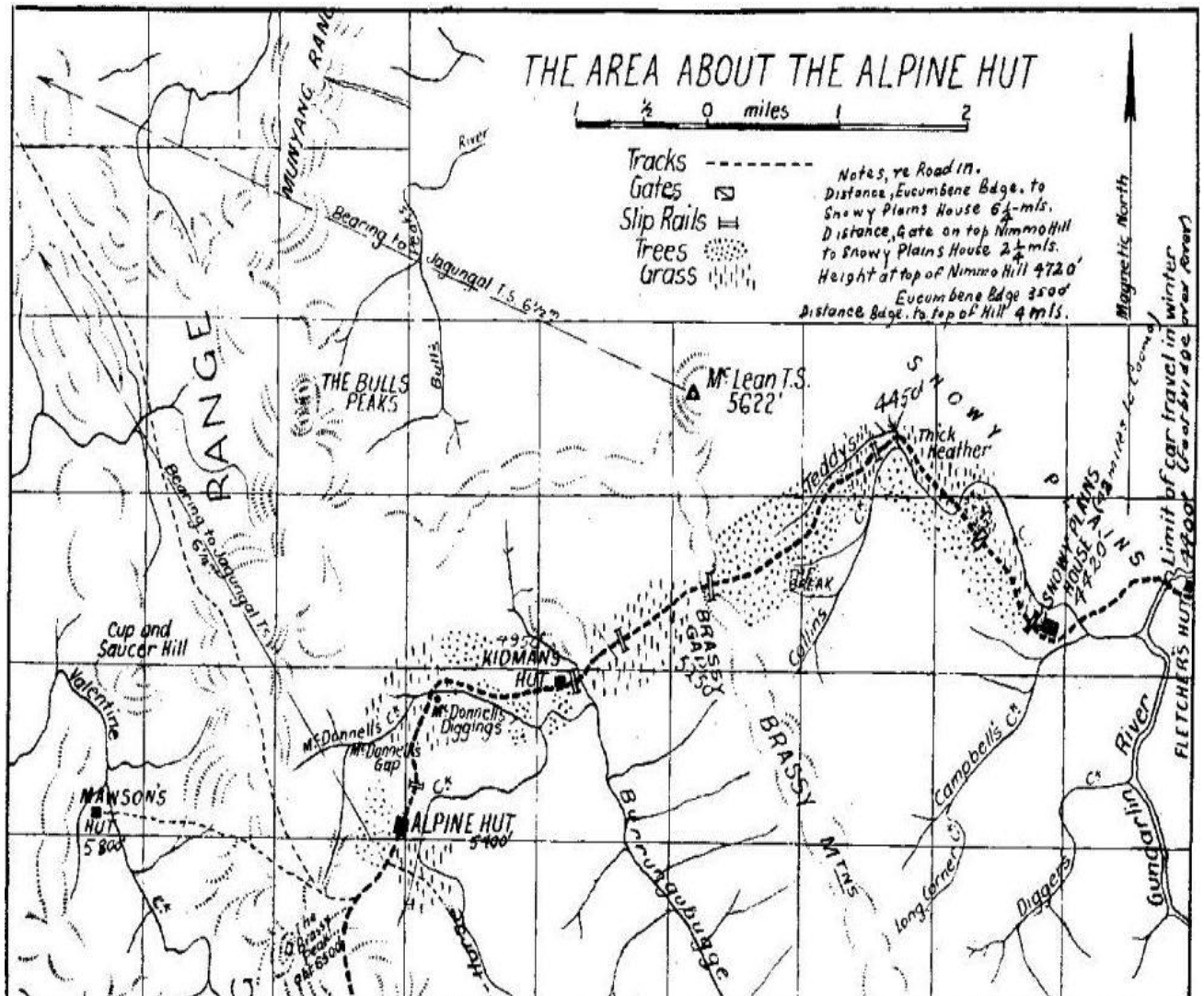


Photo No. 1 Map of Area Surrounding the Alpine Hut (Ski Year Book, 1940)

Packhorses could usually get through the winter snow from the Snowy Plains House to the Brassy Gap, about 3.4 miles (5.5km) from the Alpine Hut, with packs and bags of food and other supplies. Then it was necessary to ski the remaining distance whilst carrying heavy packs. The local graziers, who were going to stock the hut with food, act as guides and supply the packhorses, had been called up in 1942 to serve in the Australian Army in the Second World War, which started shortly after the Alpine Hut had opened.. As a result, Frank Leyden, who skied in to Alpine Hut each winter between 1942 and 1946, only had the services of packhorses for his 1945 ski holiday at the hut. Photo No. 2 shows horses at "Snowy Plains

House” (Naphthalis Homestead) at about 1445m elevation, just below the snowline of that year. From here the horses carried the packs nearly 6 km to Brassy Gap at about 1710m elevation.



Photo No. 2 Horses at “Snowy Plains House” with Skiers Packs [Frank Leyden, 1945]

In heavy snow years, such as 1943, the snowline advanced a further 4 miles down the mountain to about 1200m elevation. That year the 10 mile (16km) ski journey into Alpine Hut through deep snow generally required 24 hours, including an overnight stop in Fletchers Hut, a hut east of the Gungarlin River at about 1470m elevation.

In winter the Alpine Hut provided heated bunk room accommodation for about 16 persons, a large eating / lounge / kitchen area, a room for a cook and sometimes a live-in cook. But there was no running hot and cold water. Water was hand-pumped daily from a nearby creek into a large, open container a little larger than a baby’s bath. Showering involved heating a bucket of water and then filling a crude camping shower consisting of an on/off tap leading to a shower rose.



Photo No. 3

Alpine Hut at 1670m Elevation

[Frank Leyden, 1943]

Saturday August 14, 1943. Left Cooma; bus took one hour to reach Berridale. Weather – black frost half way to Berridale; most severe frost seen yet; everything white. Bus holding 20 *persons* still runs daily to Hotel Kosciusko. Left Berridale about **3:00pm**. Constance had gone out to fetch Heisenberg's party (*who were returning from Alpine Hut*); weather in Berridale bright sun – still (no wind) – very fine – *good* views of snowy mountains. **4:30pm** reached Eucumbene River in truck, which *then* bogged about half a mile up the Nimmo Hill (at about 1250m altitude). Decided to walk *from this point*. After another quarter of a mile *on foot in the snow*, then had to put on skis. Arrived Fletchers Hut on the Snowy Plains about 8:15pm (*after gaining about 220m altitude whilst covering about 5.3 km*). Was skiing in weather that night that was beautiful and clear bright full moon and quite mild. Climbed well on medium (*ski wax*) but it had all rubbed off by the time arrived at Fletchers Hut. It *had been* hard to find the hut as the whole country was covered so deep in snow and looked different. After leaving the truck we ascended without letup on the top of Nimmo Ridge till the road was lost under snow. *The road is* winding and we came over numerous false summits. At the top, the ski tracks of the previous party wound around the side of the main (*Nimmo*) summit. The going was through deep new snow and thick timber. Recommend med or mix in dabs (*of ski wax on the ski soles*) for climbing; no Klister (*no Klister wax should be used*).

After going for 1.5 to 2 miles sidling the main top, we came to clear open Snowy Plains with a good clear view of Brassy Mountains covered in snow as was Snowy Plains. After going ¼ mile pretty well straight ahead (travelling NW) we came to a fence & gate and cleared country in front, with a patch of timber straight in front. Near the left of this patch of timber

and in it, is Fletcher's Hut. Our packs were very heavy, each weighing about 50 pounds (23 kg).

Sunday August 15, 1943. 8.30am departed Fletchers Hut, crossed Gungarlin River on skis (frozen). Climbed small ridge. Snowy Plains House to the left and right in front with Brassy Mtns behind and Brassy Gap a bit to the right. *Arrived 9:30am at Snowy Plains House, which is in a very bad condition. Glad we had stayed at Fletchers Hut.*

10:10am left Snowy Plains House.

12:30pm (approx.) top Brassy Gap. Weather all bright clear; still cloudless – perfect. Slight cloud coming from N/West after midday.

1:00pm (approx.) left Brassy Gap.

2:30pm (approx.) Kidman's Hut

3:00pm (approx.) left Kidman's Hut. Thick cloud was coming from NW and sun obscured; air still & mild (*weather conditions were experienced.*)

4:30pm Arrived Alpine Hut

Brassy Gap was climbed on Klister dabs. Med *ski wax* would wear off too quick on the ice under trees. Would recommend very thin slight dabs of klister over (*the ski sole*) to start trip from Eucumbene River and have cake paraffin in pocket. Might have to use paraffin frequently but with med *ski wax* would get down too soon to the ski gliss (*on the ski soles*) and (*the resulting*) slipping & falling *would be* too fatiguing.

Very tired when arrived at Alpine Hut. Pack straps on shoulders hurting most. Weight should be cut to absolute minimum.

(Contrast Frank Leyden's 1943 experience of getting to the Alpine Hut with his 1945 experience which follows. We provide most of his 1945 diary entries below, so as to give an idea of the scope of the ski touring available at the Alpine Hut)

Saturday August 11, 1945. Breakfast at Railway Station OK, got away 8:45am. *There were 12 persons in the Leyden party.* Went fast in cars to Nimmo where new snow was falling. Was quite warm, strong gusty wind and cloud coming from NW. Eucumbene & Gungarlin rivers well up – latter crossed with some difficulty. Snowy Plains wind-swept and wet snow *was falling* continuously. Arrived Snowy Plains House at 11:30 and left after lunch at 1:45pm. All packs loaded onto two horses. Fresh snow on ground up Teddy's Creek. Put on skis with *climbing skins fixed underneath the skis* at start of Brassy Gap climb. Gusty wind and wet snow all the way up Brassy Gap. Everyone got wet through. Extremely beautiful effect of snow *settling* on trees, leaves, dead trees etc. Would have made excellent photos with good light. Horses could not get past the Brassy Gap. We had three bags of meat 36lb (16.4kg) and cheese, sugar, wheatmeal, jam etc. When *this additional load (carried by the horses to Brassy Gap)* *was evenly divided between members of the group, they all had extremely heavy packs.*

Just over the top of the Brassy Gap, the wind was terrific. My right-hand finger tips were extremely painful with cold, for they had got wet. *Climbing skins* slipped off the back of my skis. Got to Kidmans Hut, very tired, at about 4pm. Left Kidmans at 5pm. We dumped some food at Kidmans, but should have left more of the food there. Deep fresh snow made skiing conditions exhausting beyond Kidmans. Wind was very strong and visibility bad. Worst conditions were at "The Diggings", where wind and sleety snow made slow continuous plodding necessary.



Photo No. 4 Alpine Hut and the Big Brassy Mountain at the Rear (C. Monk, 1939)

Weather was better after “The Diggings” and the NW wind was behind us. We were very tired due to the struggle through the deep snow. I had worst pain in left instep, possibly through lifting ski tip out of deep snow combined with the effects of a heavy pack. Next worse pain was in left groin, also due to lifting *ski tip* out of deep snow and a lot of track breaking. Arrived at Alpine Hut 6.45pm very tired. Hut was left by D. Richardson’s *departing* party in excellent condition. Used medium thin ski gliss, but with skins on all the way. Skins *had* very good *performance*, but the snow gets between skis and skins and *compacts* to ice, loosening skins and allowing *the* skins to slip off the back *of the skis*. **Note:** extreme difficulty of doing anything, such as fixing slipping skins, in a blizzard.

Sunday August 12. Weather previous night *relatively* warm, heavy snowing and blizzard from NW to West continued thru’ Sunday but wind moved gradually to South and died down towards evening. Snow was very soft and deep and very bad for skiing on account of *the skis* sinking in intermittently *whilst running or gliding*. *Spent the day* mainly wood cutting, water getting (on sled) from creek and *doing maintenance* work in hut.

Monday August 13. Calmer night and colder. Bright sun with cloud and light snow coming from SW and clearing gradually. Plenty of photography around Dead Horse Creek & woodlands; also of icicles hanging on the Hut.

Snow surface much improved. In morning climbed Penerith, Big Brassy, traversed to Little Brassy and ran down to *Alpine* Hut. Snow good on Penerith, excellent on slopes below Big Brassy (Little Arlberg). Snow deep and hard to turn *on* in lower woods, After lunch climbed to big practice slope, which was in excellent condition, above Kitchen Tip. Finally ran down Wood Run, which was also excellent, but *we took a few wrong turns at first until we refreshed our memories as to where it went in amongst the trees*. Thin layers of ski wax, such as Green Sohm, were OK.

Monday August 13. Calmer night and colder. Bright sun with cloud and light snow coming from SW and clearing gradually. Plenty of photography around Dead Horse Creek & woodlands; also of icicles hanging on the Hut.

Snow surface much improved. In morning climbed Penerith, Big Brassy, traversed to Little Brassy and ran down to *Alpine* Hut. Snow good on Penerith, excellent on slopes below Big Brassy (Little Arlberg). Snow deep and hard to turn *on* in lower woods, After lunch climbed to big practice slope, which was in excellent condition, above Kitchen Tip. Finally ran down Wood Run, which was also excellent, but *we took a few wrong turns at first until we refreshed our memories as to where it went in amongst the trees*. Thin layers of ski wax, such as Green Sohm, were OK.



Photo No. 5 Frank Leyden's Ski Touring Group on Big Brassy (F. Leyden, 1945)

Tuesday August 14. Morning clear and cold; slight wind (cold) from SW; high Cirrus cloud. Temp 30 degrees F and Barom. 30.2 inch and gradually rising from previous day. In the morning climbed Big Brassy, skied down to Little Brassy. (*Skiers visible in Photo No. 5 [from left to right] are Joe Scotland, Bill Cosgrove, Len Scotland, Hedi Spiegel, John D'Arcy, Edgar Spiegel, Trude and Richard Raubitschek.*)

Spent afternoon practicing stem turns on Fletcher Nursery Slope, then the Wood Run. Good weather and snow much improved with a quite good surface. Bill and Laurie got "lost" in the woods of Big Brassy. Waxed skins to stop them icing up *during the long climbs to the top of the ski runs*. Still using Green Sohm thin ski wax, *which is performing OK*.

Wednesday August 15. Morning extremely red sunrise after night that started clear & fine but wind *blowing* from 4 am. Weather warm and increasing wind + mist from SW & working around to NW and increasing all day but very little snowing. Big Brassy trip in morning. Practice slope & wood run in afternoon. Snow fast and hard on the tops. Pasty snow down among the trees. Rained overnight.

Thursday August 16. Windy from W; hut rocks. Very warm in morning (38 degrees F *which was about + 3 degrees C*). Windy from W and very warm, over 40 degrees F all day. Snow around hut and in the trees very wet & pasty. Top slope of Big Brassy all pasty. We do practice slope in morning & in afternoon repair skins & stocks. Len, Joe & Dick do Bull's Peaks & Kidmans to bring back most of remaining food. Joe breaks ski tip and got back with a *wooden block in its place*. Green Sohm thin ski wax OK. Fast schuss but heavy turning.



Photo No. 6

Lunch-break whilst out on the Snow

(Frank Leyden)

ALPINE HUT TO WHITE'S RIVER HUT, 17 AUGUST 1945

Friday August 17. Severe wind rocks Alpine Hut during night, very warm, snow melting fast, slight falls of wet snow. *Weather* still from W. Barometer same as when we arrived in blizzard. Departed at 8.45am for Whites (*straight-line distance is 9.5km*) and got to Tin Hut at 11.00am after going over Main Range in severe blizzard up to 60mph with bad visibility. Left Tin Hut at 11.30am and arrived at White's at 1.30pm in blizzard & visibility still very bad, but not quite so severe wind. Followed fence to Moriarty's Cornice, then went south for about a mile amongst the knobbly rocks of the North Ridge of Gungartan; then temporary clearing of mist showed us Dicky Cooper Peak and the run down the creek to White's Saddle (*now known as Schlink Pass*). Snow good most of the way, but a bit wet near hut. Whites well covered with snow. Weather moderated towards evening & got colder. Hut in good condition. Plenty of kerosene, flour, sugar, some tin meat, tea and other scraps in Hut; also candles, matches, 1 hurricane lamp, 1 headlamp (needs a glass), new tools, 2 brooms, needs more buckets & a repair to tap on fountain. Spent afternoon trying to make a "venturi" for the chimney with a biscuit tin (*to aid the extraction of smoke from the fire inside the hut.*)

Spent afternoon practicing stem turns on Fletcher Nursery Slope, then the Wood Run. Good weather and snow much improved with a quite good surface. Bill and Laurie got "lost" in the

woods of Big Brassy. Waxed skins to stop them icing up *during the long climbs to the top of the ski runs*. Still using Green Sohm thin ski wax, *which is performing OK*.

Wednesday August 15. Morning extremely red sunrise after night that started clear & fine but wind *blowing* from 4 am. Weather warm and increasing wind + mist from SW & working around to NW and increasing all day but very little snowing. Big Brassy trip in morning. Practice slope & wood run in afternoon. Snow fast and hard on the tops. Pasty snow down among the trees. Rained overnight.

Thursday August 16. Windy from W; hut rocks. Very warm in morning (38 degrees F *which was about + 3 degrees C*). Windy from W and very warm, over 40 degrees F all day. Snow around hut and in the trees very wet & pasty. Top slope *of* Big Brassy all pasty. We do practice slope in morning & in afternoon repair skins & stocks. Len, Joe & Dick do Bull's Peaks & Kidmans to bring back most of remaining food. Joe breaks ski tip and got back with a *wooden block in its place*. Green Sohm thin ski wax OK. Fast schuss but heavy turning.

Saturday August 18. Wind much less but *weather* still warm & *snow* sloppy. Snowing but spots of clear sky & sun with distant visibility. Climbed to Gungartan Trig & ran down from Sunrise Point. Snow OK at top but wet & deep down in trees. In afternoon repaired sleeping bag, mended skins and collected *firewood*. About 4pm Rudy, Hanna, Manfred & Renata arrived after long hard day *travelling over snow* from Pounds Creek Hut.

Sunday August 19. Finest day so far. Climbed Dicky Cooper in the morning. Perfect snow after frosty night. Perfect clear views from Dicky Cooper. Photos taken. Cloud over Khancoban and Victoria; slight cold west wind. Townsend & Twynam sharp & clear. Run down very good. After lunch climbed Sunrise Point on Gungartan. Took photos (*one of which is presented as Photo No.5*). Very good run down. Then climbed Dicky Cooper again right away. Practiced on top & ran down on the ice after sundown. Used green sohm thin – very good. Skins OK with waterproof carrying bag and notch in back of skis (*to positively locate the skins and to prevent them from slipping off the skis*). Then got wood (*for heating bath water*) & had baths.



Photo No. 7 Whites River from Sunrise Point on Gungartan (F. Leyden, 1945)

Monday August 20. (wet). Started to rain early previous evening and continued heavily without a break all day & into Monday night. Barometer fell Sun night & low all Monday. Hail at 12:30 pm & during afternoon. Snow melted down about 2 ft (600 mm) uncovering rocks & grass. Bridges broken in creeks & all in flood. Thick low fog & quite warm. Previous day a long belt of even layer cumulus cloud hung over Victoria with wisps coming over Townsend and light continuous wind from west. Thunder and lightning in evening. Most peculiar and unusual weather. Confined to the hut all day.

Tuesday August 21. (snowed all day). Monday night was the stormiest weather I have experienced in the snowfields. Terrific continuous thunder, lightning & hail. Hut rocked. Barometer lowest up to this *time*. Sago snow on ground in morning – much colder. Tapioca snow fell all day like hail. Practice slopes morning & afternoon up above the west side of Whites Hut. Excellent snow conditions. Remarkable large pellets of snow like peas. Heavy snowing & cold all day; bad visibility; gets calmer towards evening & colder.

Wednesday August 22. (To Pounds Hut *straight-line distance is 11 km*). Morning was cloudy & dull, but signs of clearing; cold & hut surrounded by tapioca snow. Cleaned up hut – left one case sealed for 1946 – small square case labeled & addressed. Departed Whites 10.00am; reached Mt. Tate at 12.30pm; arrived at Pounds Hut at 2.30pm. The extra half hour was used going up to Spencer's Junction for a snow bridge which was very precarious (Photo No. 6) as was the snow bridge we used to cross Pounds Creek. (*Normally* reckon on 4 hours for trip from Whites to Pounds.) Sky was mackerel overcast when we left Whites; on Rolling Grounds visibility to the horizon was quite clear, especially to Perisher. On top of Mt. Tate

sky got very wicked looking from west & started to gently snow. Snow got heavier, but without wind, as we approached Snowy *River* down Tate East Ridge.

POUNDS CREEK HUT, 22 AUGUST 1945

Pounds Hut in good condition with 6 beds & 5 mattresses. Fire burns *well* & heats well. Some cutlery & billies but no tea. 5 chairs with backs, 2 good tables. 3 cans. John D'Arcy went over to Chalet (*Charlottes Pass*)



Photo No. 8 Precarious Crossing of Snowy at Spencers Creek Junction (Leyden, 1945)

(Skiers in Photo No. 8 [from left to right] are Renata Souhami, Richard Raubitschek [behind Renata], Trude Raubitschek and Manfred Souhami)

Thursday August 23. (Second perfect day *on this trip*). Cloudy & still with clear patches of sky in morning – good prospects for a fine day. Departed 9:30am. Across Snowy after going half a mile up Spencer Creek looking for a rock crossing and then using snow bridge on Snowy at Junction (10.30am). Saddle between Twynam & Tate opposite Mt. Anderson – 12:00 noon. Reached summit of Mt. Anderson at 12.30pm and skied down to Friars Alp (first knob in trees – 1:00pm – then we stopped for lunch.) Departed Friars Alp at 2.00pm, reaching the top of Mt. Anderson at 2.30pm. Climbed to gap between Twynam and Little Twynam and skied down to the junction of Spencers Creek with the Snowy River in only 12 minutes.

Friday August 24. Morning weather looked bad after mild night. Decided to cancel planned trip to Twynam and to go to Perisher Hut. Sky looked wicked. Wind strong from NW caused severe **smoking of the fire** in Pounds Hut. Departed hut at 11.00am. Followed up Snowy River to Charlottes Pass. About Blue Lake Creek, wind and mist came strongly with cloud moving fast over Main Range & very dark looking, but conditions only mildly severe. Ran

down Charlottes to Chalet and moved down to Perisher Hut in increasing & wet snow storm. Practiced on Perisher slope in afternoon. Storm increased.

PERISHER HUT, 24 AUGUST 1945

Perisher Hut (Photo No. 9) well constructed and lined with 3 ply wooden sheets. Hut very good but *had* insufficient heating. Three people from Hotel heading for Chalet arrived 7.00pm very wet. They dried out and moved on about 8.00pm. (*Perisher Hut no longer exists, but was located in Perisher Gap beside the road to the Chalet, possibly near the present location of the loading station of the Eyre T-bar Ski Lift. It provided a base for touring around The Paralyser [Photo No.11] as well as around the Perisher Range.*)

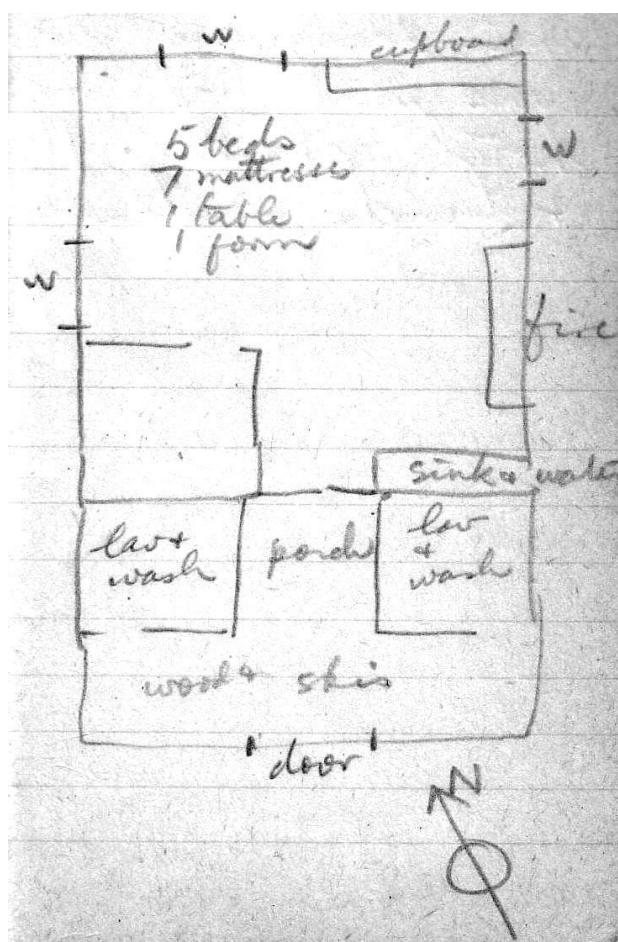


Photo No. 9 Sketched Floor Plan of Perisher Hut (Frank Leyden, 1945)

Saturday August 25. Departed Perisher with wet snow falling at 9.30am. Skied to below Smiggins then walked. After Smiggins (Photo No. 10) weather fined up but was still bad on the tops. Arrived hotel about 11.30am. Had bath & lunch. Then on to Cooma (*and caught overnight train to Sydney*).



Photo No. 10

Smiggin Holes Café (Circa 1950)

(STA Archive)



Photo No. 11 Looking towards Guthega from The Paralyser

(Frank Leyden, 1941)

CHARLOTTES PASS CHALET, JULY 1947

(Frank Leyden and six of his friends spent two weeks at the Chalet Charlottes Pass in July 1947. Frank's account of how they travelled to and from the Chalet is reproduced here, along with his account of three successive days of perfect ski touring weather when they skied the Main Range runs of Little Austria, Mt. Townsend, Sentinel Peak and Mt. Twynam.)

Friday July 11. Departed Cooma 8.45am and arrived Hotel (now Sponars Lakeside Inn) at 11.30am. Departed Hotel about 12 noon and arrived Smiggins at 12.30pm & had lunch. Departed Smiggins on skis 1.30pm and arrived Perisher Gap at 2.30pm. Arrived Chalet at 3.30pm.

Went from Hotel to Smiggins in Hotel special austerity bus with chains. Luggage went in jeep type truck. The ranges looked well *as we were* going down the hill into Jindabyne (*which in 1947 was a tiny settlement mostly on the east bank of the Snowy River*). The snow was covering the tops well and sweeping down through the trees deep down the ridges. The weather in Cooma and right through to half-way up the mountain west of Jindabyne, was bright, clear & sunny with light west wind. The tops were covered with whitish filmy cloud & underneath it was darker, more turbulent cloud.

Snowing lightly and slightly windy at Hotel. Snow-line was well below Rennix Gap and Wilsons Valley. Snow thin on ground & not too good on the Slam Run but a fair covering on the Kerry Course & up towards the Plains of Heaven, but wet and slow. Road to Smiggins wet and some deep drifts. The transport system best yet. Met tractor just below Smiggins & dumped luggage. There was time to get essentials like gloves from packs, but it was cold, windy and snowing.

We went on to Smiggins & left packs for the tractor to bring. Joe at Smiggins gave us a good feed. Said he had arranged with Mr Peterson for us to stay in a hut nearby with some bunks & fireplace in it for five shillings a week, or thereabouts, and to have meals for two shillings and sixpence each at Smiggins Café with Joe. Len & Bill thought they would put in a week at Smiggins at the end of this trip. Anyway, one would not be stuck for somewhere to stay.

We skied from Smiggins right through to the Chalet without needing to fit skins to our skis. The snow was wind-packed, firm & running beautifully. Snowing lightly & blowing, with practically complete overcast. But the cloud was not thick, nor the wind too bad and the going was quite easy. Had a yarn with Frank Fyfe at Betts Camp & Manfred (*who was booked in for two weeks at Betts*) decided to try to squeeze in with us at the Chalet, making the party 8 persons altogether. Arriving Chalet we were all booked into a big room (Room 9) together.

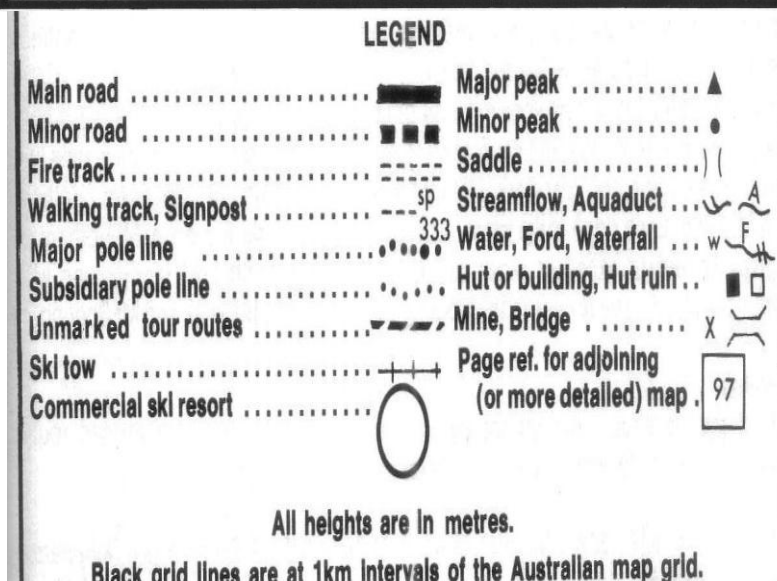
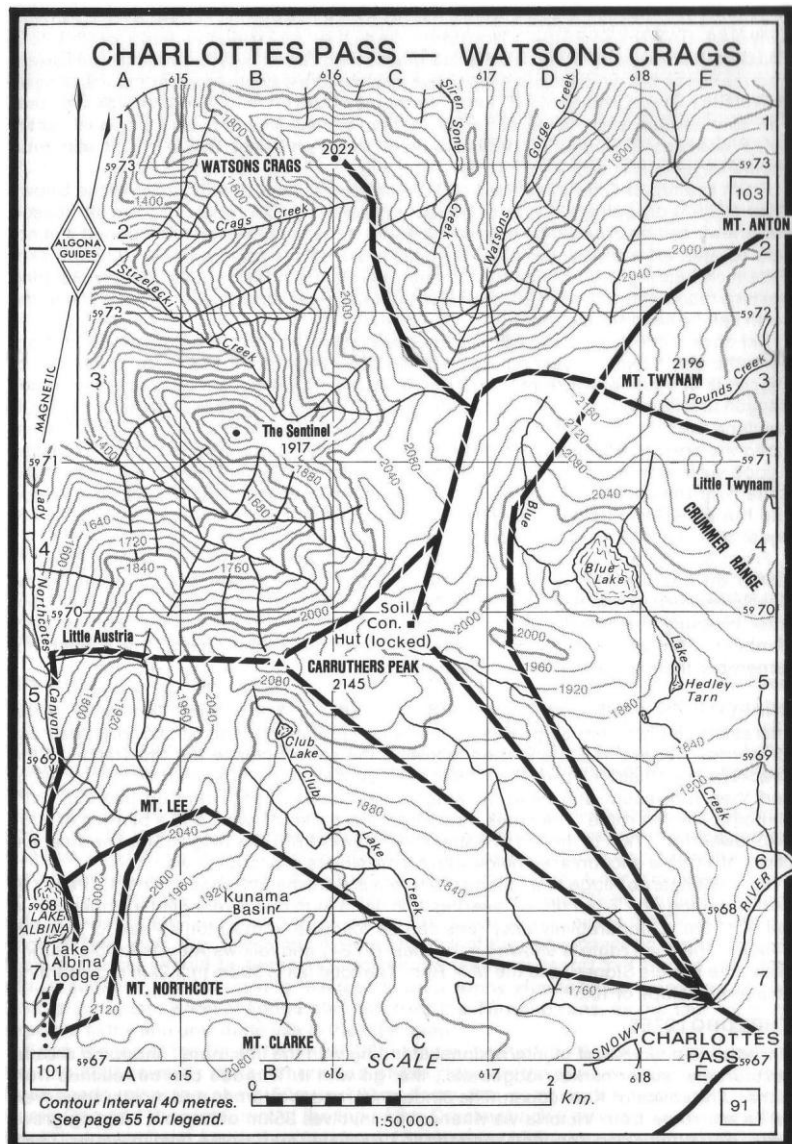
We went up Stilwell for a run. The snow was sticky & not running well – too warm & misty. Then climbed half-way up Charlottes Pass, where the packed snow was slightly better to ski on.

Meals at Chalet were excellent, well-balanced & plenty – a big improvement on the previous year. The room & facilities were very comfortable & everyone was happy. Arranged to book sleeping berths for our return rail trip from the Chalet Office. We were advised that parties travelling between Hotel and Chalet are expected to check in at Betts Camp and Smiggins Holes.

Friday July 18. (“Little Austria Day”). Alarm went off at 6.45am as usual and, looking out the window, we saw for the first time this visit, perfectly clear sky, no wind and very cold (-8°C). Richard sprang into activity; early breakfast was able to be quickly arranged, as some of the guests were going home. Left Chalet in a perfect clear morning at 8.40am. Arrived Formans site (*on the Snowy River*) at 9.05am and arrived on Carruthers Peak at 10.00am in perfect clear & bright weather. Climbing up to Carruthers *we experienced* a perfect clear bright morning, with snow very good and wind ribbed. Wind blowing cold from south on *top of Carruthers*, noticeably dissipating strands of mist in *Geehi Valley*. Low cloud over Cooma way, also straggly, low cloud over Victoria. Took a few photos on top of Carruthers and then ran across to a valley behind Mt. Lee and waited for the others who were behind. (*Please see map “Charlottes Pass – Watsons Crag”.*)

Len Scotland and I ran down one side of the gully & the rest approached down from the Carruthers side and we met at the bottom. Fairly continuously steep, smooth and even beautiful snow for a few hundred feet ending in a narrow gully. We then swung north for a few hundred yards and arrived at the top of the “funnel”. The scenery was magnificent and real Alpine (*Please see Photo Nos 10 & 11.*) We were closed in by steep walls of snow with iced

rocks extending for hundreds of feet above the way we were going (being the only negotiable route without practically mountaineering). The snow was perfect running; also perfect weather.



Please note that Lake Albina Lodge has been removed.



Photo No. 12 Top of “The Funnel” of Little Austria (N. Hassen, 1964)

The “Funnel” extended for, perhaps, the best part of 1,000 feet. Continuous turns wall to wall were necessary all the way down. Checking was easy in the good snow. Took some photos of trees with ice etc. We ran out into Northcote Canyon below Townsend Spur and went down the canyon a bit & had lunch overlooking Geehi, Grey Mare Pinnacle & The Dargals. Left at about 1.00pm to climb out the same route as we had come. (*Photo No. 11*) *Aneroid barometer read 5225 ft altitude.* The waterfall at the bottom was the most difficult *feature* to climb around. Further up was a small frozen waterfall of columns of green glazed ice thick as a man.

The climb out gave beautiful views and light mist wafted up slowly. It was strenuous climbing and took 1.5 hours to climb up to the saddle between Lee & Carruthers. Len and I went up onto Carruthers again. The others ran off towards Lee & found a good slope. On top of Carruthers the earlier wind had dropped and the air was still & calm with magnificent views. Took photos & then ran with Len down to Formans *Crossing on the Snowy River*. We saw the others ski off Lee in clouds of snow – they appeared to have a good run. We did well high up; the sun had softened the ice on the tops.



Photo No. 13 Climbing back up the Little Austria Run (F. Leyden, 18 July 1947)

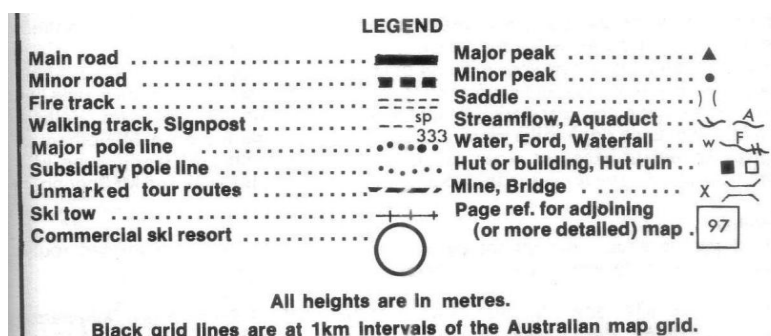
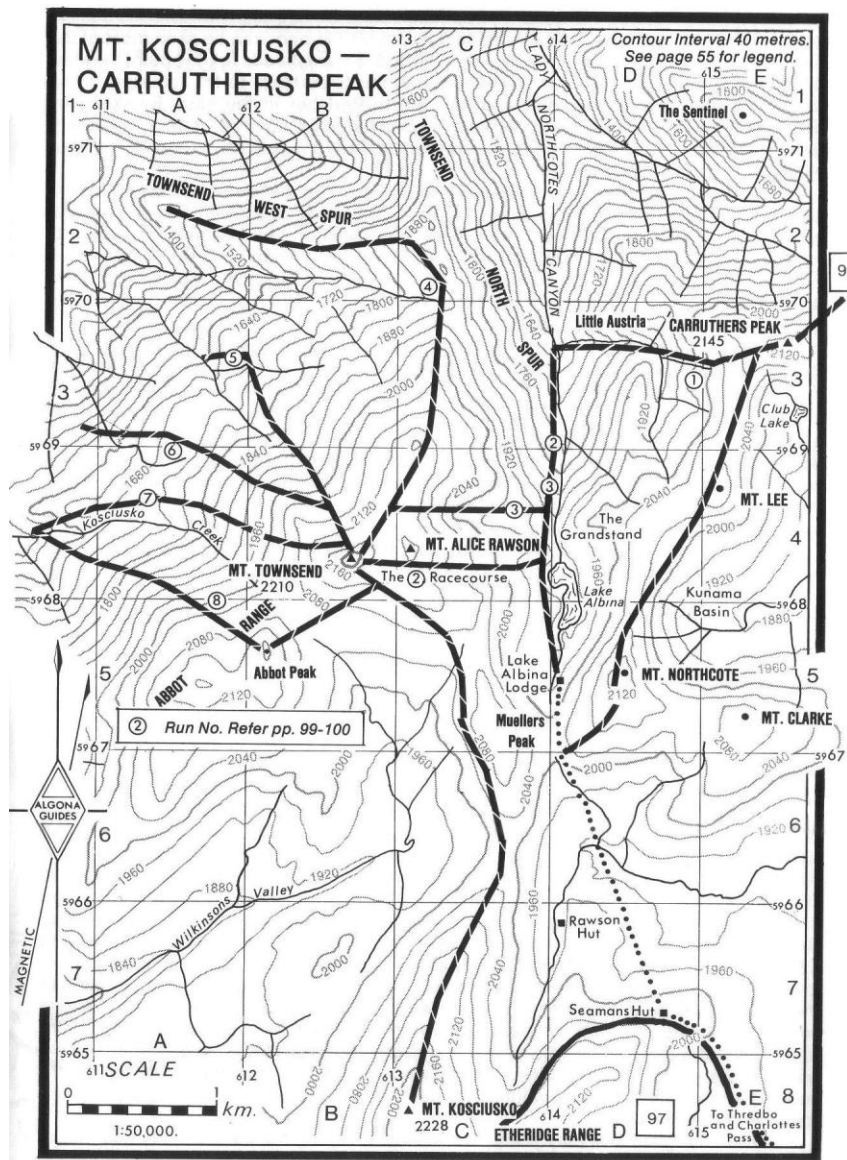
Crossed the Snowy River and reached Charlottes Pass at 4.00pm. From here we could see mist creeping over Lee but more mist obscured Mt. Tate and Gills Knobs. Kosci was clear. Skied to Chalet thru' the flags down the Pulpit Hill Ski Lift run.

Saturday July 19 ("Townsend Day"). Had early breakfast. Fine, bright, clear morning but with light wind from SW causing a weaving sinuous movement flowing over the surface of the snow. Departed Chalet 8.45am. All tops clear. Ran down to Foremans site and went tight up Club Lake Creek to underneath Mt. Lee. Went south and then climbed the saddle between Northcote & Lee. Icy conditions made climbing very difficult. Len Scotland *picked a route* and got nearly to the top when he slipped and slithered *as* a snowy mass right down to the

bottom of the slope about 50 ft (15m). Eventually, Richard made a track and we got up *onto the crest* with much trepidation. At every step the snow creaked and groaned. Very slow small steps were necessary, hanging on to the top stock by its base.

At the top we took off the skins and ran south along the top for a few hundred yards to the top of a wide gully leading down into Lake Albina. (*Please see map Mt. Kosciusko – Carruthers Peak*). Geehi and all Victoria was under a sea of low white cloud extending to the horizon, but the tops were all well above the cloud everywhere & so was *the country towards* Cooma. A light constant wind from SW by S continued all day and was only disturbing in exposed places, but quite fierce on Townsend Trig. The run down off the Northcote – Lee saddle down to Lake Albina was steep but quite nice with the good snow and was easily negotiated. We paused in the shelter of Albina (11.30am), put on skins and then climbed up a gully leading up to Townsend. It was an easy steady climb right to the top.

We then went along the wind-swept flat to the base of the final *pyramid*. This was a bit steep to side-step but over a few bumps and ice flutings, we came to the Trig *encased in* a mass of eagle's feathers *ice formations* and the wind was cold and searching. The sea of white cloud extended to all horizons; to the west high reddish cloud was above the main bank. Some holes in the cloud gave glimpses of the timbered ridges below the snow. Pinnibar and the Victorian Alps stood alone, well in the clear; also the Dargals, Jagungal and all the tops in between, also Round Mountain etc.



The view was magnificent and the sky above clear & the sun brilliant. Took photos all round; also of the ice flutings on a rock and ice cave. Then ran down from the summit on to the flat & then down the gully to Albina, where we had lunch. The run down was easy and very nice with good snow. There were small crevasses in the snow at the sides of Lake Albina about 6 inches (150mm) wide and going down to green depths extending far across the surface.

Went across after lunch to the North end of the lake, to look down into Little Austria, which was in the mist. The climbed onto The Grandstand, views magnificent, then onto the summit of Mt. Lee.

The swirling mists were rising up gradually from Little Austria. Ran off Lee to the North for about ¼ mile (400m) then traversed downward to the top of a big rock slope, very steep and hard to hang on; the others soon flew down, but Len and I had to hang on *by traversing across the very steep slope*. Eventually it became flatter & we soon ran down into Club Lake Valley & thence Snowy River, Charlottes Pass & Chalet at 4pm. On Charlottes we saw mist on Kosci and swirling over Mt Lee, moving fast from the south. In the morning a slight fall in the barometer was observed; also only -5 degrees C.



Photo No. 14 “Eagle’s Feathers Ice” on Twynam Trig (F. Leyden, 20 July 1947)

(Note that Mt. Townsend is the pyramid-shaped, highest peak in the centre of this photo and that Mt. Bogong, Victoria’s highest mountain, is on the distant sky-line above the rear skier.)

Sunday July 20. “Sentinel Peak & Twynam Day”. A beautiful morning without any wind, but the sunrise was red and high cloud fingers radiated from the NE horizon. Left Chalet at 8.45am. To Formans (*Crossing of the Snowy River*) thence up half-way to Carruthers then down into a valley above a cornice and up onto “the tops” north of Carruthers. Ran down into a little valley west of the Blue Lake, to the beginning of the ridge that leads down to Sentinel Peak. Went out along a knife-edge of snow for a few hundred yards before the ridge descended steeply to Sentinel Peak. The views were marvellous) but a SE wind was blowing furiously, especially on this narrow ridge. Took photos & then climbed north on to Twynam West Spur and part of the way out above Watsons Crags. Views excellent (*Photo No.15*).



Photo No. 15 View NNW from Twynam West Spur (Frank Leyden, 20 July 1947)

Had a look at the slopes off Twynam West Spur and Richard Raubitschek said they were not so steep and could easily be run in good snow. Then climbed Mt. Twynam & had lunch just under the Trig Station (*Photo No. 14*).

After lunch ran down to Blister Gap (*between Twynam & Little Twynam*) and then climbed around onto the North side of Little Twynam and ran down towards the Snowy River. Had to climb a bit to continue the run. Came down to junction of Snowy with Spencer's Creek. Took some photos & rested there. Went up Spencers Creek and arrived at Chalet about 4.30pm.

TWYNAM WEST SPUR, WEDNESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 1948

(14 months passed before Frank Leyden and his friends had the opportunity to ski the slopes on the North-East side of Twynam West Spur).

Dawned perfect sunny fine day with very light wind, but slightly more wind than previous morning. Wind was coming from West to SW. Left Chalet with a party of 9 skiers at 9.40am on soft spring snow. No ice down to Foremans; good run; dull leaden sky extending from SW with mist coming over Carruthers. Climbed Carruthers Ridge in soft, pasty Spring snow up to cornice in "Sunset Valley" (Site of the KAC Downhill). Arrived 11.30am. Twynam Trig approx due North. Climbed up to left around a little valley with Blue Lake & Evidence Valley on the right, Twynam in front and Sentinel Peak on left. Crossed to saddle between Twynam and the Snow Peak on Twynam West Spur (*now known as Tenison Woods Knoll*). Arrived 12.15pm.

By now mist had cleared away leaving sunshine and spots of cloud from the dissolving mist. Took photo from rocks looking down straight into Watsons Gorge Creek (*Photo No. 14*) then climbed Snow Peak. Clear & sunny – excellent views. Richard picked spot to run down by dropping about 3 or 4 feet over a vertical edge (*cornice*) then a very steep left traverse on the North side of the Snow Peak at a rocky outcrop. (*Photo No. 17*).

Richard & Trude went over, then Edgar, then Heidi, who fell at the start & went head-first down the steep slope for about 100 feet (30m) hitting rocks & finally stopping against a large rock; fortunately not badly hurt and, after a time, was able to continue the run down. After first steep part, opened into magnificent and reasonably easy run on excellent snow (best Spring snow since the Arlberg according to Richard). They turned and ran down to a patch of grass & lunched. Manfred then ran from top down to join them, whilst the remaining four members stayed & lunched on rock at the top. (*Frank took photo of the ski tracks presented as Photo 17*).



Photo No. 16 View North Down Watsons Gorge Creek (F. Leyden 29/9/1948)



Photo No. 17 Ski Tracks off Twynam West Spur (Frank Leyden, 29 September 1948)

SOME OTHER INTERESTING FRANK LEYDEN PHOTOS



O'Keefe's Hut

[Frank Leyden 3 August 1944]



Farm Ridge Hut

[Frank Leyden 2 August 1944]



Grey Mare Hut

[Frank Leyden 4 August 1944]



Departing Betts Camp for Ski Tour

[Frank Leyden Sept. 1941]



Sentinel Ridge and Townsend Spur [Frank Leyden 20 July 1947]