

PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 7 Summer 2011/12

150 Years of Skiing - Stamp Issue

Did you get your stamps celebrating 150 years of recreational skiing in Australia? They look grand and it is pleasing for PHS to have a successful outcome from our approach to Australia Post which was carried forward by Paul Fletcher MP, the Member for Bradfield.

The issue is still for sale
shop.auspost.com.au/stamps/stamps-issues/skiing

Be quick as they will be withdrawn from sale 31 January 2012.



President's Notes

Annual General Meeting and Extraordinary General Meeting 4 February 2012 at 2:00 pm

NPWS are again hosting the PHS AGM at their Jindabyne offices. The AGM will be preceded by an extraordinary General Meeting to amend the Rules of the Society by injecting two clauses to clarify the status of the Society as a 'not for profit' organisation.

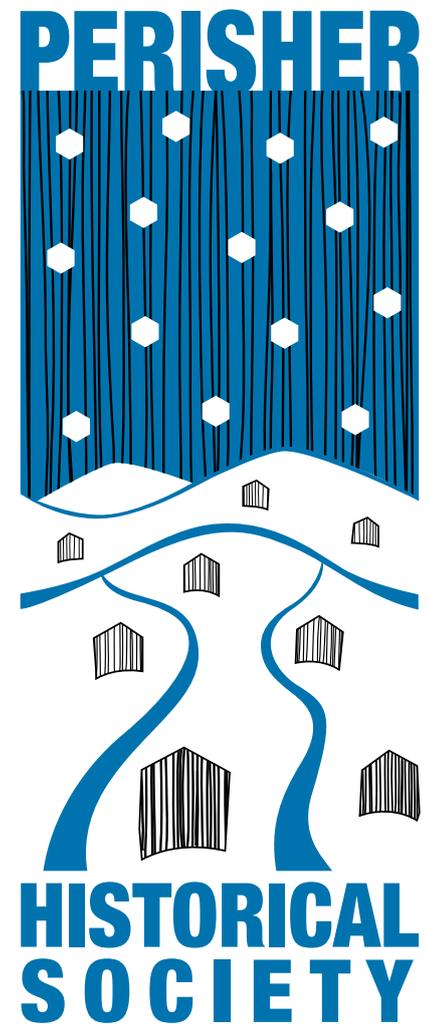
The meeting is an opportunity to meet the committee and we welcome the attendance of all members and friends of the Society.

NPWS Ex-officio Committee Position

We welcome Sally Miller, Acting Environmental Liaison Officer, as the NPWS nominee to fill their ex-officio committee role previously so ably filled by Dave Woods, who is currently on extended leave. We look forward to working with Sally.

Interesting People

We are continually amazed by the people who make contact. Terry and Margaret Chalk called to say they had a hat which belonged to



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long-time Perisher Ski Patroller Col Ferris. Two hats in fact, each festooned with skiing-related badges of all sorts; a very worthwhile item.

Matthew Quomi approached PHS looking for research assistance for a book he is writing about the chairlift that was built to access Charlotte Pass from the Thredbo Road. A broadcast email brought in lots of information including contact with an engineer who had written a thesis on the subject.

Barry Wrenford, a keen photographer and pilot who lived with his wife Robyn at the Jindabyne airport, has created a photographic history of the area from the late 70s to the late 80s. Barry is passing this outstanding resource to PHS for safe-keeping and to provide an access point for others. In time the collection will be digitised and loaded onto the website. The collection covers the construction of lifts, buildings and Skitube. Of particular interest are the aerial shots and the point-in-time record they provide.

Social

My wife Pam and I have been delighted to attend a number of celebrations marking lodge anniversaries.

Brindabella's 60th was on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin. For a wonderful insight into to the early days, visit their website and discover how it all started – with a bus!

Boonoona had a huge 50th party at City Tattersall's organised by Carl Melvey. It overflowed with skiing identities, champions and personalities.

Munjarra celebrated with a cocktail party at the University of Sydney and launched a book "A History of the First 50 Years"

compiled by Jenelle Brangwin.

Yaraandoo held a back-to-Perisher dinner at their lodge to mark 50 years since formation.

Eiger Chalet and Garry Fisher celebrated 50 years with a party and launched Gil Boehm's book "Eiger Chalet 50 years - 1961 to 2011".

We are happy to report that good times were had by all.

Website

<http://perisherhistoricalsociety.org.au/>

It has been a while coming but PHS now has a website. The objective is that it be interesting for the casual browser, fact-filled for those who want definitive answers and finally a vault of collected data of interest to the academic researcher.

Over time the site will evolve and progressively fill with information. One of the first additions will be the inclusion of updates to the Ski Lodges History Project data.

Perisher Range History Publication

Peter Southwell-Keely has made good progress and the publication remains on track for release in about a year. The Publication Sub-Committee is delighted to report the draft chapters are highly readable and the book is sure to be a 'must have' for the library of every skier, ski club, ski lodge and hotel.

Ski club members - to ensure your club is properly documented in the book please make sure your club has responded to the PHS Ski Lodges History Project.

Annual Dinner – June Long Weekend

The fifth annual dinner will be held on Saturday 9 June 2012 at a

venue to be announced. I highly recommend that you put the date in your diary now and plan to be there.

My best wishes for a safe and happy festive season and a rewarding New Year.

40th KAC Cross-country Classic

This year marked the 40th running of the KAC Cross-country Classic (known for many years as the Martini).

On 10 August 2011, more than 200 skiers set off from Perisher Valley to make the trip to Charlotte Pass, with the classical skiers ahead of the freestyle skiers. Although snow conditions were marginal, with wet thin snow barely covering some parts of the course, the weather was kinder than usual, with little wind and good visibility, and the track was quite fast.

Line honours went to the classical skiers, with Warren McCourt (37:18), Camille Melvey and David Hislop coming in ahead of the first freestyle skiers, Ben Sim (25:35) and Anthony Evans. The Geoff Nott Trophy (overall handicap winner) went to master waxer Bob Cranage and the Carl Bongers Shield (new entrant handicap winner) was won by Doris Trueman, a former Olympic skier from Great Britain, now living in Tasmania. KAC took out the Club Trophy for the most finalists, with 24 finishers.

For three skiers, Ross Martin, Ian Meakin and Ken Baxter, this was to have been their 40th race, and KAC commissioned commemorative bibs to celebrate

their feat. Unfortunately, Ross, who had proposed the running of this race to the club in 1972, was unable to compete. He had, however, put in his entry before the cycling accident that led to his death just weeks before the race. The race is still organised along the lines he suggested in 1972 and his name will always be associated with this popular event.

Congratulations to Ian Meakin and Ken Baxter, who both notched up their 40th race.

Sweep Robin Gibb of the Wangaratta Ski Club, who was suitably kitted out in antique style for this historic event, had great difficulty maintaining his designated position at the rear of the field. In fact he had plenty of time to stop and chat and pose for photographs along the way, as shown below.



Robin Gibb demonstrating 1900's skis, bindings, boots and clothing in the 2011 KAC Cross-country Classic.

Perisher Range Golden Anniversaries

In 1952 tourist facilities were formalised by the NSW government under Permissive Occupancy provisions enabling the development of accommodation to support the burgeoning ski industry. Throughout the 1950s Lodges began to appear in the Perisher Range with ski instruction commencing in 1954 and the first valley tow constructed in 1955. By the end of the decade approximately 14 lodges had been completed, a telephone service was established and skiing activities were supported by three rope tows and one T-bar. In 1960 electricity was brought to Perisher Valley, heralding a new era of mass construction, with five to ten new lodges built each year for the following decade.

As a result of this proliferation, we are now in a decade of significant anniversaries: 50 years, golden anniversaries or half-centuries.

Fifty years is a significant mark and individually each club will have an emotional tie to an event specific to them. Perhaps it is the time when the idea of a ski club was first floated, the date of incorporation, or perhaps the date the first sod was turned. From a historical perspective the date that it is self-evident is the first winter of occupation.

If your club or lodge is celebrating its golden anniversary in 2011 or 2012, we would love to hear about your celebrations for the Newsletter and perhaps why this year is significant to you.

Date For Your Diary

Annual General Meeting

Saturday 4 February 2012
at 2:00 pm

National Parks & Wildlife
offices

Kosciuszko Road,
Jindabyne, NSW

Date For Your Diary

Perisher Historical Society

5th Annual Dinner

Saturday 9 June 2012

Venue to be announced

Hello in the Snow 2011

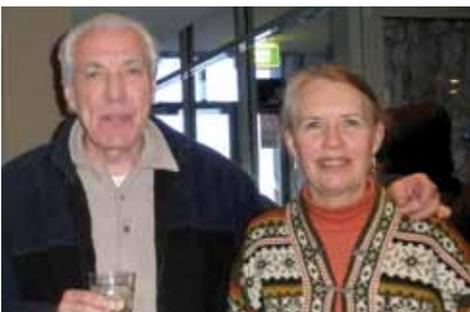
“Hello in the Snow” this year was held on Tuesday 9 August during Nordic Race Week, with drinks and nibbles around the fireplace in the Perisher Valley Hotel. Consequently, we had a very good mix of cross-country and alpine skiers, including the irrepressible and ever-popular Nordic Technical Director Carl Melvey. There were a number of new faces this year and it seems that most first-timers plan to be back next year. It was also great to catch up with instructors Christian Keller and Grant Turnbull. Our thanks to Doug Patterson, Hospitality Manager at the Perisher Valley Hotel, for his support.



Sue and Garth Purdy (Mirrabooka) with Maureen McCutcheon (Redwood).



Perisher Ski instructor Christian Keller with Liz Hay (Oldina).



Alan Caine with Kari Svensen (Telemark).

Vale Keith Line BEM – PHS Life Member

By Philip Woodman

Keith Line passed away in July aged 89. He was of extraordinary assistance to the PHS Steering Committee as we felt our way forward in the early days and became the first PHS Life Member. He possessed a prodigious memory and delighted in his network of skiing friends, all of whom were of great comfort and support to him following his complete loss of sight to glaucoma in the last ten years of his life. An indomitable spirit had him still planning his next birthday party and what he wanted to achieve next year. Keith lived alone in the house he built himself on a difficult site in Clontarf but with a magnificent view, which he said he would never leave.

Born and raised in Manly, Keith loved the outdoors, canoeing, sailing, walking and skiing. He joined the NSW River Canoe Club two years after it was formed by Paddy Pallin and was its treasurer for 11 years. He canoed many NSW rivers, including the Snowy from its source. In his youth he skippered one of the two Griffith Bros charter sailing boats that were an iconic part of Sydney Harbour.

As the prime mover in forming

Rock Creek Ski Club, Keith was immediately involved in the Perisher Ski Association. Very soon he was charged with sourcing four accredited ski instructors from Austria to form the first formally-organised Ski School in Perisher under Jean Ecuyer as Captain. Ever community minded, he was also instrumental in forming the Perisher Junior Racing School to raise the competitive level of Perisher skiers.

Keith's drive and enthusiasm were critical to the success of the Perisher Cup inter-club competition: he was convenor, race secretary and trophy organiser for 31 years. This involvement led to his determination to build a community centre and church for Perisher. Keith used his persuasive skills to call on his wide circle of friends, both in the snow and far afield, to drive the project to completion. The building was opened by his Manly boyhood friend, the Governor of NSW, Sir Roden Cutler. The Alpine Chapel or All-Denominational Church and Community Centre must rank as his crowning achievement.

Perisher Cup – 59 years on and still going strong

The Perisher Cup is one of the longest-running ski events in Australia. It has a unique team format involving four skiers, each of whom competes in each of the three events – Alpine Giant Slalom, Cross Country and a Jump.

It is fiercely competitive on the one hand and a fun event for many on the other; all in all a good social occasion. For many years it was a club event restricted to Perisher-based ski clubs and then only to clubs belonging to the Perisher Ski Association.

The event had waned over recent years but due to the good efforts of Cooma Ski Club, and Anthony Evans in particular, a healthy resurgence is occurring. The involvement of clubs is an indication of their interest in and encouragement of the sport.

The Perisher Historical Society is keen to ensure that this fun family event between clubs is continued. This year saw the field increase by twenty percent on last year to 14 teams with 56 competitors ranging in age from 69 to 10. There was plenty of snow, beautiful weather and teams from Guthega blitzed the field. The after-party was held at the Sundeck Hotel – a traditional venue. Results are posted on the PHS website.

Among the historical records NSW Snowsports kindly donated to the Perisher Historical Society were the results for almost all Perisher Cup races since it was first run in 1953. These included individual performance results for each event. Chris Brangwin (Munjarra) volunteered to tabulate these results; by any standard a massive undertaking. He has now completed the task and all the details will soon be loaded onto the PHS website.

Chris wishes to continue as the specialist archivist of Perisher Cup memorabilia, anecdotes and photographs. This is marvellous as the Perisher Cup embodies the camaraderie that exists amongst skiers and which was especially true of ski

club members in the fifties and sixties. The shared experience of building in the snow, foreign to most Australians, became a bond. Further, the snow created a level playing field for people of all backgrounds and so was an ideal place to develop an understanding of the multitude of cultures and skills introduced by the Snowy Scheme. As a result, many lifelong friendships were formed.

Chris Brangwin would be delighted to hear from anyone with Perisher Cup stories or photographs. Contact details:
E cjbrangwin@ozemail.com.au
Ph 02 4465 1955

Now it's time to get organised for next year. See you in Perisher on Saturday 15 September 2012.

Ross Martin: A Mountain Legend

By Graeme Hearl and Peter Southwell-Keely

On Saturday 2 July, 2011 the cross-country skiing community was devastated to learn of the death of Ross Martin from injuries suffered in a cycling accident the previous week. Anybody who came into contact with Ross would have found him to be a charming and, at times, challenging companion. He was, however, always interesting and always happy to share his opinions with anyone prepared to listen.

For many people, Ross was the embodiment of cross-country skiing in this country. Indeed, he was such a larger-than-life character that, even though his skiing feats have been surpassed, his standing as one of the great Australian cross-country skiers remains undiminished.

His uncle, Bruce Haslingden,

competed in the 1952 Oslo Winter Olympics and was the catalyst for Ross' interest in cross-country skiing. Ross worked for Bruce as a jackaroo for a while after leaving Sydney Grammar School and, through Bruce, established a lifelong association with both Kosciusko Alpine Club (KAC) and Cooma Ski Club. He is rightly recognised as a 'legend' of both clubs, whose active members could dine out for years to come on Ross Martin stories (some of which are actually true).

Ross joined KAC as a junior member in 1956 and also became a member of Cooma Ski Club at about the same time. He skied in cross-country races every year from 1961. It was his idea to start the KAC Martini & Rossi Cross-Country Classic in 1972 and he competed in every one of those

races until 2010: one of only three people to achieve that milestone. In recent times he was also active in re-invigorating the Charlotte Pass Open.

Ross was very fortunate to start his racing career in the early 1960s, when the local sport was dominated by European-born skiers such as Robbie Kilpinnen, Kore Grunnsund and Otto Pinkas. He learnt much from them: not just skiing technique but toughness, a love of the mountains and a sense that nothing that came easily in life was necessarily worthwhile. The Jagungal Wilderness between Kiandra and Grey Mare Hut was often their training ground, for skiing in the winter and running in the summer.

An asthmatic, Ross was not necessarily the most gifted athlete; nevertheless, through sheer



Ross Martin in training mode, 1966.

strength of will and a combination of intense and systematic training, he eventually surpassed all of his contemporaries. Ross was competitive to the very end: as many will know, the accident which ultimately cost him his life occurred during a bike race in the Hunter Valley.

Anyone who had the pleasure of skiing with Ross will recall his idiosyncratic classical cross-country skiing technique: low-to-the-ground, bow-legged and with regular changes of pole tempo. He was also never without his blue Idretteslag tracksuit top from his Norwegian ski club. With his distinctive style he was probably the most easily recognisable skier in Australia.

Ross set the Mt Kosciuszko summit record on 30 July 1966, when he skied the course in four

hours and fifty five minutes. This was a remarkable feat, especially as he did it on wooden cross-country skis. His time bettered the previous record set by Kore Grunnsund and Otto Pinkas in 1963 of five hours and twenty minutes. The record stood until David Hislop finally lowered Ross' time more than twenty years later.

Ross also held the Kiandra to Perisher record for some time and was one of the six starters in the original Paddy Pallin Classic from Round Mountain to Perisher in 1965. Many years later, Ross was always happy to tell all and sundry that if it had not had been for the skiing expertise, local knowledge and mountain craft of Kore, Robbie and Otto, none of the other competitors (Ross, Charlie Derrick, Bob Madison) would have lived, let alone finished, as the weather was so bad. He always appreciated the fact the five who actually crossed the finish line (Bob dropped out at Whites River Hut) did so together and was gracious enough to concede the three European-born ski maestros had 'nursed' him and Charlie over the line.

In addition to representing Australia at the Grenoble Winter Olympics in 1968 and the World Championship in 1970, Ross was Australian Champion seven times, NSW Champion five times, KAC Champion 14 times and won countless other races. He was selected by the Australian Ski Federation for the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics but was not endorsed by the Australian Olympic Federation and did not go.

Ross was unstinting in the help he provided to younger competitors: Ian Bradley, Rae Bolton, Colleen Bolton, Chris Allen, David Hislop and Camille Melvey all benefited from Ross' experience and

wisdom. Many more skiers, from aspiring champions to 'novice' veterans also benefited from Ross' encouragement and guidance.

Ross pioneered the trend for Australian cross country skiers to race and train in Europe, travelling originally with his great friend, Lenny Harrison. Whilst in Europe, they became acquainted with various members of the US ski team, including their then coach, John Caldwell. Ross also got to know Mike Brady (an American engineer then living in Norway and a noted author on cross-country skiing) and lifelong friendships were formed. Indeed, Ross and the Americans shared much in common, apart from a passing acquaintance with the English language. They were all seen as oddities by the Europeans (particularly the Scandinavians) and Ross, who had no team back-up, was greatly assisted by the US team

Whilst skiing and training in the northern hemisphere, Ross met the great love of his life, Toy Dorgan, an American speed-skater at the 1968 Winter Olympics, who eventually followed him to Australia. In his typically unromantic style, Ross always maintained they only married so they could win the husband-and-wife section of the first Sun-Herald City-to-Surf in 1971. They achieved this feat on a number of occasions, often on the day after they had competed in the Paddy Pallin Cross-Country Classic between Perisher Valley and Charlotte Pass, at the time at longest and toughest race in Australia.

Apart from his own skiing exploits, Ross was instrumental in bringing Mike Brady, John Caldwell and highly regarded Norwegian coaches to Australia. They provided up-to-date expertise

in cross-country skiing, which benefited many developing racers at the time. Along with other members of the national team, he was also instrumental in importing a track-setting sled from Europe for the first time in the mid 1970s, which became the prototype for a number of home-grown models (some of which may still be in use). Ever the innovator, Ross once won the KAC-Martini using skis with mohair strips on the base when waxing proved difficult.

Ross forged and maintained many friendships in Victoria at a time when interstate rivalries were taken very seriously. He also had the respect and friendship of many luminaries in the wider skiing community, with Kurt Lance and Peter Bailey amongst his many close friends.

Perhaps as a response to his own problems with team selections in years gone by, Ross was at the forefront of the skier-driven push to establish fixed and transparent selection policies for national cross-country ski teams.

Ross was also a leader in the campaign to build a shelter specifically for cross-country skiers in Perisher Valley in the mid-to-late 1970s. With Rick Macready, he worked to establish the Sverre

Kaaten Nordic Shelter, the first of its kind in Australia.

Ross ultimately discovered the joys of trekking in Nepal, alpine skiing, bike racing, triathlon, ocean swimming and event riding. In his 'spare' time, he ran Dominie, the family educational book supply business at Brookvale. He was an enthusiast on alpine skis, rather than a stylist, and, for many years, was a regular competitor in the KAC Club Championship, hoping all the time to achieve the same success on alpine skis that he had on cross-country skis in decades past. As John Caldwell wrote on hearing of Ross' death: "What a competitor!"

Ross was a man without pretensions and was equally at home with his many friends in the Botany Harriers as he was in the company of surgeons, lawyers and captains of industry. Apart from his exploits on a road bike, he was a keen mountain-bike rider, enjoying many trips through northern Australia and the Outback, mostly with Toy and their good friends Ian and Nan Landon-Smith. With Kore Grunnsund as part of his back up crew, he also competed in the Simpson Desert Bike Race in both 1988 and again in 1989, when he won. He trained for the heat by wearing

a beanie and wrapping his torso in thick newspaper and wearing a jumper over the top in the middle of summer.

Ross and Toy enjoyed many treks in the Himalayas and, in later years, travelled extensively through the northern hemisphere to ski. Often these trips were combined with visits to daughter Brook, then living in Whistler, and son Boyd and daughter-in-law Silva, in Pennsylvania. Despite all the accolades Ross received, he considered his finest achievements were his children. His greatest joy was recounting their successes in life, no matter how big or small.

In recent years, Ross had become a bit of an internet gadfly, bombarding friends and acquaintances with any number of crazy emails and frequent, extremely insightful observations on skiing and life in general. As someone who did things to excess at times, Ross sometimes lost sight of the volume of material he generated.

As his great friend Kevin Morrissey said at Ross' funeral: "He was a 'rat-bag' in the finest Australian tradition".

He will be sorely missed by all who came into contact with him.



Ross Martin, 1968 Winter Olympics, Grenoble.



Ross Martin in his element, 1995.

Ski Lodges History Project

We are still waiting on a number of lodges to return their PHS questionnaires for inclusion in the Ski Lodges History Database.

If you have not already received information on the project please contact Donald Johnston.

E Johnston@acenet.com.au

Ph 02 4872 1047

M 0412 428 207

Donald would also like to hear from anyone who owned/operated a business in the snowfields along the Kosciuszko Road between 1950 and 2000.

The PHS is keen to hear from anyone interested in helping to collect/collate this information. Again, please get in touch with Donald if you'd like to get involved in either of these projects.

New Members

We are delighted to welcome the following new members and thank them for their support.

John and Jill Berry #

Moerlina Ski Club

Gregor Murray and family

Matthew Quomi

Snowgums Alpine Club

Rick Walkom #

Five-year membership

How can you help?

Promote our new website - www.perisherhistoricalsociety.org.au

Do pass on the address to your friends and club members.

Record conversations with older skiers about what they did.

This is history; don't let it be lost.

Ski Magazines or Ski Year Books

Have you got any to add to our library?

Films and photographs.

Yes please – need to have dates, who, where and why.



On behalf of the PHS Committee we wish all our members and those involved in snow sports a Merry Christmas, Happy New Year and safe travelling during the holiday period.