

PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 20 Winter 2018

Notes from the President

Greetings, quite a big list of items to bring to your attention.

Our New Book

The Society is delighted to have invested in publishing a new book. It is special for all sorts of reasons but primarily because it is a firsthand account - *A History of the Early Development of Perisher - Smiggins* by John Davis, who with his wife Pat managed the first commercial accommodation in Perisher in 1957. John and Pat remained closely involved with the area right through its early development. John first self-published about fifty copies of a spiral bound, photocopied book for his close friends. Recognising the extraordinary worth of the book, the Society offered to republish as a bound, indexed and saleable volume. We are thrilled by the result, as were John and Pat.

The book provides a wonderful insight into these earlier more basic times, when entertainment was homegrown and a hardy disposition a necessity. A compelling and delightful read, John's prodigious memory for people, events and bankable facts and dates results in a page-turner.

If you love skiing at Perisher and Smiggin Holes this book is for you. I urge every lodge have at least one copy on hand and available for their guests.

Sadly, this dearly loved couple passed on only weeks after the book's publication. I venture to suggest that their charming disposition and positive outlook on life has been significant in forming the base character of the Perisher skiing environment.

Australian Alpine & Snowsports History Association (AASHA) – Annual Conference

It was the turn of the Perisher Historical Society to act as host for this gathering held on the first weekend of May 2018. A highly motivated Organising Committee was tasked with creating a worthwhile event. Their objective was to do it right at an affordable price, so that attendees would be delighted that they had come and left satisfied that their time was well spent.

Sixty-five people attended the Conference, more than expected, and I can confidently report that the praise was almost overwhelming.

Corroboree Lodge was the social hub for the conference – Friday Night Welcome Party, Conference Dinner, Sunday BBQ and accommodation for the bulk of delegates. The warm and enthusiastic involvement of Corroboree owners Bob and Anna Tait set the tone for a friendly and involved gathering. Bob volunteered to manage registration and payment, nothing



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was a problem and the food was excellent.

Perisher Resort provided a simply marvellous venue in the Perisher Centre that was a colourful and bright setting for the Conference proper on Saturday. The positive support of the Resort with IT assistance and audio/visual gear was much appreciated. My thanks to Peter Southwell-Keely, Rick Walkom, Donald Johnston, Leon Smith and Peter Brulisauer for their fascinating presentations and for the time and effort involved in achieving such a high standard of engaging material.

We were blessed with a full range of weather – driving snow for Friday welcome, clearing weather on Saturday and a bluebird day on Sunday - clear blue sky with snow-covered mountains providing ideal conditions for the Field Trip to view the Main Range in all its glory – it was special.

Peter Southwell-Keely was to the fore with his almost encyclopaedic knowledge of people, dates and places. As well as his involvement in two presentations, his in-bus and on-site commentary on the Sunday Field Trip was a winner. To Wal Costanzo and Brindabella Ski Club and their delightful Tiobunga Ski Lodge – a huge thanks for organising sensational weather to take in the expansive view of the Main Range over Guthega Dam to Mt Tate, Carruthers Peak, Mt Twynam et al. from your beautiful lodge and for morning tea too.

Sincere thanks to the Organising Committee of Chris and Jenelle Brangwin for leadership, Judy Thomson as ever supportive VP, Peter and Diana Southwell-

Keely, Donald Johnston and my wife Pamela for high standards and the conference bags full of goodies. It was an absolute delight to be involved with such an enthusiastic team applying their life-learned skills.

We are grateful to many others who contributed to the success, including:

Snowy Mountains Magazine
Snowy Mountains Cookies
Monaro Post
Wildbrumby Schnapps Distillery
Perisher Resort
International Skiing History Association.

AASHA Annual General Meeting

The Saturday Conference included the Association's AGM with attending historical groups presenting an update on their recent achievements. The meeting was delighted to welcome Ron Finneran, past president of what has since become Disabled Winter Sport Australia. His list of accomplishments in advancing the cause of disabled sport is extraordinary.

The prime mover in the creation of AASHA was Alan Fredericks of Thredbo Historical Society. Whilst PHS was an enthusiastic supporter, Alan drove the initiative and enthused the Mt Buller historians to host the first conference in May 2014. Alan took on the presidency and has fostered the organisation to date but announced that he wished to step down and pass on the role. On behalf of PHS, I offer our sincere thanks for his efforts and the obvious success of the organisation. We are delighted that he is remaining on the committee.

Genevieve Fahey of Mount Buller was elected President and we wish her well and assure her of our continuing support of the AASHA objectives of mutual support and collaborative activity.

11th Annual Dinner

Three weeks after the AASHA Conference the committee backed up for the PHS Annual Dinner.

A delightful gathering of eighty enjoyed the evening. Great to welcome back the growing number that have the Dinner marked as an annual event in their social calendar.

We were privileged to gain an insight into the fascinating life Johnny Abbottsmith, of which some knew parts but few knew the complete span. Our thanks to Johnny's son and daughters, Garry Abbottsmith, Faye Pendergast and Diane Hampshire, who generously stepped forward to talk about growing up in the snow with their father and hearing of his fascinating life. Peter Southwell-Keely led the conversation complemented by images of this man's innovative and adventurous life that had a long-lasting influence on the development of skiing on the Perisher Range.

Barry Wrenford – a magnificent photographic record

Some years ago Barry Wrenford introduced us to his huge photographic collection of the Main Range, Perisher and Thredbo resorts. Being both a photographer and pilot the collection includes many aerial shots. Additionally, it benefits from his appreciation of the area as both a walker and skier,

resulting in views and angles of terrain appreciated by both.

Barry has now generously provided the Society with a digitised selection of 1,100 professional photographs, taken in the 1980s, showing all about the Snowy Mountains Region during this period and intended as a historical record. The indexed and titled images are divided into 8 groups:
Alpine Areas Summer
Alpine Areas Winter
Blue Cow Resort & Construction
Thredbo Resort
Other Ski Resorts
Skitube Construction
Resorts, Towns & Places of Interest
Jindabyne & Locality.

History is indebted to Barry for his diligent efforts to achieve this wonderful snapshot in time and the Society is delighted to be a custodian of this record.

Movies – digitised

The Society was presented with two new opportunities to preserve movies of the 50s and 60s. In both cases, the source was a family with a long association with Kosciusko Alpine Club. It has been our experience to date that photographers of home movies from this early period by and large took considerable care in their craft, not really surprising as it was quite an expensive hobby.

The committee has taken the attitude to date that it is likely that good material will be forthcoming. This has proved to be the case. Our thanks to the Illingworth and Toppin families for passing on their family archives. Our policy is to utilise a professional service to convert film to digital format using a framebyframe process and

includes computer enhancement sharpening and brightening the output. This provides a high quality result and enables frame grabbing. Film deteriorates with age, discernible by a vinegar odour.

Notable Passings

Frank Walker – KSRC. A few months ago Frank Walker passed on. Frank was a stalwart contributor to skiing at Perisher. Apart from his long-term activities with the iconic Kosciusko Snow Revellers Club, Frank had a continuing involvement with the sport, working tirelessly to better the lot of ski clubs first with the Perisher Ski Association, then NSW Ski Association and later with SLOPES. He applied his knowledge of insurance to achieve the removal the Fire Levy for Perisher clubs when there was no Fire Station but his huge contribution was in achieving a Ski Club Insurance Pool. This enabled the combined insurable risk of all ski clubs to be put out to tender. The effect on premium reduction was dramatic. Clubs continue to benefit from his efforts and continue to save really huge sums annually.

Bob Strizek (1926 – 2018). Bob Strizek's early transport service to Perisher (1955-59) was critical to early lodge based skiers and to John and Pat Davis. Their interaction with Bob, their friendship and importance of community support is revealed in the Society's new book *A History of the Early Development of Perisher Smiggins* by John Davis. Bob Strizek left the area in 1959 when Perisher Valley Enterprises took over Beaver Lodge and changed its name to the Alpine Gate.

This following is a taste of the new PHS publication and reveals the adventure that was the Perisher Smiggins frontier at the time.

In summer 1956-57 John went down to Perisher to inspect The Tow Hut and attempt find out and just what he and his wife Pat were about to take on. Perisher had a minuscule community and they were to be the first commercial accommodation and running a rope tow with no prior experience – a challenge to say the least!! Oh, did I mention – no electricity, no telephone, fuel stove, remote location, etc. On page 27, John writes:

“I left Telemark the next morning with a promise to ring Mr Kaaten of our decision in a couple of days after discussing it all with Pat. I stopped off at Smiggins to meet Bob Strizek, a Czechoslovakian fellow, I think he was ex-Snowy, who was building Beaver Lodge and, with 1½ ex-Chalet snowmobiles, running oversnow transport for the Perisher huts. He assured me of winter transport, and supply of some stores from his lodge. He could deliver, in his Land Rover or tractor, fuel, coke or anything else sent to him during the summer. He gave me advice on how much coke I would likely need, different suppliers in Cooma and a few other bits of information I should know. Nice bloke and we got along fine. I had a coffee with him and then headed back to Sydney”.

50th Anniversaries

Congratulations to Lampada, Sonnenhof and Illoura, all celebrating their 50th anniversaries this year.

Philip Woodman

Vale John and Pat Davis

by Peter Brulisauer, COO Perisher Ski Resort

Perisher is the biggest ski resort in the Southern Hemisphere, with 47 lifts, 1,245 hectares of skiing, and an underground railway. It comprises four different resort areas. Each winter Perisher hosts over 800,000 skier visits thanks to its 1,200 staff. Peak days now see over 15,000 skiers enjoying Perisher's sunny slopes. But it was all very different in 1957. Perisher Valley comprised twelve ski lodges, two ski tows and a handful of winter residents and, according to John, rats as big as cats. There was no electricity, telephone or snowmaking.

Few can lay claim to being a pioneer of ski lifting and commercial accommodation in Perisher Valley. John and Pat were just that. In 1957 they operated Perisher Valley's first commercial Ski Lodge in Sverre Kaaten's Tow Hut at North Perisher and one of Perisher Valley's two first ski lifts. The other was of course opened by Johnny Abbottsmith and Johnny already had another tow at Smiggin Holes.

John and Pat hired Adam Zapenski as their first Ski Instructor and the three lived in the small tow hut together in that first winter, which was an added challenge as Adam (in John's words) *had a rather aggressive teaching style that often reduced his pupils to tears, but somehow the same people backed up year after year for lessons with Adam.*

I know the life of a ski lift operator is a nervous one waiting for

snow... Here's John's account of their opening in their first snow season in the Tow Hut.

After a couple weeks of rain and snow, heavy snow set in on 6 July. Adam rode the tow up two days later but it still needed more snow for public use. Continuing snow saw it happen on Friday 12th. And because of Blizzard conditions on that day and having the hut full of beginners we had one customer for one hour and took 4 shillings (40 cents), but the big tow, as it was becoming known, was in business.

But being a Pioneer brought many unique and wonderful experiences in the mountains (again in John's words):

On a clear sunny winters day, with excellent snow cover, Grant Turnbull, Kurt Brulisauer and myself, three other people and three Evinrude snow-cruisers, happened to meet up at the Chalet. Three of us were driving the snow cruisers and three were towing behind, we went up to Charlottes Pass to have a look across at the main range. The sight was magnetic drawing us across the Snowy River to the base of Mt Clarke, then for the next two hours or so we explored the hills and valleys of the main Kosciusko range, pausing for a breather and refreshment 2229 metres above sea level on the summit of Mt Kosciusko, overwhelmed by the magical vistas in every direction and excited in the knowledge that few before or after us would share the experience.



Pat and John with Ullr

Of course, John and Pat went on to successfully manage several club lodges and businesses in the area. Personally, I have many fond memories of visiting John at Jindabyne Equipment Hire with Dad. He always greeted us with his big warm smile and enjoyed a good laugh with Dad.

Thankfully John committed his memories to paper, detailing their struggles, laughs and joys, and it's very pleasing that the Perisher Historical Society was able to re-publish this recently. John was the first ever speaker at the inaugural Perisher Historical Society Annual Dinner where he gave a marvellous presentation complete with terrific photos.

John and Pat were pioneers of commercial skiing in Perisher Valley. I thank them for everything they did in those early years in helping make Perisher the wonderful place that it is today.

But above all John and Pat were lovely, kind and generous people who we will all greatly miss.

Ski History at Perisher Valley

An autumn snowfall greeted delegates as they arrived in Perisher Valley on Friday 4 May for the 2018 Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Australian Alpine and Snowsports History Association (AASHA) hosted by the Perisher Historical Society. Things soon warmed up with welcome drinks in the cosy bar at Corroboree Lodge surrounded by a slide show of wonderful images of the Kosciuszko area by Jan Glover. The evening was rounded off with a supper of hearty soup and much conversation.

On Saturday, a brilliant, sunny day, over 70 people gathered for a journey through the history of the ski resorts along the Kosciuszko Road. Peter Brulisauer, COO of Perisher, the largest ski resort in the Southern Hemisphere (now owned by Vail Resorts), reflected on his family history in Perisher Valley, the growth of the resort and its possible future. He was followed by Peter Southwell-Keely (greater Perisher area), Donald Johnston (Hotel Kosciuszko, 1909-1951) and Rick Walkom (The Chalet, 1930-1980). All presentations were accompanied by wonderful old images, and some early movie footage showed skiers from the 30s and 40s at the Chalet. After lunch at Corroboree, Leon Smith shared his memories of ski touring and hut building on the Main Range.

Graeme Holloway announced that the Ben Lomond ski area would be the location of the 2019



Top: AASHA delegates at the Perisher Centre

Below: Stephanie and Marcel Jud-Brettingham, Anna Tait and Michael and Penny Wadsley

Images of the AASHA meeting courtesy of Snowy Mountains Magazine





Left from top: Genevieve Fahey (NAMA); Philip Woodman with after-dinner speaker Andrew Horsley; Philip and Pamela Woodman at The Chalet, Charlotte Pass; Alan Fredericks, Gary Simms, Raylene Jarvis and Brian Farmer at Guthega
Right from top: Walter and Vanessa Kiessling with Karen Smythe; Leon Smith with Chris and Jenelle Brangwin; Pauline Rice, Michael Monester, Michelle Stevenson and Greg Bentley at Sponars
All images courtesy Snowy Mountains Magazine

AASHA Conference, hosted by the Northern Tasmania Alpine Club.

The afternoon concluded with presentations from each of the alpine historical societies associated with AASHA, a summary of the previous year's activities by the outgoing AASHA Chairman, Alan Fredericks, and the Annual General Meeting. Ron Finneran, representing Disabled Wintersport Australia, Graeme Holloway and Peter Southwell-Keely joined the area representatives to complete the new committee. Subsequently, Genevieve Fahey from the National Alpine Museum of Australia at Mount Buller was elected AASHA Chairman.

After a delicious dinner at Corroboree, Andrew Horsley entertained a full house with a personal survey of the growth of cross-country skiing in Australia.

The Sunday Field Trip gave visitors a chance to see the snow-covered Main Range from Charlotte Pass and check out the grand dining room at the Chalet. The bus then travelled

via Smiggin Holes and the Link Road to Guthega for morning tea with the Brindabella Ski Club at their Tiobunga Lodge, overlooking Guthega Dam. Wal Costanza gave a fascinating illustrated tour through the history of the Guthega ski area. Brindabella was one of the first clubs at Guthega in the 1950s.

On the way back to Perisher, there was an opportunity to study the only part of the Hotel Kosciusko that survived the fire of 1951 (converted into Sponars Inn in 1959) and Donald Johnston provided a ground plan that allowed delegates to identify some of the foundations of the grand old Hotel. During the bus trip, Peter Southwell-Keely gave a commentary on the areas visited, aided by Brian Farmer on matters related to the Snowy Scheme. The trip was topped off with a barbeque lunch at Corroboree.

Our thanks to Bob and Anna Tait, our hosts at Corroboree Lodge, who made an enormous contribution to the success of the weekend.



Wal Costanza and Peter Southwell-Keely
at Tiobunga Lodge, Guthega

Where Did Skiing Begin?

by Judy Thomson

“Cave paintings in the Altai Mountains in China may show the cradle of skiing is in China.” This sub-heading in an article by Kade Krichko in the *New York Times* last year reignited the debate about the origin of skiing. Is it possible that sliding on snow may have originated in Central Asia rather than in Scandinavia as previously thought?

The Altai Mountains are in the north of China, in a wedge of territory between Mongolia in the east and Kazakhstan to the west. The beautiful paintings of skiers hunting a variety of prey are tucked beneath a shallow outcrop in the foothills of these mountains. They were shown to Chinese skier (first National Nordic Champion) and ski historian, Shan Zhaojian, by Altai herders in 1993. Since then Shan and archaeological researcher, Wang Bo, have studied the paintings and in 2006 stated that the Altay Prefecture in China was the world's birthplace of skiing, some 10,000 – 12,000 BP (before present, ie before 1950). Not surprisingly, this declaration has stirred controversy in the West.

Nils Larsen has been researching traditional skiing in the Altai Mountains since 2005. He has produced an award-winning documentary (*Skiing in the Shadow of Genghis Khan*) and numerous articles. In response to the *NY Times* article, he has written an article in *Skiing History* (May - June 2017) outlining his view that “skiing in

the region is indeed very ancient and that the Altay area might be a place of origin". As he points out, "the first written description of skiing is about skiers in the Altai Mountains (Western Han Dynasty, 206 BC to 24 AD)". In 1890, Fridtjof Nansen, in his book, *The First Crossing of Greenland*, cited linguistic evidence for the Lake Baikal/Altai region as the possible birthplace of skiing.

In May 2017, Larsen was given a copy of an Australian/Chinese scientific paper on the rock art of the region published in 2016. The authors are all experts in the study and dating of rock art. Their work suggests that the paintings are probably 4000 to 5200 BP - very old but not as old as the 2006 claim. It is universally accepted that accurately dating of rock art is very difficult, so this analysis may not be definitive, but it is the most detailed examination of the paintings so far.

In January this year, ISHA President Seth Masia attended the 2018 Ancient Skiing Academic Conference in Altay City, China. In his article in *Skiing History* (March – April 2018) he outlined recent work by archaeologists and anthropologists on the origins of skiing in Central Asia. Rock art across the region shows hunters on snow shoes as far back as 7000 years ago. Indirect evidence suggests that their use may have begun at the end of the last Ice Age, about 12,000 years ago. Knut Helskog of the University of Tromso noted that human habitation goes back 40,000 years in northern Russia and 9500 years in Scandinavia, with more than 300 skiing

petroglyph sites in this huge area.

At Zalavruga in Russian Karelia near the shore of the White Sea (and close to Finland), a petroglyph shows skiers killing a moose or elk. The hunters are definitely not on snow shoes because the tracks shown indicate tromping uphill with pole marks alternating on both sides of the track and gliding downhill with pole plants widely spaced. The tactic was to climb above the herd then swoop down at high speed to overtake the prey. In the Altay region, Tuvan elk hunters on horse fur skis still use this technique. Ages for this wonderful pictorial story vary from 7000 to 5500 years.

As Nansen suggested in 1890, skiing hunters from the arc between Lake Baikal and present day Kazakhstan probably followed herds of elk and reindeer, spreading northward and then east toward the Bering Strait and west along the Arctic Ocean coast, and from there ancestors of the Sami brought skiing to Scandinavia around 5000 years ago.

As Masia concluded: "Since around 2005, this view of skiing's origin has come to prevail among anthropologists, especially in view of the survival of a Stone Age skiing culture among the Mongol Tuvan tribe of the Altai mountains."

China, host of the Winter Olympics in 2022, is obviously keen on the Altai Mountains as the birthplace of skiing. It's looking fairly likely that hunting on skis was developed in Central Asia, spreading north and west to the White Sea coast and then to Scandinavia.

Sources

Krichko, Kade, 2017. China's Stone Age skiers and history's harsh lessons. *New York Times*, 19 April.

Larsen, Nils, 2017. Origin story: Where did skiing begin? *Skiing History*, May-June.

Masia, Seth, 2018. Skiing's Central Asian origins. *Skiing History*, March-April.

Dates for your Diary

Hello in the Snow

Tuesday 7 August 2018
Après Ski drinks from 4 pm
Marritz Hotel
Perisher Valley

Perisher Cup

Saturday 15 September 2018



Perisher Cup Langlauf 1972
Glover collection

Eleventh Annual PHS Dinner

Despite a lack of early snow, the ski season at Perisher opened on the June Long Weekend with multitudes of skiers and boarders enjoying the beautifully-groomed Front Valley slope. On the evening of Sunday 10 June, a large group of PHS members and friends gathered at Marritz Hotel to celebrate the season opening and to mark the centenary of the birth of mountain legend, Johnny Abbottsmith.

The evening began with welcome drinks and canapés, followed by a delicious three-course meal. Peter Southwell-Keely then led us through a pictorial record of Johnny's fascinating and varied life, with comments and personal recollections from his children Garry Abbottsmith, Diane Hampshire and Faye Pendergast.

After teenage years as a keen bike racer and apprentice carpenter, Johnny landed a job at the Hotel Kosciusko, where he rapidly rose from grease monkey to ski instructor. With the advent of the war in 1939, he joined the AIF, survived Tobruk, served as an instructor with the Allied Ski Troops in Lebanon and was invalided out after losing an eye at El Alamein. He then joined the American Small Ships operation running supplies into Japanese-held PNG and the Philippines.

The end of the war saw him back at the Hotel Kosciusko where he met his future wife, Phyl. Their first home was Betts Camp, where they lived while Johnny was employed to install radios in mountain huts. He then spent time on Heard Island,



carrying out many geological tasks and weather observation, arriving back in Australia with a group of penguins that fell foul of Australian Quarantine regulations but later, after expert taxidermy, bemused visitors to Smiggin Holes.

Back in the Snowy Mountains, Johnny established the SMA Weather Station at Spencers Creek. In 1952, it was time for the Abbottsmith family to move to Smiggin Holes where Johnny had built a house. Also in 1952 he built the first Smiggins ski lift by copying a picture of a Hamilton rope tow. With his dog sled team from Spencers Creek, he started the first Smiggins to Perisher over-snow transport service.

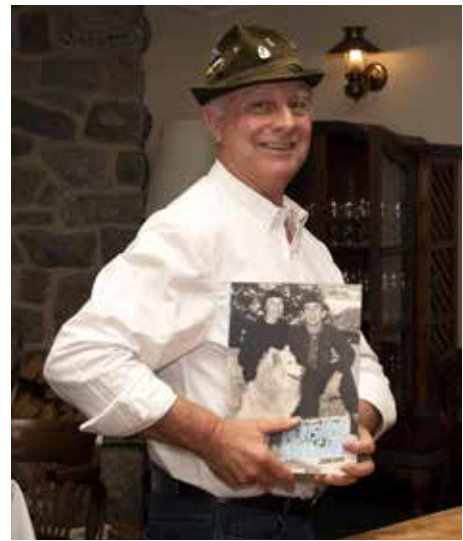
In 1955, Johnny built the Big Tow (the first permanent ski tow in Perisher Valley) and Tow Hut

in North Perisher for the Sverre Kaaten syndicate and, in 1958, he built the Village Tow in the Telemark Basin. Members of the early Perisher Valley lodges relied on Johnny for help with construction and supply of firewood during the summer.

His next venture was the Snowline Caravan Park, first at the Creel and later at the edge of the new Lake Jindabyne, a happy time for the family and the beginning of a successful ski hire business.

Throughout his life, Johnny's pragmatism and ingenuity solved many problems. As his family said, give him a screwdriver and he could do anything.

Many thanks to Simone Beilicz and her team at Marritz for their great contribution to the success of the evening.



Top: Peter Southwell-Keely (L) with Garry Abbottsmith and Diane Hampshire; Centre Left: Diane Hampshire, Garry Abbottsmith and Faye Pendergast; Centre Right: Garry Abbottsmith wearing John Davis' trademark hat, now featured in the PHS display case; Carel (centre in red) and Geoff (far right) Laing and friends. All images courtesy of Snowy Mountains Magazine.

What was skiing in Perisher really like in 1956?

Very occasionally I fall over a story that really transports you back to experience just what it was like to be a skier in Perisher in 1956. This is such a story. This is precisely the environment into which John and Pat Davis arrived when they took on running The Tow Hut and The Big Tow at North Perisher the following year. Bushwalkers, scouts, university students and returned servicemen and women were very much at the forefront in the earliest days.

The following was first published by the Sydney Bushwalking Club in their newsletter *The Sydney Bushwalker*, No.262, September, 1956. Price 9d. <http://sbw.ozultimate.com/wiki/195609>

Hey, Hell And ? (Could it be Duncan?)

by *Monica 2*

I've just been to Kosci, and it was beaut - lots and lots of snow, blue skies, sunshine, fun and trouble.

On the way down we ran into a bit of bother in the shape of fog and hoar frost, which froze the windscreen solid and reduced visibility to the minimum. Every few miles Bob had to get out and chip the ice off his side of the windscreen so he could see for at least a few miles more. Finally he gave up and for the last 50 miles to Cooma he drove with his head (with the "Yak" hat in No. 5 position) stuck out of the window.

From Cooma up to Smiggins the sun shone and the breeze breezed and all was bright and

gay. But trouble wasn't far away and it came in the shape of a hitching girl and a broken-down bus. Bob pulled up with a scream of brakes and jumped out to see what was wrong. The startled occupants from the bus scattered to the four winds - they evidently had never seen a "Duncan" dressed in a Yak suit and with a day's growth on face.

Half an hour later we started off again loaded down to the gunwales with two Chalet types. A few miles further along the car started to make queer clanging noises so we stopped hurriedly. Eeek!! The fan was kaput, the engine was boiling and we were in danger of blowing up. An hour later we got going again and eventually made Smiggins where we met the rest of the mob.

The ride up in the Snowmobile was as eventful as usual, with the mobile going hippity hop over the small bumps and tottering to the top of big ones, then taking a head-first dive and landing with a bump which makes you think that all your birthdays have come at once.

We were dumped off at the road and climbed on to skis and into packs for the long climb to the hut. I started off first as I had no climbing skins and skidded the first hundred yards on the seat of my pants till I came to a flat bit and managed to get to my feet. About half way up the hill I heard a loud skidding sound and as I wasn't moving at the time was concluding that it must be someone else when a voice said, "Hullo love. I'll take your pack," and there was a tall handsome

bearded skier, namely Mr. Schafer. All arrived at the hut for lunch except Bob who had taken the car back to the Hotel to bed it down for the fortnight.

The days after that all run together, punctuated by memories of climbs to Cooma Hut and the Perisher Tow, excursions to Guthega and days when we just played around the valley. All the doings were nicely timed to coincide with meals which were large and delightfully often.

Tuesday of the second week saw us climbing Mt. Duncan with Mr. Duncan as the intrepid leader. We did take an offering to the gods, but I don't think that they could have liked Marcelle's scones for that night we got a blizzard. However, it did not blizzard so hard that we could not go to a party at Warrungang the following night.

The party was to celebrate Bob Strizek's (the snowmobile driver) birthday. He told us after that it was the best birthday that he had ever had and we agreed heartily and only wished that it had been ours.

I was the only non-drinker in the party and drank Coca Cola while the others had a variety of things from Punch to Vodka. Surprisingly enough though, it was I who had the hangover the following day. Whatever we did drink, however, had the desired effect for we skied the mile home in just over 10 minutes.

The following morning this verse appeared in the Trips Book of the hut:-

There was a young skier named
Duncan
Staggered home from
Warrugang drunken,
As he fell on his bed
In low tones he said,
“Never, never no more double-
bunken.”

Saturday morning we were
up early and left the hut by 9
o'clock. At Smiggins we found
that the road was closed at the
Hotel, so we had to ski down.
Ugg! Five miles to the Hotel but
it felt like fifty! Two hours later
we arrived there to find that Bob
had nearly dug the car out. The
engine was behaving itself but
didn't seem to want to go for
very long. Then we discovered
that the exhaust was completely
blocked with ice, and spent the
next two hours trying to free it.

Finally we got to Cooma and
stopped for a meal. The people
in the cafe must have had a bit
of a shock when we walked
in. Bob capering about in his
“skin of a sacred pie-eyed
wombat” and a pair of socks,
and Marcelle and I looking very
elegant in baggy ski pants, damp
wind jackets and our climbing
skins wound around our waists.
But the meal was super. One
thing about going to Kosci, you
appreciate home when you get
back.

Editor's Note:

*Unfortunately, despite our best
efforts, the identity of the author
remains a mystery. However, we
assume that “the hut” was the
original CSIRO lodge, which was
removed from the Mount Perisher
ski slope in 1985.*

History of the Early Development of Perisher - Smiggins

by John Davis

**Have you got your copy?
The How The Who The Fun**

*Just released
NEW for 2018 season*



Published by the Perisher Historical Society

A MUST READ for every Perisher/Smiggins skier and beyond

- Wonderful account of the beginnings of the area
- Frank, funny and fabulous recollections
- The real story by the people who were there

Copies (RRP \$49.95) available from
Slopestyle – Perisher Centre
Skiducci – Skitube Concourse
Snowy Region Tourist Centre – Jindabyne
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