

# PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 16 Winter 2016

## Notes from the President

### AASHA

The annual gathering of the Australian Alpine and Ski History Association (AASHA) was hosted by the Ski Club of Tasmania at the Mt Field National Park, 60 km north of Hobart on 30 April 2016. PHS was represented by the Southwell-Keelys, Woodmans and Wendy Cross. This is the third meeting of ski and alpine related historical societies and other interested parties.

PHS is very supportive of the AASHA ideals of cooperation and collaboration. Again the conference proved to be very worthwhile and it continues to be an excellent forum for the exchange of ideas, an update of happenings in other areas, and for rekindling enthusiasm and cohesion. The meeting was well attended by about 45 people and the Tasmanians put on an interesting program with the dinner, as usual, playing its important part as a social forum.

The two keynote speakers - Peter McFie ("Mt Field National Park - the formative years 1910- 1940") and Bruce Cole ("Mt Mawson's Rope Tows") - told the fascinating stories of extraordinary people battling the odds to achieve great outcomes.

For me, the highlight was a presentation by Andrew Swift of Mt Hotham. Andrew draws

on the gold mining history of the ski area. He has designed and created a most amazing set of integrated material for visitors to the area. It has a consistent look and feel which covers shelter sheds, interpretive panels resting on sculptured stands, and beautifully illustrated fact sheets with QR links to short 6 minute videos. These videos are of an extraordinarily high standard. He corralled friends to act out mining scenes, all suitably costumed for the period.

Wendy Cross held an excellent workshop titled "How to be a famous writer", on improving written communication skills.

Mount Hotham will host next year's meeting, slated for April/ May, with the final date to be announced. I commend this meeting to all who have an interest in ski history in Australia. Mount Hotham is blessed with stunning views of the Australian Alps and nearby Dinner Plain is a must see for its architecture and layout.

Please pass on the word that this is a great gathering and a worthwhile event. All are welcome.

### Philipp Strobl and Charles Anton

Austrian historian Philipp Strobl, PhD, a visiting scholar at Swinburne U, approached PHS member and Australian



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Alpine Club historian, Warren Peck for assistance. Philipp is "leading a long-term research project at Swinburne University (Melbourne) about Austrians who came to Australia following the 1938 incorporation of their country into Hitler's Germany". He wrote "I would like to write a biography about the Australian Alpine Club (AAC) founder Charles Anton. The biography will describe his life in Austria, his escape to Australia and his life in his new home. However it will focus on his work for the Ski Tourers Association (resp. the AAC)."

He hit the bullseye with Warren and his close friend Leon Smith, both past presidents of AAC, as both were very involved in the foundation and growth of AAC for many years.

Woodmans, Southwell-Keelys and Leon Smith were delighted to entertain Philipp at the Austrian Club in Frenchs Forest which included a chance opportunity to meet Charles Anton's secretary of many years, Helen Malcher, and her husband Harry, the first manager of Kunama Huette. They were also happy to provide assistance to Philipp.

*Correction – Leon Smith is a stalwart member of Australian Alpine Club (AAC) not SASC; my apologies to both for my error in the Summer 2016 Newsletter.*

## PHS Website

My sincere thanks to Narelle Irvine for her significant involvement with the PHS Website. Regrettably she finds that she must restrict her activity and hence her involvement in the website.

So once more PHS is seeking assistance with our website. If you are experienced in this area

we would be delighted to hear from you.

## A new publication

We have been working away at republishing the memoir written by John Davis and distributed to a number of close friends. As residents of Perisher, John and his wife Pat were part and parcel of the expansionary period of Perisher/Smiggins. They managed the first commercial accommodation in the Valley (the Tow Hut at North Perisher) and operated the associated iconic 'Big Tow'. As a firsthand record of the Perisher area from 1957 to recent times, the book is filled with wonderful accounts of personalities and events as it tracks the development of the area, tuition, equipment and transport. This is a real gem and we are honoured that John and Pat have allowed PHS re-publish the book.

The news is that the preparatory work for publication is nearly complete with an anticipated launch date this winter.

## Did you work in the snow 1970-1995? There is a reunion!!

A reunion of any who worked in the snow at Smiggin Holes, Perisher, Guthega, Blue Cow, Skitube or the Station is being held on the weekend 4-6 November 2016 at The Station.

The main event is Saturday but happenings are planned for Friday night and Sunday morning. All reports indicate that it will be huge.

To book: Call -The Station Jindabyne Ph 1300 369 909

Enquiries: EMAIL – PerisherReunion@gmail.com

## Perisher Cup - 17 September 2016

An enthusiastic organising committee has everything ready for this year's Perisher Cup.

Trophies and prizes have been defined and rules published. Full details will be sent to all clubs and posted on the PHS website in the next weeks.

Make sure that your club has organised your team (4) entry. It is a fun event with a serious side and a long history.

Philip Woodman  
President

## Hotel Kosciusko

Donald Johnston has been labouring away for four years collecting and collating historical material on the life and times of the old Hotel at Diggers Creek (1909-1951) and the remnant staff quarters that survived the fire and were later revitalised by Tony and Elizabeth Sponar in 1959 to become Sponars Lakeside. Sponars is now becoming recognised as the hotel's legacy. Much of the exercise has been in the collation of previous written but scattered data. This project has involved countless research hours at NSW State Records, the Mitchell Library as well as many private archives. The process has been augmented by a marvellous response from the public via appeals published in the SMH column RSVP.

Now assembled into the form of a seasonal diary of the hotel's 42-year trading and social history, the project includes unique historic photos and memorabilia.

The resultant collection is now becoming an important archive

highlighting the contribution the hotel made to the growth of NSW alpine tourism and recreation in the Kosciuszko region. Its loss in 1951 was to galvanise the development of the ski club lodge built environment as we know it today.

Whilst the large source documentation will be retained, Donald is now embarking on an exercise to reduce the data to a publishable size.

This remains an open brief. Remember that PHS is always keen to receive information this topic or the myriad of subjects associated with the area, the people, equipment, personal experiences, employment and particularly your personal experiences and reflections.

## Dates for your Diary

Hello in the Snow  
*Apres Ski Drinks from 4.00 pm*  
Tuesday 9 August 2016  
Marritz Hotel

Perisher Cup 2016  
Saturday 17 September

AGM Sat 13 February 2017  
2 pm NPWS Jindabyne

## New Members

We extend a warm welcome to the following:

Lorraine Moore

Leon Smith - *Australian Alpine Club Perisher Huette*

Wendy Cross

Graeme Hearl - *Cooma Lodge, Boonoon (City Tattersalls Ski Club) & Kosciuszko Alpine Club*

Raylene Jarvis - *Kosciuszko Alpine Club*

## Sydney Cocktails at History House

Once again PHS and the Thredbo Historical Society combined to present an evening of Australian skiing history at History House in Macquarie Street on 24th May.

Drinks on arrival were followed by a 10 minute film featuring Malcolm Milne in Australia's first win in a World Cup alpine event in Val d'Isere in 1969. Then Andrew Horsley (shown below left) gave a fascinating illustrated talk on The Cross Country Discipline, with insights into its growth, sophistication and characters drawn from his long involvement as a racer, coach and administrator.

Much lively conversation, drinks and hot finger food rounded out a great evening.





# PHS Annual Dinner 12 June 2016- Marritz Hotel

With the snow season at Perisher off to a good start, PHS members and guests gathered in front of a roaring fire at Marritz Hotel for our Ninth Annual Dinner on Sunday 12 June. New chef Greg Pieper served up a delicious meal, topped off with his playful 'Marritz Snowman' dessert.



Ian Curlewis QC then took us back to his early days of skiing at the Chalet in the 1950s, where lessons with Sasha (Nekvapil) were a highlight. He and his law student friends discovered the delights of skiing on the Main Range and spent their law vacations helping to build Kunama Huette at the foot of Mt Clarke, skiing by day and partying at the Chalet in the evenings. Wonderful Main Range photographs added to his fascinating presentation, which included his first-hand account of the avalanche which destroyed Kunama in July 1956 and took the life of Roslyn Wesche. Ian himself was trapped for some time in the collapsed structure. He finished by describing the trip he made on skis from Dead Horse Gap to scope out the site for Thredbo.

Many thanks to Ian, and to Simone Beilicz, Chef Greg and the staff of Marritz for another wonderful evening. Thanks also to Jan Glover (photos) and Dave Woods (video) for recording this very successful event.



# Ski Touring near Mount Jagungal

By Warren Peck

Mount Jagungal (2061 m), the highest Australian mountain north of the Kosciuszko Main Range, can be readily seen from many vantage points in and near the Kosciuszko National Park. It is not surprising that the goal of many ski tourers is to climb Mount Jagungal on skis, so as to not only enjoy the 360 degree panorama from the summit, but also to ski its magnificent snow slopes. Mount Jagungal is 24 km from the Nimmo Road on its eastern side, 33 km from Kiandra to the north and 25 km from the Hotel Kosciuszko (Sponars Lakeside Inn) to its south. Prior to 1950, the mountain's remoteness from roads that were generally trafficable in winter, meant that most skiers in the 1930s and 1940s had to spend several days making a trip to the Jagungal Summit and return. Huts most frequently visited by ski tourers making Jagungal ski trips in the early 1940s were Alpine, Grey Mare, Tin Hut, O'Keefe's, Mawson's and Whites River.

In his 1943 Ski Diary, Frank Leyden describes a trip from Mawson's Hut to Grey Mare Hut, and in his 1944 Ski Diary, Frank describes another trip to Grey Mare Hut, this time travelling via Mt Jagungal.

"Ex Mawson's 7:30am. Crossed a ridge snout then down in the valley of the Valentine River; crossed it & skirted around 1<sup>st</sup> ridge into a little valley, then climbed towards its head. Valley ran due NW to a saddle with big snow gums. From top can see a rolling sea of white ridges.



Mawson's Hut [Frank Leyden, 1943]

North-west is Rocky Bogong and the pass between it and the third hill (so named in Elyne Mitchell's 1942 book 'Australia's Alps'). Grey Mare Hut is 2 miles due south of Rocky Bogong. Rough country on low side of Rocky Plains Creek (now named Geehi River). Then crossed plateau before running down to Rocky Plains Creek (Geehi River). Then steep climb over other side; long descent to Straight Creek thru timbered country, with heather and grass sticking through snow. After crossing

Straight Creek, climbed next ridge & from there could see the hut below a dark fan of trees. Old tumbled down miners hut was higher up on another ridge. Scars of mine and tunnel beside it. Took 3 hours 15 minutes from Mawsons with heavy packs. In (Grey Mare) hut plenty of billies & camp oven, several beds & doubtful mattresses."

In his 1944 Ski Diary, Frank Leyden describes climbing to the top of Jagungal and visits to three nearby huts, including



Grey Mare Hut (1) [Frank Leyden, 4 August 1944]



a return visit to Grey Mare Hut, during a spell of absolutely perfect weather, “bright warm sunshine, no wind all day, night full moon, severe frost. Icy snow conditions on traverse to Jagungal, good snow on *(its)* south face; very icy on north slopes of Jagungal.” Carrying packs, the group left Alpine Hut at 7 am on Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 1944 in perfect weather with a severe frost (18 degrees F). The Mt Jagungal summit was reached at 11:15 am and they arrived at Bogong (O’Keefe’s) Hut, on the northern slopes of Jagungal, at 12:30 pm. They spent the night in O’Keefe’s Hut after returning from a two hour afternoon cross-country ski trip to Farm Ridge Hut and return. Frank wrote no comments in his diary as to Farm Ridge Hut’s physical condition.

Frank Leyden recorded in his diary that they had used “black wax and blocks” on their skis all day. Leaving O’Keefe’s hut at 9.00 am the next day, they climbed straight up the Jagungal ridge behind the hut, before running down Jagungal’s south face with the Kosciuszko Main Range in the background. Frank noted “perfect clear warm, sunny day” but “very bad icy snow conditions most of the day making climbing and running very strenuous”.

Arriving at Strumbo Hill at 1:30 pm, they ran down to Grey Mare Hut, which was reached by 3 pm. Frank records “perfect clear sunny day, quite warm, no wind all day, followed by bright full moonlight Thursday night, with a minimum temperature of 6 degrees F below freezing. A cold night was spent in a very draughty hut and they emerged



*Bogong (O’Keefe’s) Hut [Frank Leyden, 3 August 1944]*



*Farm Ridge Hut and Hay Shed [Frank Leyden, 2 August 1944]*

into cloudy, overcast weather, with low clouds coming in from the west and mists coming up from the Geehi Gorge. “Weather all Friday was dull; mist on the highest tops, such as Jagungal; visibility fair; touring quite OK; a strong and cold westerly blowing across Main Range.”

After a few runs down the Grey Mare Range, above the hut, they departed Grey Mare Hut at 10.00 am and skied back to Mawson’s Hut in 3 hours, and then onto Alpine Hut in just under an hour. The following day (Saturday 5<sup>th</sup> August 1944) was a “perfect sunny day, cold and clear; temp. below freezing.” On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> August, Frank’s group skied to Whites River Hut, with the “weather perfect – clear warm bright sun, no wind all



*Skiers on the Jagungal South Face [Warren Peck, 1987]*

day". They spent three nights at Whites River Hut and enjoyed perfect skiing weather until Wednesday 9<sup>th</sup> August, when an overnight weather change, with falling barometer and heavy mist, forced them to backtrack to Alpine Hut.

"3.5 hours from Whites in very bad weather; wind and mist; all *previously* icy snow had become sloppy & wet and skis failed to run down the cornices into Dead Horse Creek; worst part was very heavy mist at Kerries Pass. Extremely difficult to navigate."

By 1950 the original Grey Mare Hut was in such bad repair that the gold miners built a new hut a little closer to the Grey Mare gold mine tunnels.



*The Second Grey Mare Hut [Warren Peck 1967]*

## 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations

PHS congratulates the following clubs and commercial lodges on celebrating their fiftieth anniversary. They were all first occupied in 1966.

Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club  
(Perisher)

Narraburra Ski Lodge

Trissana Ski Lodge

Ullr Ski Lodge

Peer Gynt Ski Lodge

IMBAC Alpine and Ski Lodge

Guthega Inn

*A comment on dates: Whilst there are a number of dates that could be used (e.g. formation, incorporation, start of construction, etc), for consistency, the PHS has adopted the year of the first winter occupation.*

## Vale: Park Pioneers

Over the past eight months or so, a number of people who have made important contributions to Kosciuszko National Park have passed away.

Dane Wimbush, who worked with Alec Costin in CSIRO and co-authored 'Kosciuszko Alpine Flora' died late last year, as did Roger Good. Roger was pivotal in rehabilitating the Main Range once grazing had stopped, studying fire behaviour in the high country and influencing catchment management policy across south-eastern Australia.

More recently, Tom Lewis, who set up the National Parks and Wildlife Service in the mid-'60s and the mighty Neville Gare, the Park's first Superintendent, have both passed away. Dave Woods has prepared a longer tribute to Neville for the next newsletter.



# Personal Reflections on Carl Melvey

By Graeme Hearl

My own first meeting with Carl Melvey was a somewhat confronting experience at Cabramurra in the late 1970s or early 1980s at a state or national championship. Carl's daughter, Camille, was competing in her first such event and Carl was a vociferous and intimidating presence on the side of the track, offering a level of encouragement to Camille normally only found at suburban football fields (just before the Tactical Response Group arrives to restore order). Most of us present had no idea what we were in for over the next thirty plus years. There was no mistaking his passion, and his commitment to Camille at this time, however. Indeed, some of those present on the day, still take great delight in mimicking Carl's ear shattering cry of "Camille!".

Whilst Carl had been a fixture in the Boonoona Ski Club scene for many years, he was largely unknown in the wider skiing community and, in particular the Cross Country skiing community, when Camille first started to race. At the time, it was a fairly insular community dominated by Cooma Ski Club, KAC and, to a lesser extent, Canberra Alpine Club. This was true not only of Cross-Country ski racing generally but also the Perisher Cup in particular. All that was about to change, however, as Carl set about making Boonoona a force to be reckoned with.

Boonoona had always had a strong Alpine fraternity, but

had traditionally been weak in Cross-County; which readers may appreciate was the key to success in the Perisher Cup. Whilst Boonoona had a number of good athletes within their ranks, none of them were good Cross-Country skiers and certainly none of them were good enough, at that stage, to compete with the likes of Cooma Ski Club with its then great depth of Australian representative skiers.

Carl took a typically methodical approach to the problem, and quickly identified Andrew Horsley as a promising young coach who could help lift their standards. Andrew started coaching and training the Boonoona skiers and along with Carl, began to identify promising young skiers out of the University ski clubs, who were not then aligned with any other Perisher Valley based ski clubs. People such as James Hamilton, David Lee, Vlad Skop, Rod and David Hislop, the Iverson girls, Ben Sim, Nick and Alex Almoukov and a host of others soon became fixtures on the Cross Country racing scene under Carl's patronage.

Within a few years, Carl achieved his dream of winning the Perisher Cup for Boonoona and began what, to this day, remains somewhat of a love - hate relationship with Cooma Ski Club. Carl also became actively involved in skiing administration through the Cross- Country Committee of the NSW Ski Association (as it was then known). He quickly gravitated into the national body, where



he became a voice of reason and reconciliation in the often fraught relationships then existing between NSW and Victoria over skiing administration and allocation of resources.

Perhaps the fact Carl was not involved in the politics of the 1960s and 1970s, which was part and parcel of Cross-Country skiing, meant he brought no baggage to the table and so was able to establish working relationships with all those involved in skiing administration at the time. Ultimately, the principal beneficiaries of Carl's diplomatic skills and willingness to work with people were the skiers themselves.

Having been involved in a number of fairly unpleasant



experiences myself (due to misplaced interstate rivalries), I can vouch for the fact Carl's role in smoothing relationships over a long period of time has been a welcome addition to the Cross-Country ski scene. That he is still probably the most popular man in Cross-Country skiing after all of these years also speaks volumes for him as a person.

I had the pleasure of spending some time with Carl in early 1985, travelling through Central Europe, along with Ross Bill and the late Tony Price, a good skiing friend from Quebec City, whom Ross and I had met the previous year whilst experiencing the delights of the World Loppet circuit. Carl was a wonderful addition to our travelling group, especially as he had the foresight to hire a Fiat Ritmo, which was a bit like a Mini Minor. What he was thinking at the time he did this, given his large frame, is anyone's guess. With Carl driving and Tony in the front seat, Ross and I were relegated to the back seat where all available breathing space was occupied by a number of large bags and wax boxes which couldn't fit in the less than spacious boot. Fortunately, the car had roof racks; although they were barely able to accommodate the twenty odd pairs of skies we had between us.

Ross, Carl and I drove from Davos in Switzerland through to Oberammergau in Bavaria where we were to meet Tony and do the König Ludwig Lauf together. When we arrived at Oberammergau, however, we were met with grass and dirt and no snow. The race was cancelled just as we arrived, much to our dismay. After some

quick checking on alternatives, we collected Tony and his gear and headed south to Dobbiaco in the Italian Dolomites, with a view to entering the Dobbiaco to Cortina Ski Marathon. Cross-country skiers are nothing if not adaptable people.

We should have known things would not go smoothly, however, when we were informed that our accommodation of choice, the "Villa Christina", was full. Fortunately, they were able to find alternate accommodation for us at the "Hotel Schwarzer Adler", in the old part of town. We appeared to be the only guests in the hotel, although the basement was occupied by a very large and aggressive German shepherd. Thankfully, it was kept on a chain, which was only just short enough to ensure it didn't tear you limb from limb as you sidled down the far side of the corridor on the way to collect your skis.

It wasn't until my wife Alex and I had a week at the "Villa Christina" in 2011 that I learnt the "Hotel Schwarzer Adler"



is, in fact, closed throughout winter. Fortunately, it is owned by the sister-in-law of Hans, who owns the "Villa Christina", and he had been able to negotiate with her to find accommodation for us. It was entertaining, if cold, damp and forbidding as it offered no food or drinks, limited heating and beds that defied all chiropractic recommendations.

The day after we arrived, we went to the race office to enter, where further dramas ensued, apparently occasioned by the fact Ross Bill's Australian Passport had been issued in Canberra but he had been born in Sydney. Carl, who allegedly speaks fluent Italian, began translating, whereupon the race officials evicted every other person from the race office except for the four of us, barred the door and started making frantic telephone calls to who knows whom.

After some furious negotiations, during the course which I don't think anybody on either side understood a word that was being said by the other, the officials eventually relented (no doubt, prompted by the fact by then there was a very long queue of angry Italians outside the race office banging on the glass doors and demanding to be admitted) and we were eventually allowed to sign up for the race.

The race was a terrific event which Carl still reminisces about to this day. It follows a winding course marked out by World War I era military gauge railway track finishing in the town centre of Cortina d'Ampezzo. The race crosses a number of very wild rivers, but the highlight of it is the two long tunnels that must be navigated, courtesy of a string

of electric light bulbs and some patchy snow.

After the race we all headed off on our different directions with Carl going to the Nuremberg Toy Fair as he did most years. I travelled as far as Munich with him and, to this day, can still smell the burnt-out clutch after one too many gear changes on the autobahn.

Quite a few years later, when I was on the board of KAC I received a call from a Carl, who informed me there was a matter of very serious concern coming before the NSW Ski Association that week and it was essential that KAC be present. Knowing Carl, I did assume it was a matter of very serious concern and duly made arrangements to attend the meeting. Needless to say, I was amused to find the first order of business was the recommendation of Life Membership for one Carl Melvey which, as you might expect, was duly passed (it should be common knowledge Carl never attended a meeting without the votes already counted).

Perhaps Carl's most recognised contribution to skiing was his role on many occasions as Team Manager for the Australian Cross-Country Ski team, where he was obliged to deal with numerous egos, interstate rivalries, inter-club rivalries and all that goes with the management of highly strung athletes. The fact he received universal acclaim for his role in that regard says much about his man management skills, his personality generally

and the fact, unlike many team managers in many different sports, he understood that it was about the athlete and not about the man wearing the blazer.

Carl was also a major advocate for women in skiing. It is often not recognised that Carl (assisted very ably by Margaret Meakin from KAC) was instrumental in ensuring equality for women in the Perisher Cup and in the sport generally. Indeed, it may be that this will, one day, be seen as



Carl's greatest legacy in skiing.

Every Cross-Country skier I know has a Carl Melvey story. All of them are generally amusing, all of them involve no harm or disrespect to anyone else, and many of them show (if told by Carl) a strong sense of self-deprecation. Carl has also bestowed more nicknames on people than anyone I know. "The Swan", "Mr. Appearance", "The Slum Lord", "Hurricane", "Herr Gus", "The Silver Bullet", "The Axe" and "The Band-Aid Man" being but a small sample.

Despite his generally good nature, and often self-deprecating ways, Carl is no push over. I remember on one occasion, when at a KAC Cross-Country Classic after-race function, a trophy which Boonoona had won, was 'borrowed' by members of another ski club. I received a very irate call from Carl, suggesting that if the trophy wasn't returned by the following morning, he would have no option but to

call the police to report it as theft. One judicious telephone call was sufficient to see the missing trophy appear in a black garbage bag on the door step of KAC the next morning, no questions asked, with honour preserved all round.

For many years now, Carl has been the technical delegate for the KAC Cross-Country Classic and the Charlotte Pass Open. Indeed, he has been doing this for so long now they appear to be lifetime appointments. His conduct of Jury meetings

before and after races is an example of economy of time and effort, and the sight of Carl sitting on his skidoo with nothing to do at the end of each race is a comforting sight to any race organiser.

After a number of, what might best be described as 'events' with his skidoo (including trying to climb a tree with one in Perisher Valley and then, on another occasion, testing out its underwater capacity at Charlotte Pass), Carl's skidooing days are over. A pleasing thought for all concerned.

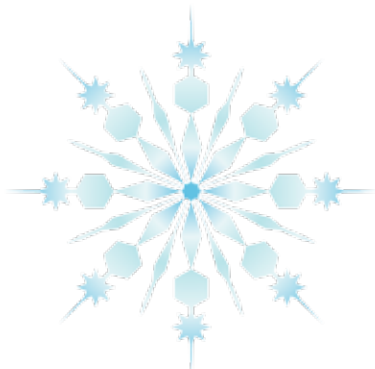


For many years, Carl was a senior examiner with Surf Life Saving Australia, as is his son Peter. Indeed Carl is probably unique in Australian sport, in that he is a life member of at least two separate sporting organisations: North Bondi Surf Lifesaving Club and Ski and Snow Sport New South Wales.

Anyone who thinks Carl's time is devoted solely to sporting activities, however, may be interested to know he has also been a long term driving force with Scalabrini Village, a charitable organisation responsible for the maintenance of retirement villages for people of Italian descent. Carl's great uncle was also one of the founding members of City Tattersalls Club and Carl remains active in that Club's affairs.

Carl and his wife Jeannette and their family have all been keen skiers, and his grandchildren look to be following in his footsteps. If Carl's grandchildren end up with as many friends and admirers as Carl has through their own time in skiing, they should count themselves as blessed.

If anyone is seriously seeking a more detailed analysis of Carl's contributions to skiing, however, they could do far worse than read through the excellent history of Boonoona Ski Club written by Peter Southwell-Keely in 2015.



## Peter Ward OAM

In January 2016 Peter Ward of Jindabyne was recognised for his service to Cross Country Skiing in NSW with the award of OAM.

Peter started his involvement in cross country skiing in the late 1970s when he moved to Cabramurra with the Snowy Mountains Authority. After a brief break in the mid 1980s he renewed his contact with the sport when John Sim encouraged him to assist with the Monaro High Ski Team. In the early 1990s he and Graeme Power offered to run the National Championships and they have been involved in the administration of the sport ever since. He became the Chair of NSWXC in 1995 and continues to be involved with all aspects of cross country skiing administration. This includes the running of cross country events, the improvement of infrastructure for cross country skiing, including the development of trails around Perisher, and organising races and ski training camps for young athletes.

He has held the following positions on the NSW Cross Country Committee, Ski and Snowport NSW:

Chairman 1995–1998, 2000-2014  
Member, Perisher Cross Country Committee  
Member Events Committee  
Member Nordic Shelter Committee

He has been a NSW Delegate, Cross Country Committee, Ski and Snowsport Australia for 20 years, and an organiser and volunteer on the Interschools Cross Country Events for 15 years.

He was involved with the substantial extensions and upgrade of the Sverre Kaaten Nordic Shelter in 2008 and continues to be an enthusiastic supporter and volunteer at the shelter.



## Vale: Bob Arnott (1922-2016)

William Robert (Bob) Arnott was born in Sydney on 13 October 1922, the great-grandson of William Arnott, founder of Arnott's Biscuits. His father, Henry Dixon Arnott, was a barrister and President of the Royal Aero Club of NSW.

Bob Arnott attended Cranbrook School and was a fine sportsman. He skied for the first time on a school excursion to the Hotel Kosciusko in 1935. He then skied at Charlotte's Pass each year until 1941 when the Chalet closed for the war.

He was in the Air Force briefly during the war but then went to the University of Sydney. He began studying engineering but changed to science and graduated B.Sc. in 1945. His first job, at AWA Materials Research Laboratory, was to study the effects of humidity on electrical equipment.

Bob began ski racing at the NSW and Australian Championships in 1946. In 1947 and 1948 he raced at Mt Buller and Mt Hotham whilst working on X-Ray crystallography at the Post Master General's research laboratory in Melbourne.

By the late '40s, Bob was one of Australia's top racers and, in 1949, represented his country for the first time at the Inter-Dominion Championships in New Zealand.

Early in 1951, Bob trained in Europe with the Belgian and British ski teams before returning to Australia in a Percival Proctor airplane piloted by his friend,



David Allen. They made 34 stops, sightseeing in India and then island hopping to Darwin with an unscheduled landing on a coral airstrip in Bali. In 1951 Bob again represented Australia in the Inter-Dominion Championships at Falls Creek.

Bob was selected for the 1952 Winter Olympics in Oslo where he represented Australia in Slalom (53<sup>rd</sup> and 64<sup>th</sup> out of 90 starters) and Downhill (71<sup>st</sup> out of 91 starters). The following is Bob's account of his Downhill run on very little snow.

*I started off behind a Greek, there were probably one minute intervals or something like that. The Greeks were always going to be in the Olympics because they started the Olympics and were always entered. The start of the race was fairly straightforward: The Greek disappeared and I was sent off, and we came to a*

*traverse, it was fairly steep and the Greek had fallen down the hill, and so I passed him. Then the same thing happened to me, I fell down the hill and he passed me, and then I got up and managed to pass him again with a schuss to the finishing line.*

After the Olympics, Bob continued to race while working for the Physical Sciences Branch of the Snowy Mountains Authority in Cooma. During this time he discovered the good skiing in Thredbo Valley and, with the approval of the Kosciusko State Park Trust, felled the necessary trees for a downhill race in Twin Valleys. The Australian Downhill was held on this course (the George Chisholm course) in 1953 and 1954, four and three years respectively, before Thredbo Village began.

In 1953 Bob won the Australian Slalom championship and



captained the Australian Inter-Dominion team to New Zealand.

In 1956 Bob began work with Ferranti in England as a logical designer for its new computer laboratory and for the next four years worked on the Pegasus, Perseus and Apollo systems. Around 1960 he returned to Melbourne to set up a Ferranti sales department there.

At the 1963 Ski Club of Australia Race Week in Thredbo, Bob had the very good fortune to meet the winner of the ladies slalom, Simone Pirenne. They were married in 1965 and, by 1970, had two children, Adrienne and Axel. Skiing has always been important to the Arnott family and both children trained for a number of years with the Thredbo Ski Racing Club. At races in Thredbo, Simone was always Chief of Gates.

Bob Arnott was the first Australian member of the Fédération Internationale de Ski (FIS) and attended the 1963 congress in Athens. He served on the FIS for 27 years, initially on the Downhill/Slalom Committee and later on the Classification Committee, of which he remained an honorary member for the rest of his life.

At Bob's memorial service, Axel Arnott explained the circumstances leading to the introduction of the 2-Bob Rule (also known as the Bob Rule).

*International skiing needed a better method of ranking its skiers and assigning start positions for each race. The higher in the order a racer started, the greater their advantage because the course deteriorates with every racer,*

*especially in those days. The existing system essentially involved a small room filled with large Austrian coaches yelling at each other until the officials could take no more. Something had to be done.*

*So, Dad the physicist, set to work developing a system that could account for the many variables necessary to rank different skiers, competing in different races, on different courses and conditions. He created a system that worked quite well but he knew it had problems. It tended to overweight some variables. Meanwhile, Bob Beattie, a US representative to the FIS was working on an alternative system, and it too had problems.*

*With the 1968 Olympics at Grenoble fast approaching and plenty of pressure to solve the problem, there was a Eureka moment late one night when they realised that if they combined both of their systems, they tended to cancel the errors out acceptably.*

*It was introduced in 1967 and, while it has had some modifications since, it is still the basis for ranking skiers around the world today. It is affectionately referred to as the 2-Bob Rule.*

For many years Bob served on the Ski Council of NSW and its successor, the NSW Ski Association (NSWSA). In 1981 NSWSA commissioned Bob to prepare a report, 'Ski Plan '81', on possible new areas in NSW for ski resort development. Bob chose about 12 areas of which the main ones were Blue Cow, Twin Valleys, Kings Cross, and Bogong Creek. It was clear that

Twin Valleys offered the most potential and, for a number of years thereafter, NSWSA encouraged the NSW Parks and Wildlife Service to promote development of the area. Sadly it did not happen.

Bob Arnott's book 'Seventy Five Seasons – The Ski Club of Australia' is an excellent history of the club which he joined in 1950. Bob thought the book of 180 pages and almost as many black/white and colour photos would take about one year to write. He finished it five years later.

Nearly every year, Bob raced in the Thredbo Masters Giant Slalom competition. The last time he competed was in 2010, finishing 6<sup>th</sup> in the Mens 75 and Over at the age of 88. His ski finale was at Thredbo's inter-club races the same year, as a member of the Ski Club of Australia where he was known as 'Rubberlegs'.

Bob's passing was mourned by his wife Simone, his children Adrienne and Axel, son-in-law Oliver, sister Karen and grandchildren Hugh and Charlotte, and the more than 200 people at his Memorial Service at St Marks's Anglican Church, Darling Point, on 4 February 2016.

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*PHS is grateful to the Thredbo Historical Society for permission to draw on its tribute to Bob Arnott.*

## Zurich to Cooma in 121 h, 5 min - Part 2

By Hans Zollinger

*In May 1970, Hans Zollinger, proprietor of Hans Oversnow, set out to fly from Zurich to Cooma. This is his account of the second part of his journey – from Calcutta to Cooma. The first part appeared in the previous issue.*

At 15.45 I reached Calcutta. Here I met an English pilot who was ferrying Twin Islander aircraft from England to Australia and with his help we stayed in a nice hotel in Calcutta, where I of course had to cool down under the shower. The room was air-conditioned and that assured me a good night's sleep. Next morning I had to say good-bye to my English pilot – he set off for Singapore, 12 hours non-stop flying away. I had to stay in Calcutta because of heavy thunderstorms, but I hoped to be able to head for Burma the next day.

There were people everywhere in the pouring rain, sheltering under verandahs, and in the morning a table-top truck came by collecting bodies from the night's casualties! Calcutta is a real unfriendly, dirty place with people living on the footpath where they are born and die. Early in the morning, on the way to the airport, you see people everywhere living along walls, under a gutter, in front of walls, little children and old people – just one big mess! There are holy cows wandering around cleaning up the mess on the roads, even goats wandering around by the hundreds, not belonging to anyone. The drive from the hotel



Hans Zollinger

to the airport is something hair-raising – I felt a lot safer in the air.

The next day arrived with sunshine so off I was, heading for Burma. After flying across sea for 1 ½ hours, it felt really good to find land again. Akyab was the stop for fuel – here nobody was prepared to change a traveller's cheque. I got the fuel man to give me credit! I could settle the matter in Rangoon. I reached Rangoon in the evening after a lot of cloud dodging – there were always clouds – and diverting all the time to keep out of the rain.

To me Rangoon looked as if it was sitting in the middle of a swamp – actually they were rice paddies. You are not allowed to over-fly the city. Customs formalities here could not be more complicated – they even made me stay at the airport overnight because

I had no visa! Actually my visa had expired. They only gave me four hours to transit Burma. In Rangoon they do not provide air crews with accommodation and they told me to sleep in the lounge. I said I would prefer to sleep in my aircraft (it would not be so comfortable but at least I would have peace there), but the security man would not let me out of the airport, so I ended up on that couch in the lounge. Next morning, because it was a holy day (full moon), I had to pay overtime for customs, immigration and health. Altogether it cost me US \$78; to me they are the greediest robbers on earth! Anyway I was glad to take off again heading for Bangkok.

There was some fun getting in to Bangkok. First it was difficult to



call the control tower – I actually had the airport in sight before I could call them on the radio. Then when they did line us up to land they had two of us on finals together. A 707 jet in front, me in the middle and behind me a DC10!! I gave way, wanting to stay in one piece! In Bangkok I stayed in an American hotel which was quite nice and not too expensive. The room boy even offered me a girl (massage they call it). I had to refuse on the grounds of finance – the fee was \$10!

Here it rains almost every day, so flying is restricted to the morning hours: even with a lot of cloud there is still no turbulence and this makes things a lot more pleasant. My early morning heading was set for Phuket, an island off the coast of Thailand. On this leg I met a pretty stiff head wind and arrived with practically the last drop of petrol – I never looked so often at the fuel gauge! In Phuket the people are very friendly and hospitable, drinks and food being offered free while the aircraft is refuelled. (The airport officials asked me if I was the last one from the air race that went through Phuket one month before...!!) Through customs and immigration and I was off once more for Penang.

I landed in Penang just on last light and just in front of a thunderstorm and the people in the airport thanked me for bringing the rain, the first they had had for a long time. Here I stayed at the International Hotel, which is of very high standard and \$5 a night. Actually I had flown most of the way with my radio switched off and Butterworth Centre was very worried – they thought I was

lost! In the evening I visited the market. This is an experience not to be forgotten. If you say 'yes' once or twice you end up with bundles of rubbish under both arms and no money left!

After a lot of reporting points, I landed in Singapore the following day. Both the Singaporeans and Malaysians are very concerned about flight safety and this accounted for their concern the previous day on my journey to Penang. In Singapore I was met by an official of the local Department of Civil Aviation (DCA) and he showed the way to the local flying club, where I met Rudi Frey, a very nice guy, Swiss but brought up in Singapore. Here I had an opportunity to have the aircraft serviced. With six men working on it, they very soon had it in tip-top shape once more. Later on the same chap took me to a hotel, and afterwards, on a sight-seeing tour around the island which was very interesting. It really is a place with a difference. He also invited me for a real Chinese meal that had to be eaten with chopsticks. The food was really first class though I actually don't know what it was! I did not pay a cent as he insisted on paying the lot. The next morning he showed me round the airport.

I sat in the local aero club waiting for the clearance from Indonesia to arrive. People told me the Indonesians are very slow issuing clearances – who knows, I might have to stay one more day here. After five days I was still sitting there waiting! By now it was getting very boring. I knew I had to be back in Australia for business by a certain date and the time was dwindling away. Cheng, my

Chinese friend, was keeping me in good spirits – every day to a new place for dinner and every time he insists on paying the bill. One day I hope he comes to Australia so I can return his hospitality. If I have to stay much longer I will owe a fortune to the airport for parking the Cessna. Also hotels are not cheap, so for the sake of my purse I would like to get moving. I had to contact the Swiss Consulate in Djakarta after sending three cables to Indonesian authorities without any reply.

At last after eight days in Singapore – days I will remember for a long, long time because they made me feel as much at home as possible – the clearance finally arrived and away I went, airborne and heading for Djakarta. The local flying club in Singapore really looked after me well. Everybody invited me home and one evening I went with the CFI to the Swiss Club where a social evening was in full swing. It must be a very healthy sort of club financially. The house itself looked like a palace in the middle of a huge park. They have their own rifle range, bowling alley and swimming pool – really first class.

Flying towards Djakarta was again full of so-called detours – again and again there were cloud build-ups to 20,000 ft with local rain showers. Well, it makes flying interesting that way and certainly one appreciates an ADF. Without that aid, flying would be rather dangerous, as it would mean flying below clouds, 500 ft or less above the ground, with lots of turbulence.

I arrived in Djakarta in the afternoon to find the, by now familiar, paper war - forms to

fill in, signatures, etc, till the ball point pen ran hot. Airport officials looked after me very well and took me to a very nice hotel - the Bali Hotel – I think it was the nicest place I stayed in and not even expensive. The whole place was full of paintings (topless and others), masks, shells, carvings, and an aquarium full of fish and ducks. The temperature in Indonesia is not bad but the humidity means that it is always raining. Flying here without carby heat is just about impossible and the motor would cough terribly sometimes. Early morning was the best time to fly so I would try to reach Bali. Well the best of plans go astray. I departed Djakarta for Surabaya in sunshine and tried to follow the coast, but the weather got worse pushing me more towards Borneo. I called Djakarta who advised of heavy thunderstorm activity. I could not return to Djakarta and, with one tank empty, I was somewhere over the sea. It was critical that I find the coast. That meant flying under the clouds 50 ft above the sea in pouring rain with nil forward visibility.

Later I found some fishing boats below which meant that the coast could not be too far away. Luckily the rain stopped near the coast but, where was I? Flying a few km east and then turning and flying west I found Semarang. I made contact with the control tower and landed safely without much fuel left. I took the rest of the day off to get my brain working again.

After an overnight stop I made for Bali and landed at noon and gave myself the afternoon off. After refuelling I took the

opportunity of seeing the town and the people and I stayed in a cheap hotel from where I could make a tour on a motor bike. I visited a so-called Monkey Dance which is a local tradition.

The next day I was off to Dili in Portuguese Timor. On this section the weather was good but a 20 knot headwind, which is just about normal for this area, held me back. I had to make two unscheduled stops for petrol, the second of which was rather tricky as it was on a grass strip which ran uphill. I know now how to handle those grass strips. I think I remember a faulty spark plug too. I stayed in a nice hotel in Dili where the food was good. As I had had a hard day, it was early to bed before tackling that bit across the water to Darwin.

I departed Dili in bright sunshine and hopped across to Bau Cau where the tanks were topped up. Also here I had difficulty obtaining a weather forecast and flight plan. I think the officials had never heard of such a thing. Luckily the regular Fokker from Darwin arrived and, with the help of the pilots, I got the flight plan to Darwin via HF. I took off and climbed to L 95 where I had a head wind of 10 knots. After four hours flying in excellent conditions, I spotted Melville Island some miles out of Darwin. I reached Australia with little petrol left after 4 h, 35 min flying into a headwind. The next leg was Darwin to Alice Springs and I had to follow the road all the way according to DCA rules.

On the Alice Springs – Oodnadatta – Leigh Creek section I followed the railway line. In Oodnadatta I had to

abandon take-off because of water condensing in the fuel. Luckily the strip was long enough for me to get back down. After a very turbulent flight across the Flinders Ranges I landed in Broken Hill only to find one plug lead not functioning any more.

The following day, in beautiful sunshine, plus a bit of a tail wind, I took off on the final leg for Cooma, stopping for fuel in Griffith. Cooma weather was, as usual, sunny with a little wind and I tied the Cessna down, unloaded, and headed for Jindabyne and work. A trip I had always wanted to do and will not forget in a hurry! For future flights I would recommend a fuel carnet and long range tanks would be an advantage – you are stretching your luck sometimes without these.

The whole trip took 121 h, 5 min flying time and I used 745 gallons of fuel which ranged in price from 39 c in Broken Hill to the equivalent of about 80 c in Turkey, Iran and Burma. Many thanks to the members of the Singapore Flying Club.

