



# *Brindabella Ski Club*



*First there was the snow .....*  
*For the history of the*  
*Brindabella Ski Club*  
*please read on .....*





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### BSC Historical Sub-committee

This brochure on the history of the Brindabella Ski Club was compiled by members of the Club's sub-committee.

Wal Costanzo provided all of the articles with supporting photos selected from the Club archives.

Members wishing to contribute any articles or photos please contact the sub-committee through the Club President or Secretary.

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Designed & produced by Richard Blavins - July 2013  
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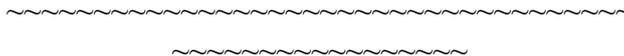
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## A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club

*In the beginning ...*

The Brindabella Ski Club's life began as the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra on 15 June 1951 when a group of skiing enthusiasts, brought together by the late Harry Black (then "General Secretary" of the Canberra YMCA), agreed to form a ski club. It was decided to call the new club "The YMCA Ski Club of Canberra" and the Club's first constitution was adopted on 2 July 1951.

The Club's early ski trips to the Snowy Mountains revolved around a series of old buses of dubious mechanical reliability because in those days very few would-be skiers in Canberra owned cars. This method of traveling to the snow continued for quite a number of years. Often as not, the would-be skiers were obliged to push the buses because of regular breakdowns. Accommodation, when it could be found, was pretty basic with members sleeping on the floor of the bus (and some even under the bus), "dossing down" in an old shepherd's slab hut at Smiggin Holes, in the ramshackle "Black Hut" which boasted a door and windows and a dirt floor and in a variety of other huts of comparable standards.

Between 1951 and 1954 membership of the Club grew steadily. The habits of working together and running a club under great difficulties brought about a strong club spirit.

In the mid 1950s the Club decided that it needed permanent accommodation in the Snowy Mountains for its members. At that stage Guthega Dam was being constructed by Selma Engineering, a Norwegian company, and there was a sizeable village in Guthega to accommodate its staff and workers. The Club had made ski trips to Guthega on several occasions in the past. In 1955 the Snowy Mountains Authority officially offered the Club one of the staff cottages at Guthega which the Club accepted. This cottage was to become "Tiobunga" with fairly basic accommodation. A lounge room was added to the southern end of the lodge in the summer of 1958-59. The Club's first of its many building projects.

With the acquisition of the cottage the Club's membership started to grow. But location at Guthega presented the Club with some problems. There were no tows and the road was often blocked by snow. However these did not deter members. In 1957 the SMA Ski Club (now the Tate Ski Club) took the initiative and together with the assistance of other Guthega ski clubs installed a rope tow on Tate East Ridge. The SMA tow hut burnt down in 1965 during a severe thunderstorm and was not replaced.



*A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club continued ...*

*In the beginning continued ....*

As membership rose to 275 by the middle of 1959 it became increasingly obvious that the Club would need to provide its members with additional accommodation. The question of where to build, however, was not an easy one to resolve. The difficulties of access, the deficiencies of uphill transport and the lack of ski instruction at Guthega were problematic. In the end it was decided to build a second lodge in Guthega because accommodation would be available in Tiobunga during the construction phase. This was to become "Kyilla" which was officially opened by Sir William Hudson, then Commissioner of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority, in July 1960.



*The 1960s to the 1990s ...*

On 3 May 1961 the Club adopted a new constitution and took a decision to incorporate and became the "YMCA Ski Club of Canberra Inc" thus becoming a legal entity in its own right. The rationale behind the need to incorporate related to the Club's inability to negotiate directly with the then Kosciuszko State Park Trust (KSPT) in relation to the Club's Tiobunga and Kyilla leases and on other legal issues. The alternative would have been a very cumbersome and unworkable arrangement in which the YMCA of Canberra Board would have had to act on the Club's behalf.

Because of the "sub-standard" Tiobunga accommodation relative to that of Kyilla and the fact that the KSPT considered Tiobunga contravened its building regulations the club decided to undertake a major renovation of Tiobunga. The building program was undertaken during 1960-1963. A wing was added to the northern end of Kyilla during the summer of 1982 -1983.

In 1960 Walter Spanring, an Austrian ski instructor became a member of the Club and commenced instructing skiers in Guthega. The Club also built a rope tow to assist beginners in learning to ski. Later Walter and a syndicate were to build T-bars on the southern slopes of Mounts Blue Calf and Blue Cow.

By 1967 the Club with a membership of about 500 had learned to live with the minor inconveniences of the area; doubtful access to Guthega and limited towing facilities. However, many Club members were also skiing at other resorts and it was apparent that they wanted to ski more challenging runs served by chairlifts and longer T-bars. The catalyst for the possible move by the Club to expand to another ski resort probably occurred following the destruction of the tow hut on Tate East Ridge in 1965 and it not being replaced. Apart from the inconvenience in getting to the tow on the other side of the Guthega Dam, Tate East Ridge was a magnificent ski slope - probably one of the best in the mountains.



*A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club continued ...*

*The 1960s to the 1990s continued ...*

Despite the fact that Walter Spanring and others built a T-bar on Mt Blue Calf which was closer to the lodges, the slopes were not considered challenging enough for some members. In addition, there was uncertainty and concern about the road into Guthega being cleared during winter.

A decision was taken to build a new lodge in Thredbo because of better vehicle access, parking, good ski tows, chairlifts and après ski facilities. Work on the first stage of the new lodge, which was to become "Carinya", commenced in October 1968 and lock-up stage was reached in May 1969. The second and final stage of Carinya was commenced in the summer of 1996-1997 and completed in June 1997.

The construction of all of the Club's three lodges and extensions were undertaken almost entirely by Club labour. Ours is very much a "Do it yourself" club. Working together has built up a great esprit de corps amongst members and many very close friendships have resulted. Many members also learnt many building skills during the construction of the Club's lodges.





*A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club continued ...*

*The 1990s ...*

Shortly after the construction of the final stage of Carinya was completed, the lodge was destroyed in the Thredbo landslide of July 1997 with the loss of one of our Club members and 17 residents of Bimbadeen lodge. The loss of Carinya weighed heavily on the morale of the Club. There followed lengthy litigation by the Club for compensation from the NSW Government. This finally resulted in the Club receiving compensation for the loss with which the Club was able to fund the construction of a new lodge in Thredbo. The new lodge was completed and opened on Saturday 5 June 2004, in time for the 2004 ski season. Following the completion of the new lodge membership of the Club grew to some 800 to 850 members.

During the middle of 1996 and early 1997 the Club had a major disagreement with the Board of the Young Men's Christian Association of Canberra (YMCA). As a result in March 1997 the Club decided to remove any doubt that it was legally associated with the YMCA. It agreed to a new constitution to comply with the requirements of the ACT Associations Incorporation Act and adopted the name "Brindabella Ski Club". After some lengthy negotiations with the Registrar of Incorporated Associations, the Club was finally incorporated in June 1997.

In August 1997 following the Thredbo landslide, the Committee decided, as a precautionary measure, to engage a structural engineer to check the structural integrity of Kyilla and Tiobunga.

Kyilla was found to be structurally sound. However, in the case of Tiobunga the engineer found that the rear wall of the lodge could become a problem when subjected to snow build-up behind it. The engineer also found problems with the roofing frames of the lodge. He believed that a dangerous situation could arise following heavy snow build-up on the roof of the lodge followed by rain. This would saturate the deep snow and increase the snow load on the roof as well as exerting lateral pressure on the lodge due to the build-up of snow behind it. As an additional precaution, early in 1998 the Committee engaged a geotechnical engineer to inspect the site conditions of Kyilla and Tiobunga. He found that there were no signs of any major instability of the Kyilla or Tiobunga sites.

Under the "duty of disclosure" provisions of the Insurance Contracts Act, the Committee was obliged to advise the Club's insurer of the potential problems with Tiobunga. The insurer advised that in the circumstances all insurance cover on Tiobunga would cease. In addition, the Committee was also obliged to advise NPWS of the situation because the lodge's lease was conditional upon it being covered by insurance. Without insurance cover the Club could not use the lodge to accommodate its members and friends.





*A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club continued ...*

*2000 onwards ...*

In December 1999 a structural engineer and a geotechnical engineer recommended that a solution to the potential problem would be to erect a stand-alone frame and roof over the southern half of the lodge. The coordination and implementation of this solution proved to be a very protracted and complex exercise.

The construction of the temporary roof was unable to proceed in time for the 2000 ski season. In these circumstances, the Club was forced to close Tiobunga for the 2000 winter season. With only one operational lodge, namely Kyilla, following the loss of Carinya, the Club was placed in a most difficult situation as far as accommodation for its members was concerned. As a temporary measure, accommodation in the Kirwin Apartments in Jindabyne was secured for the 2000 winter season. In addition a number of ski clubs in Thredbo generously made accommodation available to our members.

With the loss of Carinya and the closure of Tiobunga the Club lost some 120 members. The temporary Tiobunga roof was constructed during the summer of 2000-2001 and the club was able to use the lodge during the 2001 ski season.

However, National Parks and Wildlife Service's approval for use of Tiobunga for accommodation with the temporary roof was conditional upon Tiobunga being replaced during the summer of 2001-2002 or at the very latest in the summer of 2002-2003. Remarkably (and fortuitously for the Club) this condition was finally met in 2008, only 6 years later than the timeframe set by NPWS when the new Tiobunga was completed and officially opened.

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*Membership ...*

One interesting feature of the Club is that many of its members have come from a very wide range of countries so that the Club has acquired something of a cosmopolitan and international flavour. The Club has and has had members who came from Poland, Finland, Norway, Sweden, Latvia, Lithuania, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Italy, Germany, Austria, Holland, Japan, the USA and Canada to mention but a few. Many of these members were displaced persons in the aftermath of World War II or refugees who had escaped from the post-war communist regimes of Eastern Europe. The contribution that these members have made to the Club has been quite significant both from a cultural and a hands-on point of view because many of them were skilled tradesmen.



*A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club continued ...*

*Competition ...*

The history of the Brindabella Ski Club has not solely been one of traveling to the Snowy Mountains in decrepit buses and building ski lodges, important as these may have been. It also has a creditable record in competitive skiing. In 1952 three young German skier members represented the Club at the Australian National Championships at Mount Buller. One came fourth in the slalom and another tied with the then Australian Olympic representative, as National Champion. The Club has shown its support for competitive skiing by helping to finance part of expenses to National, Inter-dominion, Olympic and Australian training squads. The late 1950's saw an influx of Austrians into the Club. They provided the basis of the Club's alpine strength, and Norwegians strengthened its Nordic teams. The 1957 Balmain Cup team consisted of three Australians, a Czech, an Austrian, an Italian, a Norwegian and a Pole. The Club's 1964 winning team contained people from Poland, Finland, Japan, Norway, Hungary and Australia. The important thing to note is that the Club did not think in terms of nationalities, but as a Club. In addition, one female Club member featured in the Australian Inter-dominion Team in 1961.

Another was selected in an Inter-dominion Team winning the NSW and Australian Junior Championships in 1970. In both 1969 and 1971 she was selected to train with the Australian National Ski Federation squad in Europe. She came fourth in the Commonwealth Games Ladies slalom held in St Moritz in 1971.

In more recent times, in addition to continuing to compete in the Balmain Cup, the Club has participated, with some success, in the both the Thredbo Senior and Junior Inter-club Races.



*Ski touring ...*

Ski touring and bushwalking are also important aspects of the Club's activities since Guthega is an ideal starting point from which ski tourers and bushwalkers can leave to visit a range of places in the Snowy Mountains.





*A Potted History of the Brindabella Ski Club continued ...*

*Today ...*

Today the club is in a good position with three comfortable and operational lodges. But the period 1997 to 2008 was a very difficult one for the Club. That the Club is now in its current position is due in no small way to the dedication and hard work of a key group of members.

Apart from the provision of comfortable and relatively inexpensive accommodation and skiing facilities for its members, another very interesting feature of the Club is the type, variety and diversity of people it has attracted as members. It has brought together people with a wide variety of working backgrounds and occupations ranging from skilled tradesmen, professionals and senior public servants. Were it not for the fact that these people became members of the Club the chances are that they would never have had the opportunity of meeting one another. Membership of the Club has resulted in life-long close friendships and in some cases even marriage.





## Historic Tiobunga

The original Tiobunga Lodge was one of a number of cottages which, together with a series of barrack style buildings, were erected by Selmer Engineering Pty Ltd, a Norwegian company which had won the contract to construct the Guthega Dam and the Guthega Power Station. The cottages were erected around 1951 to house the company's engineering and administrative staff and their families during the construction of the dam. The barrack style buildings were designed to house the company's workers.

The cottages, in modular component form, were brought out from Norway because of the shortage of building materials in Australia following the end of World War II.

Following completion of the dam all but three of the cottages and all the barracks were removed by the Snowy Mountains Hydro-Electric Authority (SMHEA). These three cottages were later destined to become the homes of the Snowy Mountains Authority (SMA) Ski Club (now the Tate Ski Club), the then YMCA Ski Club of Canberra (now the Brindabella Ski Club) and the Sydney University Ski Club. Why these three cottages were left in Guthega whilst all other buildings were removed is unknown.

### *Acquisition of Tiobunga ....*

The then Vice-President of the Club, Doug Anderson, negotiated with the SMA to obtain one of several huts becoming available at Guthega, Mungyang and Island Bend. On 24 May 1955, the SMA officially offered the Club Hut "C" at Guthega, the centre cottage of the three remaining buildings in the area. The three cottages were located on the same terrace on the western slope of Mount Blue Calf. The lease charge was \$368 per annum. Guthega was an area the Club had visited for the first time in August 1952.



Photo of the original Tiobunga taken very shortly after the Ski Club took possession of it circa 1955. The three cottages left in Guthega were of a similar design and their colour was that of weathered Baltic pine.



## Recollections of a Reluctant Participant

*For many years now I have been reluctantly working up the enthusiasm to commit to paper an episode in my early skiing days in the Club. This was quite an historic, extraordinary and unpleasant experience for those of us who had the great misfortune to have participated in it. I refer to the big snow and the snow-in which occurred on the weekend of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of July 1964 and subsequently in Guthega.*



To set the scene - it was a beginners' weekend<sup>1</sup> and the Balmain Cup was being run in Guthega. At that stage, no matter what weekend on which the Balmain Cup was held, the competition was invariably accompanied by bad weather. On Friday night the 10th of July we were able to drive our cars almost right up to the lodges in Guthega. We parked them on the road almost adjacent to the present Guthega overnight car park. There was quite a large group of first time skiers in Kyilla and Tiobunga. That night some 7cm of snow fell.

Saturday the 11th of July dawned with an overcast sky and miserable weather. This worsened as the day wore on. Beginners' lessons were held on Saturday morning but in quite unpleasant conditions. The snow cover in Guthega was relatively poor and the result was that a group of keen, advanced skier Club members – Bob MacGregor, Roger Smith, Clyde Creed, Pam Murphy and others – decided to go to Perisher where the snow was much better. By very late afternoon the weather had turned really bad.

On returning to Guthega, the late Bob MacGregor, in whose car the group had gone to Perisher, drove right up to where the Guthega Hotel is now located to turn his car around to park it on the road adjacent to the present overnight Guthega car park. When we got back to Tiobunga that evening I asked Bob if he had had any problems because of possible snow build up on the road from Perisher Creek. Bob indicated that the road to Guthega was fine. That night the Club sages gathered in front of the big Tiobunga picture window, gazed into the night and pondered the situation. They generally concluded that it would be unnecessary to move our cars to Perisher Creek.

However, on Saturday night it snowed quite heavily. When we woke on Sunday morning there was some 25-30cm of snow around the lodges and on the road. However, as there had been virtually no wind during the night, the snow fell almost vertically with the result that no snowdrifts had formed.

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<sup>1</sup> In the Club's early days, we used to arrange instruction classes for members who had never skied before.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

During Sunday morning discussion took place as to whether we should try to move our cars down to Perisher Creek. However, the decision had already been made for us in that, during Sunday it continued to snow with the result that by midday snow levels had risen to between 60-70cm. It therefore became quite apparent that no one was going to be able to move his or her car anywhere – let alone to Perisher Creek! That is, apart from one cagey member of the Blue Cow Ski Club, and former Club member, Doug Anderson who drove his VW down to Perisher Creek and to safety. The rest of our cars were well and truly stranded – over 30 of them!!

It continued to snow heavily all day Monday. This was accompanied by strong winds which resulted in the formation of large snowdrifts. Robbie Kilpinen, a very accomplished cross country skier, skied down to Perisher Creek to inspect the road. On his return, he reported that there were very large drifts along the road especially on the steep hill above Perisher Creek. He estimated that some of the drifts were of the order of 2.5-3m deep.

Richard Down, the late George Dudzinski and his son Mark skied across to Perisher to ring the Island Bend Village to find out if the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electricity Authority (SMHEA) was planning to clear the road to Guthega, to ascertain what the weather forecasts were and whether the road to the Mungah Power Station was trafficable by buses. They were told that phones were out of order in the Perisher/Smiggin Holes area and that roads were closed to all but official vehicles from Wilson's Valley onwards.

On Tuesday the 14th of July, a group of 13 experienced Club skiers who had work commitments, etc in Canberra in the coming week, decided to leave Guthega. Some skied to Smiggin Holes and others to Perisher where they were able to get transport back to Canberra. However, some 28 Club members remained stranded in Guthega.

Also on Tuesday, Doug Sturkey and I decided that as conditions were worsening it would be wise to ski down to the Mungah Power Station to contact<sup>2</sup> the then President of the Club, Derrick Carrington, to advise him of our predicament. Family members, etc of those of marooned in Guthega could then be advised that our group was not in any danger.<sup>3</sup> However, our visit to Mungah was not without its problems.

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<sup>2</sup> At that time there was only one telephone in Guthega in the then Snowy Mountains Ski Club, now the Tate Ski Club, but this was unavailable for use.

<sup>3</sup> At the same time a group of ANU students were staying in the Canberra Alpine Club's lodge at Mt Franklin and were also cut off. Parents of some of the students, senior staff at the ANU and Public Service, became so concerned for their safety that they contacted the ACT Police. We were receiving regular radio reports on their situation. The result was a massive "rescue" effort with graders and bulldozers being used to clear the road to Mt Franklin. But about us not a word! It took a group of cross country skiers from the Club and the Canberra Alpine Club to "rescue" the students who most were reluctant to leave – they were having too good a time! Observations were made by Police Officers that the cross country skiers were going into dangerous territory. The result of this episode was the later formation of the ACT Police Ski Club (they own the Jagungal lodge) at Guthega to give Police Officers experience in skiing and dealing with snow conditions.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

The staff at the Power Station was most reluctant to allow us to use their phone. However, after lengthy negotiations they finally allowed us to ring Derrick. Several more trips to the Power Station were made during the course of our enforced stay in Guthega.

During our discussion with Derrick, we asked him to make enquiries about chartering a bus to collect the stranded group when things improved. The snow at the Power Station was some 75cm deep with the road between Mungah and the Island Bend Village open only to 4-wheel drive vehicles. We were advised by the Power Station staff that telephone lines and power lines were down all over the Smiggin Holes and Perisher area, confirming the advice provided earlier to Richard, George and Mark. Our return trip to Guthega took an arduous 2¾ hours in very difficult and unpleasant conditions – all uphill.

Conditions in the Snowy Mountains had deteriorated to such an extent that the Kosciuszko State Parks Trust<sup>4</sup> (KSPT) and the NSW Police were issuing warnings to skiers to take care when skiing under or near high tension electricity cables. Huge snowdrifts had built up under the cables and snow and ice had formed on the cables causing them to sag quite markedly - thus making them quite dangerous.

The bad weather and high winds continued during Wednesday with very large snowdrifts forming on the road, around the lodges and on the roof of Tiobunga. The drifts on the western entrance to Tiobunga were so large that we had to dig our way out of Tiobunga on several occasions. Later in the season the only way into Tiobunga was via a tunnel some 2-3m in length.



An example of snowed-in cars in Guthega  
Winter 1960 Not 1964



Removing snow from Tiobunga roof  
Circa mid August 1964

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<sup>4</sup> The Kosciuszko State Parks Trust was the forerunner of the National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS). The NPWS came into existence in 1967.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

During this period of involuntary confinement in Guthega we lived on what was left over from the weekend's provisions and later, on tinned food from the Club's pantry – tinned camp pie was cooked in a variety of ways to make it more palatable - but to this day many of us who were involuntarily confined at Guthega still hate the stuff! This fare was supplemented by bread brought in by Robbie Kilpinnen on ski trips to Perisher.

Finally, it was decided that on Thursday 16th of July the group should try to ski to Smiggin Holes resort when it was forecast that the weather would improve somewhat. By this stage every parked car had been completely covered by snowdrifts. This included George Dudzinski's car (a Citroen Goddess) which he had picked up in Sydney on the Friday just before traveling to Guthega - it only had about 500 miles on its odometer. At one stage during his period of "involuntary incarceration" in Guthega, George was told by a Club member that the member had found George's car and pointed to the tip of his stock which carried some flecks of paint which appeared to match the colour of George's car. George was not at all impressed and responded "You (expletives deleted). I know precisely where my (expletives deleted) car is because I have been clearing snow from it for the last several of days"!!! There were several other members whose relatively new cars were now also buried under snow. One member had some very serious problems. This was Ken Ikebe, a staff member in the Japanese Embassy. He had driven up to Guthega in an Embassy vehicle and now it was stuck under a mountain of snow in Guthega. We are unaware of what this incident may have done to Ken's career prospects in the Japanese diplomatic service!!



Marguerite Le Mesurier entering Tiobunga via the "Tunnel" - Winter 1964

Early on the Thursday morning of the week, all of us remaining in the Club's lodges began the "Long March" (which unlike the Chinese Communists in the 1930s we did or tried to do - in the case of the beginners - on skis) from Guthega to Smiggin Holes. By the time we reached Perisher Creek the group was strung out over hundreds of meters. It was anticipated that when we reached Smiggin Holes we would be able to obtain over-snow transport to Sponar's Inn - the old Kosciuszko Hotel (located at the intersection of the Perisher/Guthega roads). Earlier telephone arrangements had been made with the Committee in Canberra for a charter bus to pick up our group at the crossroads.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

Fortunately, in the ski out of Guthega we had the guidance and assistance of George Dudzinski and Robbie Kilpinnen, both very experienced skiers, who assisted and accompanied us. Despite the marginally improved weather conditions, it was nevertheless a very long, wet, unpleasant and difficult hike to Smiggin Holes. When we got to Smiggin Holes around 1.00pm, we were told that all over snow transport was booked out for the whole of the following week. At this stage, several members of the party had changed into dry and warm clothing only to be told that we would have to ski on to the Sponar's Inn to catch our transport back to Canberra. This meant they had to change back into their damp cold ski gear. They were not very happy vegemites!



Joan Davies leading the strung out "Long March".  
Thursday 16th of July

Thus the trek from Smiggin Holes to the Sponar's Inn began. This was made particularly difficult for many of the beginners who had great trouble in keeping up with the main body of the party. For them it was very much a case of 3 steps forward and 2 steps back. At one stage, George Dudzinski and I had to take over the rucksacks of a couple of beginners because they were having great difficulties in making any progress at all. Not a pleasant prospect having to carry your own rucksack as well as someone else's! Fortunately, the party ran into Neville Gare, then Superintendent of the KSPT, who was driving up to Perisher in a four wheel drive vehicle to inspect conditions there. He relieved several of the beginners of their rucksacks (including my and George's two) thus enabling us to make better headway.

The exhausted group finally made it to the Perisher/Guthega cross roads around 6.00pm. It was dark and beginning to blizzard strongly and to snow quite heavily. There we came across several buses, but unfortunately none of them were ours. These buses were suddenly swamped by large numbers of warm, dry and chic looking "snow bunnies" in their lovely pink, etc après ski gear accompanied by several suitcases each. They were disembarking from over snow vehicles from Perisher and Smiggin Holes.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

Everyone in our group was very wet, cold and miserable. The older hands in the group tried to keep members moving in an endeavor to keep them warm. Finally our bus arrived - but it did not immediately stop to pick us up. It had to travel all the way down to Island Bend to enable it to turn around because the area at the crossroads was in a congested state of chaos. Thus we finally got back to Canberra.

After we reached Smiggin Holes, George Dudzinski and Robbie Kilpinnen returned to Guthega and remained there for a further several days where George and Robbie continued digging snow off their cars. From time to time, George marked the location of his car with branches of snow gums until he finally gave up defeated. He surrendered to the elements and decided to return to Canberra. Both he and Robbie concluded that their efforts were an exercise in futility. In the Club's log book George succinctly recorded his views on the situation as follows "They (their cars) are embedded in about 12ft (over 3½m) of the bloody white stuff which by now is getting on our nerves ... Robbie is taking up water skiing and selling all his ski gear this coming spring ... We are very sick of camp pie and tomorrow ... we are going to have a 3 course dinner at Perisher View with a bottle of the best Yalumba Riesling and all the trimmings". These comments coming from a dedicated 'snowophile' such as George speaks volumes!!!

George finally made it back to Canberra on Wednesday the 22nd of July and as he put it in the Club's log book "...beaten by the beastly white substance which is still coming down for the 12th day. 32 cars snowed in here are covered by at least 5-6ft (about 1.5-1.8m) above their roofs...". Robbie skied off to Grey Mare Hut!!! As Robbie recorded in the Club's log book on the 22nd of July "...Sunny, calm, cloudless and warm morning. Sometimes it pays to wait a fortnight for good skiing..."!!!

However, for those of us whose cars were still snow bound in Guthega, this was only the beginning of our nightmares. It had already snowed solidly for 2 weeks – and later was to snow heavily for a further several weeks.

We were advised in late July that the SMEHA would be sending heavy equipment up to Guthega to clear the road on the weekend of the 1st and 2nd of August. We were requested to be on hand to dig out and move our vehicles. Those of us with vehicles stuck in the snow had to ski into Guthega from Perisher Creek. On the way in to Guthega it became clear that a very very heavy tracked vehicle had passed over the snow because it had left tracks on the snow which had set as hard as concrete. At the time we were unaware that a D9 dozer had been sent up to Guthega earlier in the week to commence clearing the road but had quickly retired because when maneuvering in the area where our cars were parked the driver had backed over two of the snowbound vehicles – the dozer had sunk somewhat when it did so. The driver considered it too dangerous to continue further work because he didn't know where our vehicles were parked. On the way up to Guthega, some of us had thoughts that as sure as anything it would be one of our cars that had met a crushing end!!



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

Over the weekend of the 1st and 2nd of August and the following Monday the SMHEA workers finally cleared the road from Perisher Creek to Guthega. We had been requested to dig our cars out so that the workers knew precisely where they were located in order to avoid damaging any of them.



Bulldozer and front end loader at work.



Bulldozer at work.

The excruciating work on excavating our vehicles progressed through Saturday, Sunday and Monday. Nigel Johnston and I teamed up and worked together because Nigel remembered that his car was parked either immediately in front or behind mine. We found mine first and then his. We then commenced the real work of digging. Mountains of snow were shifted by all the diggers over the three days. Due to the depth of the snow we were forced to excavate our vehicles in stages via a series of snow benches. We then shoveled snow from one bench onto another until we finally reached our cars.

Frustration experienced by many diggers.





*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*



Almost there! – Sunday morning - 2 August 1964  
(Note the indentations in the roof of the car)



Finally there! – Sunday afternoon - 2 August 1964.

Invariably when the diggers reached the road levels they found that the “running boards” of their cars were level with the road and that the car springs were not in their normal positions. The result was that when the weight of snow was removed from the car roofs they returned to their normal positions with a perceptible “boing”! The diggers soon learnt, to their “great joy,” that the roofs of their cars were lower than normal by several centimeters – a panel beater’s delight.

Throughout the weekend we toiled with much gnashing of teeth accompanied by a continuous flow of unprintable expletives. Some of us were able to find our vehicles relatively easily, others however were confronted with a more difficult task. Roger Smith was one of these unfortunates in that he spent the best part of Saturday and Sunday prodding deep snowdrifts with a piece of skirting board some 3½m long. During his proddings he found many cars belonging to other people – but not his own. He finally located his car late on Sunday afternoon and then began the long and arduous task of digging it out.

To add insult to injury, on the Sunday the weather burst like a tourist poster, cloudless skies and magnificent snow conditions. We poor car searchers and diggers laboured while members with no marooned cars enjoyed their skiing in fantastic snow conditions.

Most of us who retrieved our cars were fortunate because the damage to them was relatively small and easy to repair. However, there were two unfortunates whose cars had been in the path of the D9 sent up earlier which had backed over them when turning around.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

One was a VW owned by Evan and Barbara Burge on which they had only just made their final payment in the previous week. The other was a utility owned by one of the members of the Guthega Ski Club (I think). The result was that the roofs of these two vehicles were crushed level with the top of their doors. As Evan Burge put in an item in Christie "...And when he found it (i.e. his VW), behold, it was sore compressed..." To make matters worse the weight of the D9 had compacted the snow around the two vehicles to such an extent that it was as hard as concrete. Evan and the owner of the other vehicle almost had to use crow bars to make any headway in digging their vehicles out of the snow.



A sore compressed VW Sunday morning  
- 2 August 1964



A sore compressed utility Sunday morning  
- 2 August 1964.

Evan, who lectured in Classics at the ANU, was forced to leave Guthega on Sunday night as he had lecturing commitments at the ANU on the Monday. He therefore, asked other Club members if they could help in getting his car down to the Mungah Power Station. Several of us agreed to do so. When his vehicle was finally cleared of snow the question arose as to how it was to be moved to Mungah because no one, other than a very small midget, could get into the car because the roof was level with the top of its doors and the dash board. We had to remove the driver's seat to gain access to the inside of the vehicle and then only by sitting on the floor. BUT as soon as the key was inserted in the ignition the car started immediately – the virtues of a VW!!

However because of the condition of the vehicle, it was impossible to drive it. On the Monday around lunch time, I approached the foreman of the SMHEA workers and asked if they would put a steel hawser under the roof of the car and then use a front end loader to lift the hawser to raise the roof. Only then would it be possible to sit in the car and drive it out of Guthega. The foreman without thinking, responded as follows "... AAggh, Narh mate, we might do some damage to the car ...". Do further damage to a car that was almost a write off? Needless to say I was not impressed. The only solution then seemed to be to use a sledge hammer to belt the roof up so that the car would become drivable.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

After lunch, when I returned to the parked cars carrying a 16 pound sledge hammer through the deep snow from Kyilla, I found that the workers had done precisely what I had asked them to do. I ended up carrying that heavy sledge hammer in the back of my car until the following summer.

The area around the snow bound cars was finally cleared sometime around mid-afternoon on Monday, with nasty weather closing in. We were then able to move our cars around the road area in preparation for a return to Canberra. Nigel Johnston and I drove our roof battered vehicles to Mungah where we parked them. This involved driving through a very deep trench of cleared snow along the road. This trench was some 4-5m deep! But then we had to return to Guthega because we had undertaken to get Evan's car out of Guthega and down to Mungah. This meant skiing back into Guthega. However, on this occasion we got lucky. We were picked up a little way up the steep Perisher Creek hill by an SMEHA worker who was traveling to Guthega in a Land Rover.

The drive back to Mungah in Evan's car was to be a quite challenging experience. The windscreen of his car was smashed, as was the rear window, none of the doors would close and the driver's seat had not been re-anchored to the floor of the car. But the VW purred like a kitten. To make matters worse it started to blizzard – quite strongly. We finally took off. Driving was most difficult with no windscreen so that snow streamed into the car clogging up my glasses, our skis poked out of the rear window, the back seat of the car was full of snow and there was the added inconvenience of having to drive down the road trying to hold the car doors shut with one of our respective hands. What made things even more difficult for me was trying change gears whilst at the same time trying to drive and keeping the driver's door closed. We finally made it.

The drive back to Canberra was quite exhilarating even though we were all exhausted. We were going home and we had our cars back.

But this was far from the end of the story. We had missed a week's work, we were all very tired from digging snow and then we had to get our cars to panel beaters to have them assessed for repair. On arriving at the panel beater whose workshop I had chosen, the panel beater took one look at the battered roof of my car and burst out into uproarious laughter and said something like "...Not another one?...!!!" I think that during that winter, panel beaters in Canberra and elsewhere made a small fortune.

Although the snow was magnificent skiable stuff many of us were prudent in spending too much time in the snow that winter. Those of who did made sure that we parked our cars in the safety of Perisher Creek.

The magnitude of the task of digging our vehicles out of the snow can be gauged from the photos shown above.



*Recollections of a Reluctant Participant continued ....*

To give members some indication of the magnitude of the snowfall in mid July and early August of the 1964 winter, Doug Sturkey recorded the following comments in the Club's log book "...Harry Black, Robin Miller, et al inspected the damage (resulting from snow horizontal pressure being exerted on the rear of Tiobunga) and formulated innumerable theories about the lodge's movement. Largely on their advice it was decided to dig a trench between the lodge and the hill..."

In addition, the following was recorded by Geoff Lucas in Tiobunga's log book on Monday the 10th and Wednesday the 12th of August "... *In addition, it was noticed that the pressure and weight of snow on the roof of Kyilla had caused the internal wall of the 'President's Locker' (the now Room 4A upstairs in the old wing of Kyilla) to bent (sic) badly between the A frames...*" and "... *Due to the heavy snowfalls over the last few weeks, it was necessary to relieve the weight of snow off the roof of the hut (i.e. Tiobunga) which was causing severe damage to the main structure of the building...*"

No doubt, there are many other stories which could be told about "The Big Snow" and "The Big Dig" of mid-July and early-August 1964. However, I am not familiar with the experiences of other Club members or for that matter other Guthega residents at the time. I can only recount details of those incidents with which I was personally involved in or aware of.

Perhaps other members of the Club who were involved at the time can give an account of their experiences. It would be interesting to hear of them.

Wal Costanzo





## Climbing Skins used by David Davies

These cross-country climbing seal skins were donated to the Thredbo Museum by Joan Costanzo, David Davies's daughter. She was given them by her father when she began skiing with the Brindabella Ski Club (then "The YMCA Ski Club of Canberra") in Guthega in the early 1960s.



For a variety of reasons she never got around to using them preferring to stick to downhill skiing using ski tows for uphill transport – a much more preferable way of skiing rather than having to laboriously and fatiguingly climb the hills and mountains around Guthega!

David Davies graduated at Liverpool University in the United Kingdom with Honours in Civil Engineering in the late 1920s. This was around the beginning of the Great Depression. He was unable to obtain work in the United Kingdom and decided to join the British Colonial Service as a Civil Engineer being posted to Sarawak, other locations in Borneo and the then Malaya.

After a period of several years in the field, officers in the Colonial Service were given "Home Leave" for 2 to 3 months. On one occasion during the 1930s when he was in the UK on home leave he and several of his friends went on a skiing holiday in Kitzbuhel in Austria (a far cry from the heat and humidity of the tropics). He bought the skins during this skiing holiday (*see overleaf*)



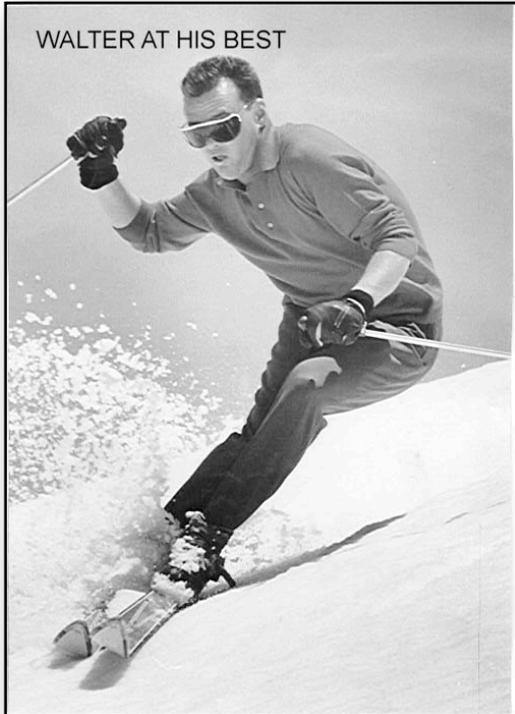
Climbing skins used by  
David Davies  
c1930s





# Brindabella Ski Club

## Walter Spanring in Guthega & his Legacy



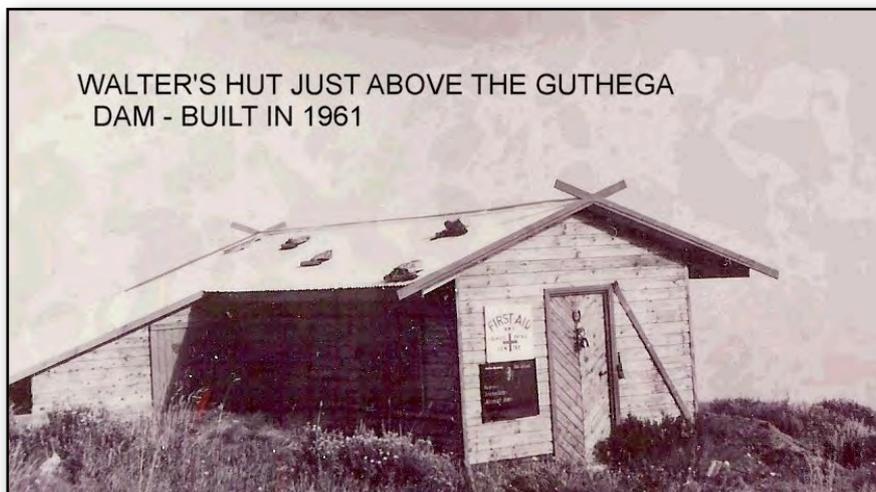
WALTER AT HIS BEST

One of the major problems associated with skiing in Guthega in the early days of the village was the lack of professional ski instruction. In 1959 Henri Devoussaux, a ski instructor from Perisher, came across to Guthega on several weekends.

However, this arrangement proved not to be very satisfactory and it became very clear that a permanent ski instructor in the village was needed.

In 1960 Val Paral, a member of the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra (now the Brindabella Ski Club), met Walter Spanring, a ski instructor and tradesman from Austria, who had just arrived in Australia. At the time Walter was living in a workmen's hostel located in the general vicinity of what is now the site of the new Parliament House in Canberra. The hostel accommodated tradesmen involved in the building industry during the initial period of the major development of Canberra in the 1960s.

Walter joined the YMCA Ski Club and in 1960 stayed in Kyilla, one of the club's lodges and began instructing skiers in Guthega. The proficiency of Guthega skiers improved quite dramatically – particularly among the younger ones and in the following year he built his own hut just above the Guthega Dam.



WALTER'S HUT JUST ABOVE THE GUTHEGA DAM - BUILT IN 1961



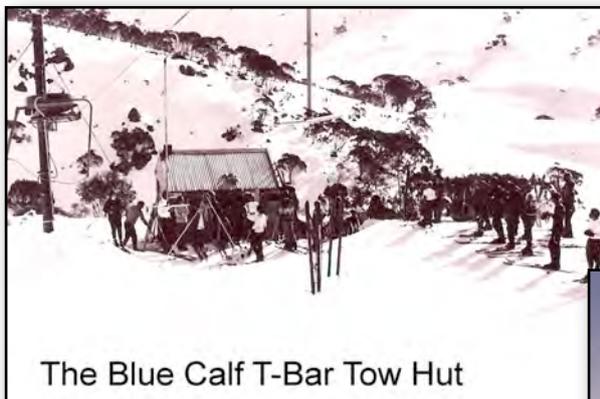
*Walter Spanring in Guthega & his Legacy continued ...*

Walter's continued presence in Guthega provided more assurance of steady instruction than could otherwise have been possible. His attachment to Guthega and his vision for its future, in which he invested a considerable amount of his time, effort and his own money, must be acknowledged as having given a great boost to Guthega as a ski village and thus to the ski clubs in the area.

Uphill transport in Guthega was another significant problem at the time. The initial initiative in this area was taken by the Snowy Mountains Authority Ski (SMA) Club (now the Tate Ski Club). It built a rope tow located on the north eastern slope of Tate East Ridge across the valley from the Guthega village at the point where Guthega Creek joins Guthega Dam. It provided good uphill transport to excellent ski slopes. Its main disadvantage was that it was located on the other side of the Guthega Dam - a considerable distance from the lodges. The problem with this was that its location involved a very long tiring uphill walk back to the lodges - especially after a hard day's skiing. The tow was quite unsuitable and difficult for beginners. A beginners' tow was built by the YMCA Ski Club in 1960-61. It was erected on the western slope of Mt Blue Calf just below the main road leading to the top of the hill where the Guthega Hotel (now the Guthega Alpine Inn) was located. Walter took up the operation of the SMA's rope tow and the YMCA Ski Club's beginners' tow.

In 1966 Walter Spanring and his wife Hannelore (Eberstaller), key developers of Guthega's ski areas up to that time, built the Guthega Hotel.

The SMA tow hut was struck by lightning and burnt down in 1965 and was not replaced. A syndicate headed by Walter decided to erect a T-bar on the southern slopes of Mount Blue Calf just above Farm Creek. This gave Guthega skiers a good uphill transport facility that they had not had before and one which was much closer to club lodges and which became well used.



The Blue Calf T-Bar Tow Hut



Blue Calf T-Bar 1984



### *Walter Spanring in Guthega & his Legacy continued ...*

Despite the fact that the operation of Walter's Mount Blue Calf T-Bar was a success, it provided only a relatively limited unchallenging area on which to ski. Thus uphill transport still remained a problem.

Aware that there was a still need for additional and better uphill transport, Walter sought to obtain the rights for a new ski lift from the Blue Cow Pastures area to the summit of Mt Blue Cow. He also sought approval for a series of other developments and improvements.



NPWS approved the plans, but then a lack of funding arose. A number of the existing Guthega ski clubs provided loans, with Walter's Guthega Developments Pty Ltd finding the balance. Mt Buller was visited with a view to purchasing a T-bar available there. It was purchased and became the Mt Blue Cow T-bar. This opened whole new areas to Guthega skiers with more challenging slopes.

Guthega Developments also found funds to build a new Amenities Building at the base of the Mt Blue Calf T-bar.

In 1980 because of a shortage of capital on the part of Guthega Developments three Sydney-based investors were brought in. The new investment capital facilitated the introduction and improvement of a series of new facilities at Guthega over the period 1981-1983. Walter remained at the resort to see the developments and improvements proceed to their next stage.

Among the improvements made were – improvements to car parking, the construction of a Ski Centre (now the Nordic Centre), the construction of a double chairlift to the north of the Ski Centre up to the Blue Cow Pastures area, the replacement of the original Mt Blue Cow T-bar with a new high-speed T-bar. In addition there were a considerable number of other developments and improvements.

Guthega's new ski facilities were launched in 1983 with a series of international marketing and promotional campaigns that included a number of skiing competitions, etc designed to attract more skiers to Guthega.

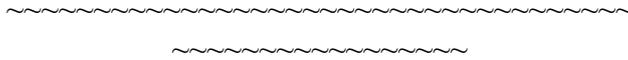
It was only Walter Spanring's hard work and dogged determination that enabled him to achieve the results that he did.



*Walter Spanring in Guthega & his Legacy continued ...*

In 1991, Guthega was purchased by the Alpine Australia Group Pty Limited, the then operator of the Blue Cow Resort. This led to the operation of two resorts becoming integrated in 1992, thus providing relatively easy day access into Guthega via the Ski Tube Alpine Railway and the Blue Cow and Link Management Unit ski slopes. Guthega is now part of the Perisher Blue Ski resort.

It can truly be said that Walter Spanring, with his dedication, perseverance and hard work in Guthega, was one of the pioneers who put Guthega on the map as a special ski resort.





**Club Pioneer**  
**Audun (“*The Mad Viking*”) Fristad**  
20 May 1922 – 20 March 2004



“The Mad Viking”, as Audun liked to call himself, was a greatly respected member of the Brindabella Ski Club (formerly the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra).

Audun was born in Norway. His father was a builder from who Audun learnt his remarkable carpentry skills.

When the Germans invaded Norway in 1941, he joined the underground having quite a number of narrow escapes from the German authorities.

Together with a group of young Norwegians he escaped via a treacherous sea voyage to Scotland, where he joined the “Norwegian Brigade”, as part of the 52<sup>nd</sup> Scottish Division during World War II.

Following a long correspondence with a young Australian woman from Melbourne, Mabel Melrose, he and Mabel were married in Norway. The family moved to Melbourne in 1952 where Audun worked in a factory repairing broken boxes. Around 1954 Audun obtained work with Selmer Engineering, the Norwegian company which had won the contract to build the Guthega Dam.



*Club Pioneer - Audun ("The Mad Viking") Fristad continued ...*

Audun joined the then YMCA Ski Club of Canberra becoming a very dedicated member of the club. He was very heavily involved in a number of extensions of the club's Tiobunga Lodge, taking a leading role in the construction of the club's Kyilla lodge in Guthega and in the construction of the first stage of the club's Carinya lodge in Thredbo. Audun was a prodigious worker who could work from dawn and well into the night if a job had to be finished quickly. Audun, together with a few other members of the club erected one of the A frames during the construction of Kyilla (a very dangerous exercise). The work was commenced one weekend with a small group of members stayed on for the following week to get the construction work well under way. When other members returned the following weekend to continue work on the lodge, all the A frames and bracing timbers were in place thanks largely to Audun's skills and untiring efforts. Audun directed work on the building of Kyilla lodge for many weekends often at the expense of his own business!

According to some club members, Audun's skills as a carpenter were quite uncanny. He would look at a space to be filled with timber, cock an eye at it and then cut a piece of wood that fitted the space exactly without recourse to a tape measure

Audun was a dedicated cross country skier and racer representing the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra in numerous competitions. He also loved ski jumping. He was generous with his time in training other members of the Ski Club's Nordic Balmain Cup teams and was known to compete in downhill events when the numbers needed bolstering.

With his employment with Selmer in the construction of the Dam and his membership of the YMCA Ski Club, Audun had a very very long association with Guthega.

After his long association with skiing and the club, Audun later became heavily involved with veteran's athletic circles in Canberra. As a member of the ACT Veterans Athletics Club, he won masses of medals in marathon running in particular and in orienteering. Because of his athletic prowess, Audun was chosen to be a member of the ACT Olympic Torch relay team for the 1956 Melbourne Olympics. He did his stint near Hall in the ACT.

Due to contributions made over many years, Audun was a veritable pioneer who helped to put the club in the solid position that it is today.





**Club Pioneer**  
**Eugene (Gene) Forrest Herbert**  
23 June 1932 – 6 September 2009



Gene was born in Western Australia. He gained a BA (Hons) at the University of WA in 1954. Between 1955 and 1961 he worked as a Research Officer in the then Australian Bureau of Census & Statistics. In 1962 he joined CSR Ltd rising to various levels in the company until he became a Deputy Managing Director.

Gene joined the then YMCA Ski Club of Canberra (later to become the Brindabella Ski Club) in 1956. He became Secretary in 1957, at which time there were just over 200 members in the Club. He was President in 1958 and 1959, and Publicity Officer and Editor of Christie (the Club's magazine) in 1960, 1961 and 1962. In 1959, Gene presided over and actively participated in the extension of the living room of the Club's Tiobunga lodge in Guthega. The success of this project, however, generated enthusiasm for a second lodge to cater for the Club's expanding membership. It was for his role in the construction of this lodge - Kyilla - that Gene will be particularly remembered.

At the time, in 1959, the Club did not have the funds to build Kyilla. It was thought some \$7000 could be raised, but the estimated cost was in fact between \$10,000 and \$12,000. The Committee however, with Gene at the helm, determined to push ahead on the assumption that the Club would respond to the challenge once the building was started. This approach was subsequently referred to as an early application of the "Sydney Opera House Principle".

The foundations for Kyilla were laid on 1 February 1960, and the lodge was opened on 17 July of that year by Sir William Hudson, the then Commissioner of the Snowy Mountains Hydro-electric Authority. Somehow the funds were found!!



*Club Pioneer - Eugene (Gene) Forrest Herbert continued ...*

For his contribution to the Kyilla project, as well as for his years of Committee service, Gene was awarded Life Membership of the Club in 1963. Club records at the time stated that “... *His advice, ideas, drive and organisational ability played a key role in the expansion of the Club. As the inspirer of the Kyilla project, he spent practically every weekend in the summer of 1960 in the mountains, and most of the week doing the organisational work associated with construction. No other person has done so much to make the Club what it is today... ”.*

Gene's dedication and contribution to the early development of the Ski Club is in no small way responsible for the strong position in which the Club finds itself today. Kyilla was his pride and joy.

It could be said that the success of the early building projects provided the Club's committee and members with the confidence to proceed with larger projects, in the expectation, once again, of a favourable outcome.

Gene's involvement with the Brindabella Ski Club was a significant part of his life not only while he lived in Canberra, but also in the years after he moved to Sydney, when Gene and his family continued to ski at Guthega.

He was one of the Club's respected pioneers particularly in so far as the development of Guthega as a ski resort is concerned.





## Club Pioneer George Dudzinski

4 February 1923 – 12 August 1983



George Dudzinski was a very prominent figure in the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra (now the Brindabella Ski Club) over many years. He worked quietly and effectively in such a way that many members did not fully realise the extent of his contribution to club skiing and skiing generally and in Guthega in particular.

Records in the Club's magazine, 'Christie', show that up until August 1983 it is hard to find a copy that does not have a Dudzinski name somewhere in its pages. George, Anne, Mark, Georgina and Margaret featured prominently in the columns of downhill ski racing results, cross country races and tours and ski administration. Occasionally a few well-chosen and penetrating words from George also reminded members that they belonged to a 'ski' club and brought the club back to its real objective in the administration of the club.

George learnt his skiing in Australia after migrating from London where he lived and studied following his service with the Polish Free Forces in World War II. He joined the YMCA Ski Club in 1956 where he became heavily involved in ski development skiing administration.

George served on the club's committee on 8 occasions, was club champion on 5 occasions (being runner-up on many other occasions), he represented the Club in the Balmain Cup over 15 times (and on 2 occasions when the club won the cup), he was the first ACT Alpine Champion in 1958 and represented the Club many times subsequently in Alpine and Nordic events.

He was the ACT editor of the Australian Ski Year Book for many years and was a prime mover in organising ski touring in the club in the 1960s and 1970s. He was directly responsible for the restoration of Grey Mare Hut and Tin Hut. He was also a contributor of many articles in the Club's 'Christie' magazine and to National Ski Journals and the Ski Year Book.



*Club Pioneer - George Dudzinski continued ...*

George represented the Club on the ACT Ski Council (later the ACT Ski Association) continuously between 1956 and 1983. He was Secretary of this body for 4 years and President for over 10 years as well as ACT representative on the Australian Ski Federation for many years.

George was the Club's conscience and did not let any club committee forget that the club was a ski club despite the attempts of some to see 'building' or 'administration' as ends in themselves rather than only a means to an end. On one occasion when, at an Annual General Meeting, the Club was considering changing the then Vice President (Skiing) position to Vice President (Lodge Management), George convinced members that this should happen only if a further position of 'Competitions Officer' was created. He stated that "We need skiers on the committee, as well as administrators".

George was made a Life Member of the Club in 1969 for his contribution to skiing activities and administration. At the time he was one of only seven to receive this honour.

To appreciate George's contribution it is necessary to look into the past history of the club and perhaps go beyond the memories of many of the then current members. George always aimed to improve the future of skiing as a sport and a recreation. With this thought in mind the Committee arranged with the Southern Districts Ski Federation for the Club to sponsor a perpetual trophy to be awarded as part of the Balmain Cup competition. The award, known as the "George Dudzinski Trophy" was inaugurated as part of the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Balmain Cup competition. It is awarded to the club which has the best combined performance by an individual in the competition (ie. a recognition of the all-round skiing ability by an individual in the competition).

George was one of the club's respected pioneers particularly in so far as skiing development and skiing administration are concerned.



ANCIENT WOODEN BOOT TREE AND  
OLD LEATHER SKI BOOTS DONATED TO  
THE BRINDABELLA SKI CLUB BY LATE  
CLUB MEMBER GEORGE DUDZINSKI



**Club Pioneer**  
**Henry (*Harry*) Preston Black**  
20 April 1919 – 27 June 2010



Harry Black, as he was always known, was born in Sydney where he grew up in the suburb of Ashbury in Sydney.

Harry left Canterbury High School aged 15 so as to help support the family during the Depression.

In late 1939 Harry joined the armed services. Harry took up an offer from the YMCA to become a welfare officer in New Guinea, where he arrived in December 1942. Harry was at times based just behind the frontline. He distributed to Australian soldiers returning from the frontline, soap, a cup of tea, and pen and paper with which to enable them to write home to loved ones.

Returning to Australia in August 1945, he joined the staff of the Hospitals Contribution Fund in Sydney, before taking a position with the Sydney YMCA in 1946. In 1948 he was appointed General Secretary of the Canberra YMCA.

Harry's role in the formation of the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra (later to become the Brindabella Ski Club) was paramount. In 1949 and 1950, following his arrival in Canberra, he gathered together a group of other Canberra skiing enthusiasts who made more than half a dozen day and weekend skiing trips to the Snowy Mountains. Hired buses were used to transport these skiing enthusiasts to the mountains.

On 15 June 1951 Harry convened and presided over a meeting of like-minded snow enthusiasts. This led to the creation of the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra. Following the Club's formation, Harry was elected as the club's inaugural treasurer. His interest and enthusiastic involvement in the activities of the Club continued over many years.



*Club Pioneer - Henry (Harry) Preston Black continued ...*

On the Ski Club's 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, Harry was awarded Honorary Life Membership for his services to the club. He had inspired the early enthusiasts, convened the first meetings, arranged the finance to buy the club's first bus and served on the Committee in the Club's first 6 years. He was the driving force in the Club. One of his last acts as an active member of the Ski Club, together with another club member, was to officially open the Club's new Tiobunga lodge at Guthega in October 2008. The Club has changed considerably since its early days, but one could well say that without Harry Black, there might well never have been a ski club.

Harry retired to the South Coast to a bushland property near Bermagui where he created a small orchard. During his retirement he became a well-known South Coast identity.

Harry was a well-liked, and well-respected member of the Club, the Canberra and South Coast community.

Harry Black was a unique man, one who did some very remarkable things during his lifetime and made a significant contribution to our community.

Harry was another pioneer of the Canberra skiing fraternity. Were it not for him it is possible that the development of Guthega as a ski resort would never have occurred.





Club Champion  
Beverley Hannah  
Alpine Champion



YMCA Ski Club of Canberra Member<sup>1</sup>

~ 1961 ~

Wins ACT Womens Alpine Championship & selected for Australian Inter-dominion team in competition against NZ.

~ 1962 ~

Wins ACT Womens Alpine Championship.



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<sup>1</sup> Later to become the Brindabella Ski Club.



Club Champion  
Hal Nerdal  
Nordic Champion



YMCA Ski Club of Canberra Member<sup>1</sup>

~ 1958 ~

Wins NSW Nordic Championship.

~ 1959 ~

Wins National Nordic Championship.

~ 1960 ~

Wins National & NSW Nordic Championships & represents Australia in 1960 Olympic Games.

~ 1961 ~

Wins National & ACT Nordic Championships.

~ 1962 ~

Wins National Nordic Championship & comes 2nd in NSW Nordic Championship.



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<sup>1</sup> Later to become the Brindabella Ski Club.



Club Champion  
Heather Minty<sup>1</sup>  
Alpine Champion



YMCA Ski Club of Canberra Member<sup>2</sup>

~ 1965 ~

Selected to train with Thredbo Junior Racing Squad.  
Trained with squad until 1970.

~ 1966 ~

Third in NSW Girls under 13 Junior Championship.

~ 1967 ~

Second in giant slalom in NSW Girls under 15 Junior Championship.

~ 1968 ~

Second in slalom in Australian Junior Championship.  
Wins NSW Junior Championship for Girls under 15.  
Second in NSW Open Girls Junior Championship.

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<sup>1</sup> Now Heather McCalman.

<sup>2</sup> Later to become the Brindabella Ski Club.



*Club Champion - Heather Minty continued ...*

~ 1969-70 ~

Selected in ANSF European Training Squad (Trained with Austrian Womens B-team)  
Also selected in Australian team for Inter-dominion competition against NZ.  
Wins Australian Girls Open Junior Championship.

~ 1970 ~

Wins NSW Open Girls Junior Championship.  
Third in slalom in Australian Womens National Championship.

~ 1970-71 ~

Member of Australian team in European FIS B-circuit races & Australian team in  
Commonwealth Games at St. Moritz.  
Seventh in Womens giant slalom.  
Member World Championship Training Team at Val Gardena, Italy.  
Fifth in Womens downhill in Lowlander Championship at Val d'Isere, France.

~ 1971 ~

Member of Australian Olympic training team for Sapporo, Japan.

~ 1972 ~

Wins Australian Womens Championship.  
Second in NSW Womens Championship.  
Fleet Alpine Award bronze medal.  
Nominated ACT Sports Person of the Year.





Club Champion  
Mark Dudzinski  
Alpine Champion



YMCA Ski Club of Canberra Member<sup>1</sup>

~ 1961 ~

Wins Under 12 & Under 15 NSW Junior Downhill Championships.

~ 1962 ~

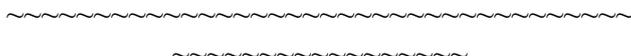
Wins NSW Junior Downhill Championship.

~ 1964 ~

Second in NSW & Australian Junior Downhill Championship.

~ 1965 ~

The then youngest skier to be selected as a member of an Australian team in Inter-dominion competition against NZ.



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<sup>1</sup> Later to become the Brindabella Ski Club.



Club Champion  
Robbie Kilpinnen  
Nordic Champion



YMCA Ski Club of Canberra Member<sup>1</sup>

~ 1963 ~

Wins National Langlauf Championship.

~ 1964 ~

Wins NSW, Victorian & National Langlauf Championships.



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<sup>1</sup> Later to become the Brindabella Ski Club.



# Brindabella Ski Club



ROPE TOW NUTCRACKER DONATED TO THE BRINDABELLA SKI CLUB BY FORMER MEMBER LYN CHAFFER. USED BY HER ON THE SMA SKI CLUB'S ROPE TOW ON TATE EAST RIDGE, GUTHEGA

TOP - SKIS DONATED TO THE BSC BY MEMBER BERYL CUTHBERTSON. USED BY HER TO CLIMB TATE EAST RIDGE, GUTHEGA c 1957

CENTRE - CLUB OWNED NORWEGIAN NORDIC JUMP SKIS. USED BY CLUB MEMBERS IN JUMPING COMPETITIONS.

BOTTOM - LYN CHAFFER'S NUTCRACKER



VERY OLD DOWNHILL SKIS DONATED TO THE BRINDABELLA SKI CLUB BY FORMER MEMBER GRAHAM YOUNG. GRAHAM USED THEM ON THE SMA SKI CLUB'S ROPE TOW ON TATE EAST RIDGE, GUTHEGA

