

THE KANDAHAR SKI CLUB OF MÜRREN

By CAPT. A. H. D'EGVILLE

THE KANDAHAR SKI CLUB was founded in 1924 and started with forty-three original members, of whom eleven were ladies.

It had been felt by us for some time that having raised the general standard of our ski-ing by application to tests, we should try to enter the field of competition, and so still further improve ourselves as a ski nation, and incidentally enjoy ourselves still more. Only intensive work could accomplish this, as the average Britisher gets only about three or four weeks ski-ing a year, and that outside his own country.

To put the whole thing on a sound organized basis it was decided to form a club which should devote itself entirely to encouraging ski-racing, not only among ourselves, but among other nations as well. For some time we cast about for a suitable name, finally taking the name from Lord Roberts of Kandahar, who offered the first cup in history for an all downhill race. The "Kandahar" has always been the name of this classic race, which is still the leading annual downhill event.

We then had an inaugural dinner. At this dinner were the fourteen founder members. Rules were drawn up, officers appointed, members elected, and it was decided to have "K" as our badge and to have two classes of badge—gold and silver; silver being the badge awarded on election to the club, the gold "K," a highly prized award, being awarded by a committee consisting solely of those already holding the gold "K" to those who distinguished themselves in racing, though it is also occasionally awarded for some specific act. On one occasion one of the members was awarded a gold "K" for escaping from an oncoming avalanche, exhibiting the greatest coolness, skill and dash in so doing.

Having founded our club, the next thing was to do something. Our first move was to challenge the local Swiss Club, who, of course, soundly defeated us. That didn't matter. It was a start, and the defeat at once welded us together, and started that wonderful "morale" which is the secret of the club's success.

We next arranged club ski tours twice a week, and practice races in between.

Since those early days the club has been presented with many trophies for competition among its members. Famous among these are the "Silver Ski," a two-foot long replica on solid silver of a ski, with silver harness that actually fastens and unfastens;

the "Golden Ski Stick" (pole), the "Chichibu," a beautiful silver rose bowl bearing the crest of H.I.H. the Crown Prince of Japan, who presented it; the "Inferno" (the Hell-Fire), a silver model of a downhill skier in action; the "Arnold Lunn," a silver replica of an Italian wine decanter, and others. There is also my own cup, which was never presented! This became such a joke that when at last I was going to present it, it was refused; but after the Relay Race (which I started and in connection with which I promised—someday—a cup) the presenter of the prizes goes all through the motions of presenting this trophy and the winners through the motions of receiving it and bearing it off.

Membership is by invitation only, and the standard today is very high. Election is by secret ballot. The ballot box is of wood, beautifully carved by a famous Swiss woodcarver.

Any two members may enter a candidate's name in the candidate book, providing he has passed the third class test of the Ski Club of Great Britain, but he must show in the club test that follows that his standard is considerably nearer to second than third. He is judged chiefly on dash and speed, and though falls under certain conditions will not damn his chances, a candidate who falls much stands no chance. If he has not passed the third, he must be proposed by an officer of the club and supported by two members of the committee.

The election is quite ruthless, no personal sentiment being allowed to weigh for or against a member. The test consists of about 3,000 feet of running (i.e., 3,000 feet vertical drop) in steep difficult country of all kinds. Two judges must be present, but many more usually attend, in order that voting may be from personal experience and not by hearsay.

One instance of what the club has done for ski-ing in general will suffice to show the influence it has exerted.

A few years ago, a small party of us visited the Arlberg, in Austria, to see the great Hannes Schneider, hero of the film "The Chase," and founder of a great school for teaching ski-ing. While there we offered a cup for a slalom race among the local "lads," calling it the Arlberg-Kandahar. It was very popular. None of the competitors had ever raced in this manner before. We decided to make the event annual and to include a downhill race.

The following year there were forty-five entries from Switzerland, Germany, Austria and Britain, among them many teachers and winners of important cross-country races.

Today the event draws some 150 of Europe's best runners and some from overseas. The slalom has spread as a popular sport, and is a first class physical and mental exercise.

Encouraged by this, the club last year offered a similar cup to the Province of Quebec—the Quebec-Kandahar.

In co-operation with the Swiss University Ski Club, our old and loyal allies, this gospel has spread all over Europe, and of course produced many better runners than Great Britain can ever hope to produce. Downhill races take place all over Europe, at which various nations attend, thus doing inestimable good in fostering good feeling. Members of our club who might never have moved far from Switzerland have now raced in Austria, Germany, France, Poland and Italy, and parties have visited Norway and Sweden to try to learn at first hand the secrets of cross-country racing. Many distinguished Norwegians and Swedes have been our guests.

And now that downhill racing is established we are turning our attention more intensively to jumping and cross-country racing. Our best jump is, I think, about 180 feet. Our efforts in cross-country skiing were shown to some extent in the recent McGill versus Oxford and Cambridge meeting. Many of our lady members jump.

Club dinners at Mürren are great functions. On these occasions the club flag and all trophies are on the table. Other decorations include a chairman's hammer made of oak from an old British battleship, and presented by Admiral of the Fleet Sir Roger Keyes, hero of Zeebrugge; a ski stick reduced to ribbons during a famous race renowned for its "toughness;" a section of the famous "Lone Tree," from the fearsome Lone Tree Slope, Mürren, and other odd relics. The club also meets in London two or three times a year.

Among its ordinary members is His Imperial Highness Prince Chichibu, Crown Prince of Japan, and an excellent ski-runner. Among the honorary members are Their Majesties the King and Queen of the Belgians, Count Bonacossa of Italy, Count Hamilton of Sweden (honorary secretary International Ski Federation), Admiral Sir Roger Keyes, Bart., G.C.B., C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., Tor Klaveness and Count Krefting of Norway, The Earl of Lytton, P.C., G.C.S.I., Dr. Karl Roesen (German representative, International Ski Congress 1928), H. T. Cliff (president Toronto Ski

Club), C. M. Proctor (U.S.A. Olympic Team 1928), and Dr. Herbert Schlink (vice president Ski Club of Australia.)

Many Canadians are members of the club.

The majority of the British Universities Team racing annually against the Swiss Universities Team are "Ks." The balance of wins stands in our favour.

"Ks" have skied in all four corners of the earth, from India to Australia, from the far north to the mountains of South America, and distinguished themselves on many occasions.

There is also a junior section of the club, ruled over by the junior captain. The junior captain is allowed to attend club dinners. The juniors run their own affairs under the friendly supervision of the senior officers, and thus acquire early in life the habit of organizing, of thinking out difficult points and mastering the gentle art of running committee meetings orderly and expeditiously, and according to accepted practice. They have had many successes in the field of competition and are, of course, the club's great strength of the future.

We have never pretended to be a jumping club, but a few years ago, realizing the value of jumping, and to ward off for all time any criticisms on this score, jumping was added to the list of objects of the club, which now reads:—

(a) To do all in the power of the club to encourage racing.

(b) To hold races at frequent intervals and to promote races against other centres and against other clubs.

(c) To organize club ski runs.

(d) To ensure the success of club runs by preserving a reasonably severe entrance qualification for the club.

(e) To encourage jumping.

(f) To promote good fellowship among members by dinners both at Mürren and in London.

(g) To publish an annual review.

(h) To maintain the highest possible code of good sportsmanship in racing, and courtesy and consideration in cross-country skiing.

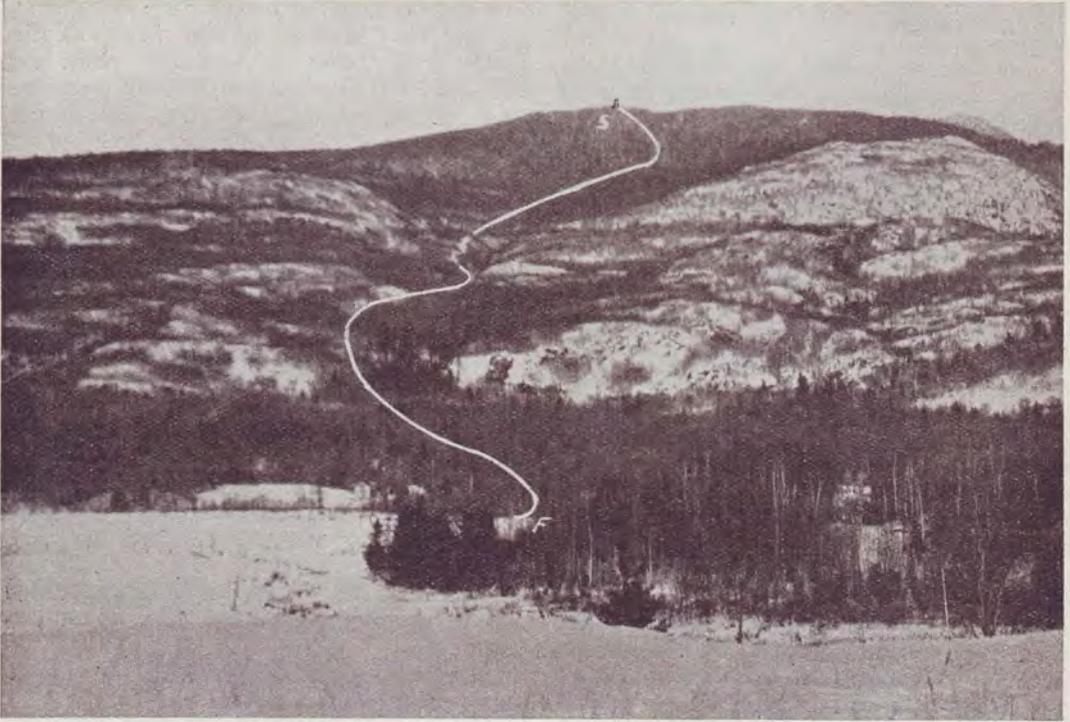
The club has many songs, most of which are quite meaningless to anyone who is not acquainted with Mürren, the Alps and the Kandahar. Switzerland is famous for ski and mountain songs, and no dinner or party is complete without a few of these songs in the quaint dialect.

Our professional rule is quite inflexible.

The club is strong financially, and increasing steadily every year; steadily because its standard is always being raised as the general standard advances. No president can remain in office more than two

years, but may be re-elected after a period of years. The committee meets every week at Mürren and several times during the remainder of the year. Its colors are black, light blue and white, and "Keep 'em

pointed downhill" is its favourite motto. It does not claim to have invented anything. It does claim to have revitalised, organised and improved a great deal, that either already existed or was moribund.



A PHOTOGRAPH OF MOUNT TREMBLANT SHOWING COURSE OF THE QUEBEC-KANDAHAR DOWNHILL RACE

THE QUEBEC-KANDAHAR RACES

By H. SMITH JOHANNSEN

President Montreal Ski Club

THE QUEBEC-KANDAHAR CUP was presented to the Canadian Amateur Ski Association by the Kandahar Ski Club of Great Britain with the request that a race be held under that name in the Province of Quebec yearly, beginning in 1932.

It was stipulated by the donors that the competition for this Cup should be based on a downhill and slalom race, the winner of the combined event receiving the trophy outright, and that a new cup would be presented to the Canadian Amateur Ski Association every year for this purpose.

This generous act of the Kandahar Ski Club was very much appreciated by the Canadian Amateur Ski Association as well as by the skiers themselves. In order to show our appreciation to the Kandahar Ski Club and our desire to make this race an outstanding event, it was decided to hold the event at Mount Tremblant, which is

considered the most suitable terrain in this part of Canada for downhill racing. A number of our most enthusiastic skiers have, during the last ten years, made frequent trips to this mountain, where we have always found plenty of snow from the middle of November until the second week of May, and where the snow conditions, particularly in February, March and April are such that any part of the bush can be traversed on skis without using trails.

We have, since the war, had many slalom races at Shawbridge and downhill races at St. Sauveur, but these hills only allow a drop of less than 1,000 feet, while Mount Tremblant offers a difference in altitude of about 2,300 feet between the top of the mountain and the lake below.

As the Montreal Ski Club already had a fixture on their program for a downhill race at Mount Tremblant on March 13 they were