

AUSTRALIAN NOTES

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“I love a sunburned country
a land of sweeping plains”

wrote Australian poetess Margaret Mackellar, lines not calculated to inspire those who prefer to take their sport vertically! However she qualifies this with:

“of rugged mountain ranges,
of droughts and flooding rains.”

Closer inspection of the vast island continent discovers a sort of undercover spirit of the hills emerging from an original pioneer distaste for useless country, a distaste which produced in the Southern Alps, where in our winter snowfields exceed the acreage of Switzerland, such indicative names for the peaks rising to over 7,000 ft. as The Perisher, Crackenback and others equally or even more succinct in the Victorian Alps.

The western slopes of these very old mountains present crags and snow gullies reminiscent of the Ben Nevis cirque, and the Australian section of the New Zealand Alpine Club runs an annual snow and ice course there in order to prepare its beginners for climbing courses run usually in the Mount Cook area by its parent club.

The Australian scene also reveals vast areas of dolerite and quartzite mountains rising to over 5,000 ft. in Tasmania. Owing to a protection of low-lying horizontal scrub, these afford an introduction not dissimilar to that received in the New Zealand Alps in the way of heavy back-packing to get to the peaks. Visits are made increasingly by the Melbourne University Mountaineering Club and Victorian Climbing Club whilst most Tasmanian bush walking clubs have their climbers.

Meanwhile in New South Wales the Sydney Rock Climbing Club has at last come to grips with the inherent dangers of the sandstone cliffs which rise sheer one thousand feet in the Blue Mountains. Security is provided by cleverly contrived brackets which fit over expansion bolts, and a high standard of climbing is resulting. The thought of Harrisons Rocks magnified one million times, as it is in this state, hardly bears thinking about by those who make the Tonbridge pilgrimage at weekends. In Sydney your cliffs are in every suburb!

In the north of New South Wales rise the exciting Warrenbungle

mountains, volcanic plugs of basalt, and similar peaks rise abruptly from the plain of Queensland called by Captain Cook, who first sighted them, Glasshouse Mountains.

South Australia has its Flinders Ranges guarded in summer by lack of water, but attractive enough for all that, whilst in West Australia at Wittenoom in the north and the Stirling Range in the south there is some scope for the climber prepared to travel a few thousand miles.

The bush walkers who traditionally traverse V.Diff. slopes using scrub for security have received a leavening of migrant New Australians and 'Pom' climbers, and somewhere an Australian School of Climbing is to be discovered. Already the country possesses a first class cadre of 'snow men' from the annual antarctic expeditions, each seventy-five strong, but the sport of climbing will only grow as an expression of a need in an affluent society as schools, youth agencies and society realise the value of the individual challenge at a time of emphasis upon competition and the 'consumer' sports. It seems likely that we shall see casualties before a tradition of safety overcomes a tradition of rugged independence. Indications point to a rising interest in this country in the 'expedition' but, as is the case with most developments here, each state evolves in its own way, often making parallel discoveries and mistakes to its neighbour. It may be that intra-State expeditions matter more than the overseas type in the first instance; there is certainly plenty to explore and many cliffs to climb—

"I love her far horizons;
I love her jewel sea,
Her beauty and her terror—
The wide Brown Land for me!"