

# Blind Children Revel in Snow on Ruapehu

By Lorna M. Fell

**A** LOOK at a recent page in the visitors' book at the Society's lodge at Ruapehu would show an unusual page, for attached to it is a page of Braille signatures put there by a group of pupils from Homai College for the Blind, Manurewa, Auckland.

**I**T was my privilege, as a staff member of the college and as a member of the Society, to join the children on this adventure and learn with them the pleasures of life on a mountain and the sheer fun of snow.

The children saved the money to pay for their trip by various work projects—sweet and cake stalls at school, sale of pottery they had made, etc. They planned their own menu, their activities while at the lodge, and their timetable. The party consisted of eight pupils, the senior Braille class at Homai, their classroom teacher, Mrs Tolladay, and three other staff members.

## Braille Maps

They set out from Homai equipped with Braille maps of their route to the mountain and a further Braille map of the immediate surroundings of the lodge. At that time, all the geographical names were just places, but by the end of the trip they were all part of an actual experience.

On the way south they visited Wairakei, Taupo (where they swam in the hot pools), and Turangi, where they explored all the models at the Ministry of Works Publicity Information Bureau.

Snow in sheltered places beside the lodge was quickly discovered with much enthusiasm and it was a tired, but very excited group of children who explored all the facilities of the lodge. Bunks and sleeping bags were a novelty; as was the ice inside the window panes the next morning.

They spent their first morning exploring Car Park 4, and with snowballs, snow fights, sliding on plastic, and breaking through iced-over streams the range of activity was almost unlimited. Up to the Bruce they went for more ambitious gliding on really steep slopes, investigating plants growing through the snow, and then back to the lodge for a very late lunch, a short rest, and then a fascinating 2 hours with Mr Spannagal, one of the rangers, who came to the lodge with his son, Kim, and

The Homai College children outside the Society's lodge on Mount Ruapehu.

