

# PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 18 Winter 2017

## Notes from the President

Greetings, these notes provide an opportunity to bring a few specific items to your attention.

Delighted that the snow gods provided snow for the season opening June Long Weekend and for the Society's premier annual function – Lunch at Marritz, as reported on page 4.

### PHS Hosts Meeting of Alpine Historical Societies 5-7 May 2018

Perisher Historical Society is the host for the next annual conference of all ski and alpine societies, known as the Australian Alpine and Snowsports Historical Association (AASHA). This collaborative group is proving to be beneficial to all and is of general interest to anyone who loves the snow, the resorts and surrounding areas of the alpine regions.

We hope for big turnout and encourage as many as possible to attend: all are welcome. It is always great to be amongst like-minded enthusiastic people and this event provides this in spades. Planning is well advanced, with accommodation and dinner at Corroboree Lodge Perisher, and the Skitube Conference Centre as the venue for the Saturday conference meeting. The weekend is rounded out with an on-site historical tour and lunch.

The conference is a 'don't miss' event for all who wonder at social evolution and how you played a part. Thinking of coming? Ring. Presentation suggestions or involvement will be greeted with delight.

### Donation from the Reunion of Reunions

As reported by Gil Boehm on page 5 the Reunion of Reunions, which gathered past Perisher workers together, was an overwhelming success. Absolute proof of this is that the budgeting was spot on leaving a surplus of \$2,000. On behalf of attendees, the organising committee has generously donated the whole sum to Perisher Historical Society. We in turn have committed the donation to the re-print of John Davis' book, *A History of the Early Development of Perisher – Smiggins*.

### Inductees into the Australian Paralympic Hall of Fame

Delighted to learn of the induction of Ron Finneran OAM and the Late Adrienne Smith OAM to the Paralympic Hall of fame. Both were fundamental to the formation and promotion of sport for the disabled. Ron's is a wonderful story, commencing with trips with friends to Thredbo as a non-skier, competing as a Paralympian, President of Disabled Wintersport Australia and as a significant influence



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in disabled sport on the world stage. See PHS Newsletter Issue 3 (2009) for more information.

Adrienne Smith took on the role of Executive Director Disabled Winter Sport (DWA) having previously been Executive Director of Australian Ski Federation (now Ski and Snowsport Australia). She enthusiastically promoted the cause of disabled sport and together with Ron was significant in insisting that the Paralympics were included in the successful Sydney Olympic bid. In her retirement, at the request of DWA, Adrienne generously documented the Australian history of Disabled Sport. See PHS Newsletter Issue 8 (2012) for more information.

### **Charles Anton – Academic Paper Published**

Mention was made previously of research being undertaken by Philipp Strobl on the life and cultural influence of Austrian pre-war immigrants. One of six subjects chosen by Philipp was Charles Anton and his paper on Anton is published and provides a wonderfully detailed account of his influence on Australian skiing.

The paper titled “Migration, knowledge transfer, and the emergence of Australian post-war skiing: The story of Charles William Anton” by Philipp Strobl is published in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*. <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09523367.2017.1313234>

### **History Starts Today**

#### **Head Lease**

The history of the development of Perisher received another entry early in June with the news

that following the Governance Review and a call for tenders for Head Lease for the Perisher Range, a Head Lease would not be offered at this time, although consultation will continue. At Charlotte Pass direct negotiations continue. Commentary is provided in the local alpine media.

#### **Waste Point**

The recent announcement of a Preliminary Master Plan for Waste Point brings to mind the days when this was the general parking area for skiers staying overnight. (Subsequently parking was moved to Sawpit Creek.) Buses then transported skiers to the end of the cleared road at Smiggin Holes where they could experience the joys of organising a snowmobile to their lodge. Quite apart from the story of the Waste Point area (not forgetting the marshmallow scandal), the evolution of parking and transport is an important topic for research and documentation.

Yet another topic is Coach Transport and the important part it played in popularising skiing by introducing people to skiing and the snow. Timelines need to be documented along with remembered experiences.

As always, contributions are sought and welcome.

#### **50th Anniversaries**

Congratulations to Karralika and Sundowner, two Perisher lodges celebrating their 50th anniversaries this year.

#### **Passing**

The Society notes with sadness the passing of Rex Cox and Colin Rae.

Rex Cox was an icon of Southern Alps Ski Club and the sport of skiing generally. Together with his partner, Joan Gardner, he was both an enthusiast for and substantial contributor to youth racing and over the years was responsible for introducing many to the wonders and delights of Main Range skiing. Profiles of both Rex and Joan appeared in PHS Newsletter Issue 17 (Summer 2016/17).

Colin Rae is remembered by many in his role of General Manager of The Chalet at Charlotte Pass (1970-1974) and later as General Manger of Perisher operations from 1979-1993.

*Philip Woodman*

## **Dates for your Diary**

### **Hello in the Snow**

Apres Ski Drinks  
from 4.00 pm

Tuesday 8 August 2017  
Marritz Hotel, Perisher Valley

### **Perisher Cup 2017**

Saturday, 16 September

## **Perisher Ski Patrol**

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

### **Gala Dinner**

Dockside Darling Harbour.

### **27 October 2017**

### **Everyone is welcome:**

*Members, ex-members, sponsors, partners, friends, skiers, boarders. Everyone!*

All the details on

Ski Patrol website or call  
Steve Howe - 0488 666 811  
<mailto:steveh@howeconsulting.com.au>

# PHS Drinks in Sydney

## 14 May 2017

PHS members and friends shared a most enjoyable evening with Nan and Larry Adler at Collaroy on Sunday 14 May. Great food, drink and company aside, the highlight of the night was a historical gem, a 15-minute film produced by the ABC's 'Weekend Magazine' for the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of The Chalet in 1980.

Tipped off by Rick Walkom (author of 'Skiing off the Roof'), the PHS network swung into action and located the film. As well as shots of the early days of skiing in the Snowy Mountains and rare footage of Australian Ski Troops in Lebanon, the film contains interviews with John Abbottsmith, instructor Dick Oldfield and Ken Breakspear. There is also some sensational old footage from the '30s of Austrian instructor Ernst Skardarasy making his beautiful swooping turns followed by his trademark, the long, swooping feather in his cap. Footage of the 1938 fire that destroyed the first Chalet building in a matter of minutes is riveting. A wonderful find!

Many thanks to our generous and hard-working hosts – Nan, Larry and Skye.

*Pictures from top:  
Pre Season drinks at Nan and Larry Adler's shop at Collaroy.  
A group of Kosciusko Alpine club members enjoyed the evening.  
Tim Woodman and Ben Elvy.  
Warwick and Robyn McGirr with Mario Longhitano.*



# PHS Lunch - June Long Weekend 2017

This year, for the first time, PHS held its annual, season-opening function at lunch time rather than the usual dinner. Sunday 11 June was a glorious sunny day for lunch at Marritz. There had been a reasonable fall of snow before the long weekend and the thousands of skiers who packed front valley added to the beautiful view from the Marritz dining room.

Our guest speakers this year were Peter McGuinn and his sister Carel Laing, the two surviving children of the late Stan and Marie McGuinn, who were, successively, managers of the Chalet at Charlotte Pass (1954-62) and then Perisher Valley (1963-72).

Both Peter and Carel were genuinely thrilled to have been asked to talk about their young lives in the snow and to be back at Perisher together again after a gap of some time. To illustrate their talk they had put together a powerpoint slide presentation with some wonderful photos of growing up at Charlotte Pass and Perisher Valley. Their talk was thoroughly entertaining and much appreciated by the audience.

PHS is very grateful to Simone and her team from Marritz who helped, as always, to produce a memorable occasion. We were hopeful that the change from evening to lunch might attract more attendees but the numbers were slightly down on previous years, so the jury is still out on whether to return to our traditional dinner format.



# Perisher Reunion of Reunions

by Gil Boehm

On the weekend of 4-6 November 2016, a rather large group of 'young at heart' people gathered at The Station, Jindabyne for two days of fun, food, wine, hilarious memories, many hugs and lots of laughs. The group comprised a wide cross section of folk who had lived and or worked in Perisher, Smiggins, Blue Cow, Guthega, The Station and Skitube between the years 1970 and 1995. Many people had travelled great distances, some from as far as the United States, Scotland and Asia.

The weekend was the brainchild of Dianne Brulisauer, who needs very little introduction to anyone reading this. Di was an active, talented business owner and manager in the Perisher Resort for more years that she would perhaps like to see recorded. Di, along with a small, hard-working committee managed to pull off the best Reunion of Reunions ever!

Friday evening kicked off with at least 200 people meeting for drinks, a barbeque dinner, a trivia game, lots of memory sharing and smiles. Breakfast and lunch on the Saturday saw more friends meeting up, some after 30 years. The highlight of the weekend was a beautiful dinner provided by the Station for 350 people. Tables for 10 were set decoratively by the team, with floral arrangements set in ski boots (thanks to Alan Rowson) and Di's signature hedgehogs in oranges. A voice from long ago, Dave Nesbitt, entertained during the weekend and after dinner on Saturday the band played on for more fun and dancing.

Paul Yonna, Post Master and Fire Chief from another time and his wonderful partner, Julie, organised the publicity for the reunion, the graphic design and the artwork, as well as keeping the reunion Facebook page up to date throughout.

The following is from Paul's last entry:

*"Hello all you good people... without intending to do so, the Reunion of Reunions made a profit of \$2000.00 ... after much discussion we have decided to donate this money to the Perisher Historical Society. It will help fund an edited reprint of 'A History of the Early Development of Perisher-Smiggins' by John Davis.*

*So to all those who turned up and made it a weekend to remember... Thank you ... YOU ALL ROCK."*

*Below Left: Alan (Barney) Davis presenting the \$2000 cheque to Pam and Philip Woodman.*

*Below Right: Peter Brulisauer, Alan (Barney) Davis and Di Brulisauer welcoming old Perisher hands.*



# Jean Findlay-Gowar

*Jean Findlay, a noted equestrienne from Taralga near Goulburn, moved her horse-riding business to Perisher Valley from Thredbo in 1962. She provided riding lessons and trail riding until horses were banned from the National Park around 1974. Memories of Jean by two long-time friends follow.*

## **Janet Dawkins (Caldwell), Alexandra Ski Lodge, Perisher, March 2017.**

In 1962 Jean was invited to go to the USA to instruct in camps in Vermont, Boston and New York. On her return Lend Lease wanted her stay at Thredbo but she moved to Perisher where she gave lots of pleasure to parents and children alike. Parents enjoyed fishing and walking whilst the children spent many happy hours with horses. They walked from Geebung Lodge to the stables each day where they had riding lessons and trail riding out in the mountains with their friends.

Jean wanted to build her own lodge. With the help of Thyne Reid and the encouragement of the parents of her pupils currently camping at Geebung, Valhalla (home of the fallen heroes) was built. Thyne Reid unfortunately died the day the bulldozers came to clear the site for Valhalla which was just up the hill from her stables. However, he did leave provision in his will to help Jean follow her dream of building Valhalla, which was completed in 1964-65.

My connection with Jean goes back to the time she moved into Perisher Valley where I attended many wonderful pony camps, ski camps, trail rides to Betts Camp, Cascade Hut, Tin Mines and many more exciting places. Jean's camps were experiences never to be forgotten, with friendships born at Valhalla that I still have today.

Now in my sixties I still keep in touch with Jean, spending many hours talking of old times (see anecdote below), having a good old laugh whilst eating egg sandwiches and sweet treats. Due to declining health Jean is now in full time care.

*In the summer of 1958 Jean picked up a group of young Japanese visitors from Cooma airport. She was surprised to see they had climbing boots, ice picks, and ropes in their luggage. They told her, very proudly, that they'd come to climb Mt Kosciusko. They looked so disappointed when she offered to drive them to the summit in her station wagon.*

Thank you Jean for all those wonderful times never to be forgotten.

## **Janet Fairlie-Cuninghame**

I have known Jean since about 1960 when I was employed by her at Thredbo to work at her summer riding camps, during the school holidays. I continued on at Perisher Valley until about 1971. Jean and I taught senior scouts to ride at Terry Hills and I accompanied her when she took them and 2 packhorses on a 6 day ride in Kosciusko National Park. In 1965 I also worked at Valhalla Lodge during the winter season.

Jean was always an intrepid and innovative leader with enormous courage and vision. She was well loved and respected by the hundreds of children and parents with whom she came in contact. She was a superb horse rider and

has an exceptional knowledge and skill in handling children and horses. Some of the children were as young as 5 and Jean had an exceptional ability to match the personality of the child with a pony. The camps and the stables were all well run.

At the end of the season Jean conducted six-day rides without any vehicle accompaniment. The horses had to be hobbled and sidelined or enclosed in an electric fence. The riders all had to be fed, the gear cleaned, and pack horses packed and loaded. Jean was particularly good at caring for the horses on the long rides. She also organised between 40 and 50 horses to be ridden over the mountains to be agisted over winter in Victoria.

Jean was well known for her excellent horse knowledge. Brumbies were bought and broken in and ridden. For many years she was a well respected horse judge at the Royal Easter Show and all over Australia. Jean also has a British Horse Society certificate, an American Instructors certificate and was one of the first people to get Riding for the Disabled going in Australia in about the 60s.

Jean always took an active part in the community. At Thredbo she sent her staff and horses out in a search for missing persons. During her time in Perisher, Jean was a great supporter of the cross country ski movement and Valhalla became a gathering place for the skiers.

I do not know of another person who is as strong willed and determined as Jean. She has suffered a lot of adversity in her life and for the past 40 years or so has lived alone.

Jean is an extremely private person and values her own private space. She has a very good memory and knows the Snowy Mountains country well. She could write a valuable history of her time and her knowledge of horses.

*Right: Jean Findlay-Gowar with Helen Swinbourne's horse, Quickstep (Sheeba).  
Photo courtesy Helen Swinbourne.*



# The Big Blizzard

by Donald Johnston

At the end of the first guest week of August 1935, 123 guests at the Kosciusko Hotel, most of them members of The Millions Ski Club, were caught in a terrifying blizzard at Rennix Gap on the way to the Hotel. They were rescued from the stranded buses with great difficulty and taken to the Hotel by sleigh and skis. All the outgoing guests also remained stranded at the Hotel for some days until weather conditions improved. Some of the cars belonging to the ski club members became snowbound and later were totally buried by snow for many days before being retrieved.

Two of the rescuers, who also filmed the event, were Film Associate, George Rayner, and Cinesound Cameraman, Mr George Heath. Both were staying at the Hotel along with actors and support staff while they were shooting the film 'The Burgomeister' for Film Players Corporation under the Production and Direction of Harry Southwell.

Snow fell at the rate of about a foot (30 cm) per hour and the wind was so strong at times a person could hardly stand. Some set out for the Hotel on skis whilst others tramped through the snow in ordinary shoes risking hypothermia. The wind raged about the Hotel all weekend, gusting at times to 70 miles per hour (112 km/h). The road into the hotel was covered to a depth of 5 feet (1.5 m). The snowplough broke down and had to be dug out and manpower was needed to move it on.

George Rayner described the rescue period as follows.

"There was plenty of film material there for drama. The people staggering through the storm looked as if they had stepped out of a political persecution in Europe. Some of the women were near hysteria. Many of those who tramped to the hotel had an extraordinary appearance. The driven snow

had hard packed against their chests as they fought against the snow and they entered the hotel wearing solid ice. Others had a job thawing out their eyebrows and moustaches".

As the incoming guests' luggage had been abandoned on the buses' roof racks, the new arrivals had only the clothes they arrived in for the next few days. The earlier hotel guests organised a shared clothing and personal effects arrangement to ease this situation whilst the Picture theatre, Billiard rooms, Lounge rooms and the Manager's Private office were all turned into bedrooms to assist in the sleeping arrangements.

Sources: *Sydney Morning Herald* 5 August 1935. *The Argus*, Melbourne 7 August 1935.

*This is an edited extract from a draft chapter from the history of the Kosciusko Hotel being prepared by the author.*



*Photos courtesy National Film and Sound Archives*



*Top two photos courtesy the Estate of William Edwin Pidgeon, permission by Peter Pidgeon, son and Curator of the WEP Collection. Bottom photo: Courtesy National Film and Sound Archives.*

# Water from the Rock

by Warren Peck

Ski villages need an abundant source of water, particularly in the depths of winter. As a possible alternative to pumping water up to several kilometres from the nearest perennial stream, management of the Perisher and Dinner Plain resorts investigated the possibility of extracting drinking water from the underlying rock. The Perisher investigation took place in 1974 and the Dinner Plain investigation was in 1981. The test bore at Dinner Plain produced seven times the water flow achieved by the test bore at Perisher. The entire water supply for Dinner Plain comes from two boreholes immediately adjacent to the village. Perisher's water is piped from two creeks - Betts Creek and Rock Creek. This article reports the results of the search for underground water I carried out in the two ski resorts more than thirty years ago.

Supplies of high quality drinking water can be found not only in streams but also under the ground in some alpine areas. The rain water remaining after run-off and evaporation sinks into the ground, and some of it, after passing through the soil, reaches the bedrock, where it occupies pore spaces and natural fractures in the rock. Some rock-types, such as sandstones, can act as underground water reservoirs as a consequence of their porous nature. Rocks locally fractured by geological processes can also act as water reservoirs.

Whilst stream flows can be

greatly diminished in the middle of winter, the water trapped in rock voids below the soil is relatively unaffected by seasonal changes in air temperature and does not usually freeze under Australian climatic conditions. This ground water can be the basis for a town's water supply. The ski village of Dinner Plain is an example of a town whose reticulated water supply entirely comes from the many fractures in the basalt rock that underlies the town.

Perisher is underlain by granite which is locally fractured along major linear structures called lineaments. Whilst not easily seen at ground level, the Perisher lineaments are clearly visible in air photos. One prominent NE-trending lineament aligns with the escarpment lying SE of the South Perisher, Highway Alpine and Yalara Lodges. It can be traced for over 1 km to the SW and it is paralleled by two more lineaments about 230 m apart. Another set of six lineaments can be traced N-S for more than 1.5 km, with an average spacing of 230 m between each lineament. Water from rain and melting snow soaks into the ground along these lineaments. Some lineaments that drain a relatively large catchment area can provide sufficient water to constitute a domestic water supply for a small township.

Initial field investigations in January 1974 identified the precise locations of some lineaments that, subject to field

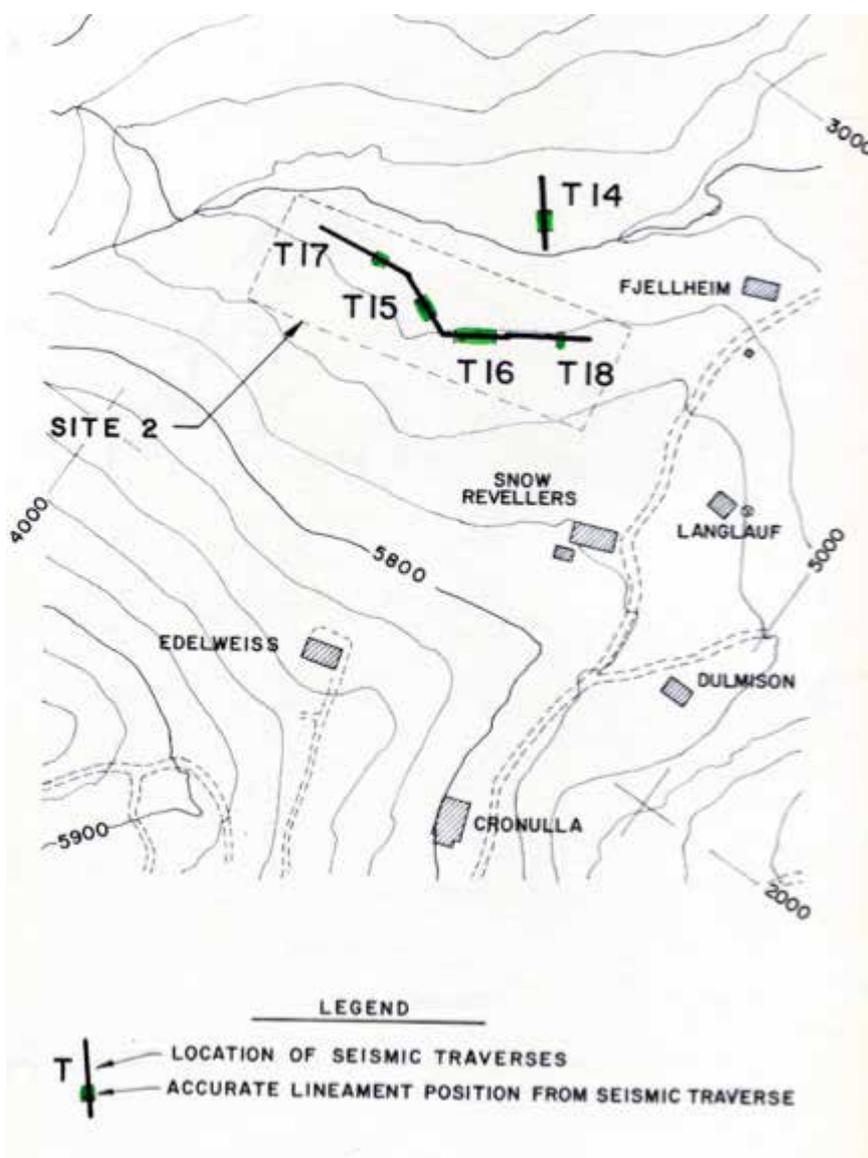
testing, might collectively provide 500,000 litres of water per day, thus obviating the need to pump water for domestic purposes into Perisher Village from Betts Creek (a distance of about 4 km). The second stage of the investigation required the drilling and testing of three sites in order to establish the typical yields of groundwater that might be recovered by water bores drilled into lineaments within Perisher Village. Site No. 2 (shown below) gave the best results, yielding just under 55,000 litres per day, only a fraction of the desired 455,000 litres per day. Kosciusko Alpine Resorts, the then operator of the Perisher Valley Resort, opted to pump water for the Perisher Village from Betts Creek and to increase the capacity of the existing dam on Rock Creek.

In contrast, most of the Dinner Plain Village is underlain by basalt rock that extends westwards for some kilometres into the National Park. This basalt is permeable, contains very large volumes of water and has a total thickness in excess of 40 m. The basalt stores a large volume of water, equivalent to about two year's requirements of the village. The groundwater supplies are continuously being replenished by seepage from the higher ground to the west and from infiltration into the ground by rain and by water from the melting of the winter snow blanket. The area abounds with permanent springs.

A sustained pumping test in November 1981 was unable to lower the water level in a small diameter (75 mm) test bore to below 6.0 m and its regularly-monitored standing water level during the 1982/83 drought never fell below 3.2 m.

Two water-supply bores are available, each with a total capacity of about 500 litres per minute. Peak monthly utilisation during the 1992 and 1993 ski seasons was 6.15 megalitres in September 1992, equivalent to an average requirement of 142 litres per minute. Testing showed that the 5.7 m thick moderately weathered basalt layer could supply 270 litres per minute continuously over a period of several days. The deepest recorded water level in Waterbore No.1 was 6.0 m on 22/5/1993 following a period of sustained pumping.

In conclusion, it must be stated that the characteristics of water supply systems for ski resorts are very site-specific. Whilst the Dinner Plain underground water supply system is a fantastic success story, insufficient groundwater could be obtained when a similar system was trialled at Perisher in the 1970s. Should any new ski resorts be developed in the future (e.g. in the Kiandra – Cabramurra Area), the option of obtaining supplies of potable water from the rock should be investigated.



Location of the 1974 Investigation Site No. 2 at Perisher

# Geoffrey Eyre Forrest Hughes

(9 May 1928 – 12 March 2017)

by Greg Hughes

Geoffrey Eyre Forrest Hughes (Geoff) was the third-born child of Geoffrey Forrest Hughes (son of Sir Thomas Hughes) and Margaret Eyre Sealy Vidal. Geoff and his siblings, Tom, Constance and Robert (Bob), enjoyed a happy and busy childhood, growing up in Bellevue Hill and spending holidays trout fishing, shooting and riding at Yaouk in the Snowy Mountains; staying at their grandmother's property, Jonah's, at Whale Beach; and in the 1930s, learning to ski on the slopes near the old Hotel Kosciusko. They were a very close family.

The boys attended boarding school at Riverview and Constance went to Kincoppal. The family were raised in a devout Catholic home, with prayers said morning and night.

Geoff completed his schooling at Riverview in 1945. At school he enjoyed sports, playing in the First XV and First XI, competing in the 880 yards at the GPS carnival and State Championships and also winning the Medal for Debating, in a team that included Charles McDonald. In Geoff's own modest words, it was easy to make the Firsts, as the school was quite small and there were few to choose from! From a young age he displayed a good work ethic and made the most of his talents. His academic progress was solid and he already showed a very practical

streak and was always good at building and designing machines, engines and other contraptions.

Like his father, grandfather and elder brother, Geoff went into the law. He was admitted a solicitor in NSW in 1952 and joined the family firm, Hughes & Hughes, where he worked for nearly 50 years. He served on the NSW Law Society Council and loved being around the law. He saw it as a vocation rather than a job.

At school he had played golf on the course at Riverview and later, while studying law, became very keen on the sport. A natural left-handed player, he played right handed. In 1951, aged 23, he won many competitions at Royal Sydney, and held the amateur course record (68) at Royal Sydney for some time. He was the first and still the only golfer to win the big four major championships at Royal Sydney in a calendar year. In 1951, he also qualified for the Australian Amateur Championship at Royal Melbourne, where, other than getting an albatross on one hole, he was soundly beaten in an early match. It seems that shortly after this, he momentarily lost interest in golf and a new sporting interest, skiing, took prominence in his life.

In the mid 1950s, Geoff started to spend increasing amounts of time on the Main Range of the Snowy Mountains. He was a member of the Ski Club



of Australia and a foundation member of the Ski Tourers Association. He loved ski touring and photography.

Geoff raced in the Australian Downhill Championships on the George Chisholm Course in the early 1950s. On one of these visits he was exploring for better snow above the race course, when he saw something far more exciting – on the far side of the valley, the Snowy Authority's bulldozers were carving the first stage of the Alpine Way, which would provide access into the Thredbo Valley.

In 1955 Geoff, Tony Sponar, Charles Anton and Eric Nicholls formed the Kosciusko Chairlift and Thredbo Hotel Syndicate, to build a year-round resort in the Thredbo Valley. Geoff owned 40% and the others 20% each.

In 1956 Geoff met and married his wife of almost 60 years, Patricia Dawn Jordan. They had three children, Damian, Greg and Genevieve.

In the winters of 1955 and 1956, Geoff, Tony and Charles made exploratory trips to the Thredbo Valley, seeking out the best

site for the village. Kosciusko Thredbo Limited, or 'KT' as it is better known, was registered in 1956 and Geoff convinced Thyne Reid to join the original syndicate and Thyne came on board as a major shareholder and Chairman of KT.

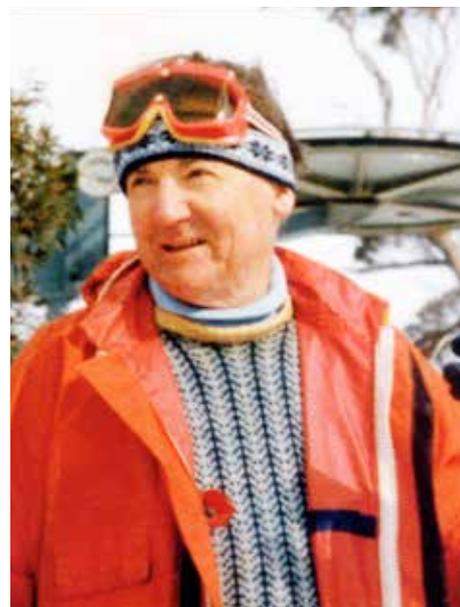
Geoff negotiated the head-lease for Thredbo with the relevant Government Departments. It has stood the test of time and is still regarded as legally and commercially advantageous to KT. Thredbo enjoyed its first season in the winter of 1957.

A foundation member of Crackenback Ski Club, Geoff designed and supervised the building of the first tow at Thredbo, which was erected by members of the Club, in time for the 1957 ski season, while KT awaited the arrival of its first chairlift. Thredbo hosted the Australian Downhill Championships in 1957 and Crackenback was the host club. Geoff was intimately involved in all of these activities.

As a result of his knowledge of ski lifts, Geoff formed a small company with engineer, John Gam, called Ski Tows Pty Ltd which built the first T-bar in Perisher Valley in 1959 for Ken Murray.

He also found time to advance his skiing and in 1957 he was selected for the NSW Alpine team and later as a reserve in the Australian ski team in 1958. That year, while race training with Leonhard Erharter, Geoff was very badly injured in a skiing accident at Thredbo. He hit a tree and fractured his skull. Brother Tom came to the rescue, and arranged for Sir Douglas Miller, the preeminent neurosurgeon of the day, to attend to Geoff, and in time he recovered.

After his accident, Geoff ceased ski racing, and lost some interest in skiing for a time. The family continued to ski at Thredbo in the early-1960s, but, by the later 1960s they started taking winter holidays in Queensland.



From the early 1960s, Geoff became heavily involved in the national debate over 'State aid for independent schools'. He was an executive member of the Australian Parents Council formed in 1962 and devoted a great deal of his time to this cause.

Geoff loved working in the city and was a member of the Australian Club for almost 70 years. He loved the paintings in the club and talking to members about his latter day passion, the stock market. He continued to play golf, remaining competitive during his seventies, and served on the General Committee of the Golf Club.

In 2009 Geoff suffered a seizure and started to slow down, gradually becoming quite unwell with dementia. For the last three years Geoff and Dawn had full-time care at home. Dawn died less than 12 months ago and during the last 6 months Geoff deteriorated rapidly. He died peacefully at St Vincents Hospital.



*The Crackenback Ski Club group which built the first ski tow in Thredbo, 1957. L-R: G. Hughes, J. Minter, J. McCallum, M. Mathews, T. van Dugtren, I. Curlewis, R. Minter, J. de Vries, D. Cassidy, T. Bell, Mrs M. Kater, M. Kater. Hughes collection.*

# Charles Kerry and the Tyrrell Collection

by Dave Woods

In previous issues of the PHS newsletter, we have used some old images of skiing and life around Kiandra, the early years at the Hotel Kosciusko, and early excursions along the Main Range. The credit for these images is mostly assigned to Charles Kerry (or Kerry and Co.) and many have been sourced from the Tyrrell Collection. The purpose of this article is to give some background on Charles Kerry and his involvement in snowsports, and to explain how many of his images found their way into the Tyrrell Collection.

Charles Henry Kerry was born on 3 April 1857 on Bobundra Station (north of Bombala) where his English-born father, Samuel Kerry, was a grazier and commissioner's orderly. Charles was schooled in Bombala and from an early age showed an interest in the art of photography. Originally planning to be a surveyor, in 1875 at the age of 17 he embarked upon his preferred career when he took up an offer of work as an apprentice to well-known Sydney photographer Alexandre Henri Lamartiniere. In 1883 Kerry became a partner in the business, and in 1884, in partnership with C.D. Jones, he took over from Lamartiniere. The business became known as 'Chas. H. Kerry, Photographer and Artist' until 1892 when the partnership with Jones ended and it became 'Kerry and Co.'

Portrait work was, for most of the latter part of the 1800s, the main source of income for photographers, and Kerry competed successfully with

other studios across Sydney for this type of work. However, this was not Kerry's preferred subject matter nor, as an outdoor's man, was working in the confines of a Sydney studio. Kerry started to explore outdoor scenery and matters of public interest, both in the country and city. His images were sold as large photographs, often framed, or in the form of post-cards. It was not uncommon for Kerry's prints to be available within a few hours of an event such as a Test cricket match, a harbour-side feast or funeral. In fact, Kerry's diverse photographic collection and timely exposure of images was a prelude to the era of photographic journalism that followed.

Throughout the 1890s, his decision to pursue this new line of photography started to pay-off, both financially and in the national acclaim and government commissions received. On 20 January 1887 Kerry married Delphine Hilda Vivian at St Mark's Church in Darling Point, Sydney, and by 1898 he had opened a well set-up four-storeyed premise at 310 George Street. This included a ground floor as a show room and for sales, two floors for reception rooms and portrait studios, and the top floor for developing, enlarging and framing.

Perhaps the pivotal year for Kerry was 1885 when he was asked to prepare an exhibit of Aboriginal portraits and corroboree pictures for the 1886 Colonial and Indian Exhibition in London. While some of the



images were contrived with studio backdrops, others were taken in the field. Not only did this give Kerry the opportunity to work outside, but also led to his first major commission under his own business name. In 1890, the Governor of New South Wales, Lord Carrington, appointed Kerry as his official photographer which furthered his confidence to pursue a wider pictorial agenda.

In 1891 the NSW Colonial Government commissioned Kerry to photograph the Jenolan and Yarrangobilly Caves. This was a period of great development of tourism in NSW that took advantage of the expanding railway and road networks (initially for horse-drawn coaches and subsequently motor vehicles), and a population with more recreation and leisure time. Destinations like the Blue Mountains, Hawkesbury River, the (Royal) National Park, Illawarra and eventually the Snowy Mountains would all

be promoted by a burgeoning government tourism push, initially the responsibility of the NSW Government Railways.

In 1895, Kerry also began a mobile photographic service (also referred to as the Squatter's Service) throughout NSW and Queensland, sending his employees to rural towns and farms, allowing remote communities the opportunity of photographic portraits. This also gave his photographers access to a vast array of rural imagery: from shearing sheds, homesteads, squatter's camps, farming families, swagmen, transportation of people and goods, agricultural activities, timber felling, prized animals and landscapes. Some of these trips were coupled with 'official' commissioned work by respective colonial or state governments, like the 1895 government-sponsored tour of outback Queensland to photograph artesian bores.

Spurred on by an interest in mineralogy and amateur prospecting, Kerry first visited Kiandra in 1894. Although Kiandra was no longer the goldrush 'tent city' of 1860/61, he knew it was the birthplace

of 'snow-shoeing' (skiing as it is known today) in Australia. This visit to Kiandra directed his business interests toward mining investments and created a desire to return to Kiandra for a photographic assignment.

And so it was that in 1896 that Kerry began to capture a unique part of Australia's landscape and heritage around Kiandra, focusing on 'snow-shoeing', snowsport competitions and life in a snow-bound township. The race carnivals organised by the Kiandra Snow Shoe Club (KSSC) not only gave Kerry subject matter to photograph, but whetted his appetite for his own involvement in snowsports, club affiliation (he became a member of the KSSC) and promotion of the sport of skiing through newspaper articles – writing under a pseudonym but using images crediting Kerry and Co.

In 1897, Kerry was part of a 15-member expedition which was the first to achieve a winter ascent of Mt Kosciuszko, a number of this group going on to form the NSW Alpine Club in 1898 headed by Kerry.

With the construction of the Summit Road, to provide

vehicular access to Mt Kosciuszko in 1906/7, and the opening of the Kosciusko Hotel at Dainers Creek in 1909, skiing in the Snowy Mountains moved from Kiandra. In August 1909, the formation and first meeting of the Kosciusko Alpine Club (KAC) took place in Sydney; Kerry was elected President, a position he held until 1917. Between 1909 to 1919, KAC was the only ski club in the Kosciuszko area. In 1925, Kerry received Life Membership of the club.

In 1913 Kerry handed over the management of his Sydney-based business to his nephew. Kerry's absence to pursue his mining interests probably helps explain the demise of the business and subsequent closure in 1917. He also undertook a photographic expedition to the South Pacific, visiting Tonga, New Caledonia, Fiji, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Samoa.

Charles Kerry died suddenly in his Neutral Bay home on 26 May 1928, having just returned from a scientific expedition to the Great Barrier Reef.

So what happened to all those photographic plates from Kerry



Kiandra



Snow Shoe Jumping

and Co.?

Fortunately for us, there was a gentleman by the name of James R. Tyrrell (1875-1961) who, amongst other interests, owned and operated a second-hand book store in Sydney. Tyrrell was also an avid collector of photographic glass-plate negatives. Following Kerry's death, Tyrrell purchased many of Kerry's glass-plate negatives which included 1334 plates formerly belonging to his contemporary Henry R. King. With an ambition to eventually build a floating ethnographic museum to be moored in Sydney Harbour, Tyrrell eventually acquired a collection of over 7,900 glass plate negatives, mostly from the studios of Kerry and King, but also plates from other unattributed photographers. It should be remembered that both Kerry and King employed staff who carried out portrait and field photography where images were labelled according to their respective business names and not the actual photographer. Nevertheless they were in the style of Kerry and King.

Although the floating museum did not eventuate, Tyrrell's collection managed to protect a very important part of Australia's historical record, particularly city and rural life, and the transition from colonial settlement to commonwealth status. Tyrrell's collection (7,903 glass plate negatives) was sold by his family to Australian Consolidated Press (ACP) by James' grandson, Bill Tyrrell, in 1981. ACP subsequently made plastic copy negatives of 2000 glass plates that were considered the most significant and best preserved

of the total collection. In 1985 ACP donated the entire negative glass plate collection to the Powerhouse Museum.

In addition, the Macleay Museum at Sydney University has approximately 3000 glass plate negatives originating from Charles Kerry's studios, and The National Library of Australia and the state libraries of New South Wales and Victoria hold miscellaneous albums and original prints from both Henry King and Kerry and Co.

In summary, we are very fortunate to have had a photographer such as Charles Kerry whose commissions to photograph rural Australia introduced him to the Snowy Mountains and skiing. His association with the mountains and the sport he fell in love with was maintained through his membership and appointment to head the Kosciusko Alpine Club. We are also lucky that Kerry's (and King's) work was valued by the avid collector, James Tyrrell, who secured a significant part of our country's heritage by carefully storing the collections for many years until their transfer to ACP and then donation by ACP to the people of NSW (and

Australia) by way of the Sydney Powerhouse Museum.

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*Below: Tail Race - New Chum*

