



## President's Forward

On 15 June 1971 the Y.M.C.A. Ski Club of Canberra turned 20 years old. The Club today would surprise its eleven foundation members just as much as some miraculous return to those days would surprise the comfort-laden skier of today. The Y Ski Club has always been a dynamic forward looking Club. It has been well served by its Committee and other active members. The outward signs of growth is a current membership of over 600 compared with 11 in 1950; assets valued at over \$100,000 compared with \$2.05 (£1.0.6) in 1951; a wide and comprehensive program, a Club magazine and a full array of skiing events. The Club pioneered Junior Scholarships in the ACT. It was instrumental in the foundation of the ACT Ski Council; it has produced skiing champions and it has provided cheap skiing and companionship to several thousand people.

The Club has always been forward looking but on occasions it is valuable to look back and see the way we have come and the part played by some of those people who have helped make the Club what it is. The 20th Anniversary is a good occasion for such a backward look.

It never ceases to astound me when reading of the meagre beginnings and the step by step progress made over 20 years. One of the most noticeable facts is that each episode of the story has a different group of people as its nucleus who, when they have done their bit, move aside for another group to continue the work. It is this constant turnover of people which continuously brings new faces, new willing hands and new ideas which perhaps is the real clue to our success.

A Club history is something which people hold in their memories in many versions and this published version is a combination of these memories moulded by the editors into a very readable and interesting form.

It has been very interesting for me to read this history and I hope that it will give you some idea of how and why the club is what it is today.

It is doubtful if we shall see the same rapid growth over the next 20 years. However, new members with their new ideas coupled with the past knowledge and experience of older members will ensure the continued development of the Ski Club as we move into the era of highly developed skiing which is emerging in Australia today.

Roger Smith

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## Authors' Note

We are pleased to have had the opportunity to write the history of the Club's first 20 years, but we make no claim to be the best persons to do so. We are both the victims of the Club's 'do-it-yourself' policy which was applied when we suggested the project! We have consulted all available records but, unfortunately, too many of them are missing and if anyone can provide missing information or correct any errors which may appear in the following pages we would be glad if they would do so.

We have had the benefit of detailed notes prepared by Harry Black (on the early years), George Dudzinski (on competitive skiing), Robin Miller (on the Tiobunga renovations) and Bob McGregor (on the Thredbo project). Don Stodart took what was basically a very inadequate draft prepared by us on the Thredbo project and effectively fumed it into the Chapter on the project which appears in this history. In addition, we have shown and discussed the draft with Harry Black, Robin Miller, Val Paral, Harry Naphali, Graham Young, Gene Herbert, Derek Carrington and Don Stodart, who have all made most useful comments. Dorothy Brown and Robin Miller assisted in the collection, printing, sorting and selection of the photographs. Thanks go also to Chris Marshall, Ruth Hall, Margot Mackie, Jan Livingstone and Margaret Kennedy who deciphered our illegible scrawls to produce the typewritten manuscript.

For all that, we make no attempt to avoid responsibility for any failings of fact or structure. Not all events are included and not all points covered are described as fully as may be desirable. As with most things, the account might have been improved if there were more than 24 hours in the day. As far as possible we have avoided a merely chronological approach. We have sought to describe what happened and why and to bring out general themes. We have also sought to bring out the flavour of each period. No doubt there are many anecdotes not included which might illustrate the themes even better, and no doubt the Editor of "Christie" would welcome contributions which will correct these omissions. As for the rest we leave it to the reader in the hope that it may jog old memories or give some idea to new members of what the Club has done.

David Goss  
Wal Costanzo  
August 1971

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## Genesis

Today skiing is a "with it" popular sport. The skiers' every need is catered for (at a price) from up-hill transport to instruction, accommodation, good access roads and the inevitable après-ski. This was not the case in Australia as the 1950's broke. Skiing was a definite fringe sport. Accommodation was rare; and a few rope tows provided the only up-hill transport. The road to Cooma was dirt, and pot-holed, and even worse beyond Jindabyne, so that the few with cars were reluctant to risk them lightly on a journey to the snow. It is well to bear these points in mind when contemplating the founding and first few years of the Club, for it was by no means inevitable that a YMCA Ski Club should have come into existence.

That it did so was due to Harry Black, the Club's founder. Harry had been a foundation member of the YMCA Ski Club in Sydney. He came to Canberra in June 1948 as General Secretary of the YMCA. A keen skier, he gathered together a group of other enthusiasts who in 1949 and 1950 made more than half a dozen day and weekend trips to the mountains. Buses were hired from Pioneer or Greg Cusack and the whole party, including bus driver, "dossed down" in the old shepherd's slab hut at Smiggins. This informal arrangement might have continued had not one of these enthusiasts, Geoff Robertson, noticed an old bus which had appeared in the Black Mountain camping area near his home, and suggested that it might be potential transport. It was hired for the King's Birthday long weekend in 1951 and 21 people set out for the snow. The Club's records note "... the bus caused much difficulty but has now been fixed and it was decided to pay the \$20 hire as the owner did not guarantee its sure running ."

Following this trip Harry Black convened and presided over a meeting on 15 June 1951 at the old YMCA Club rooms at Civic. A resolution moved by L. Wheeldon and T. Cromar "that a Club be formed and named the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra" was adopted unanimously. An interim committee was appointed to draw up a constitution. A second meeting of 9 people on 25 June discussed the pros and cons of buying the bus. A third meeting on 2 July, attended by 12 people, not only adopted a Constitution but decided to buy the bus for \$460 (it was eventually bought for \$700), Dr. Erwin Koch-Emmery was elected President with a Committee of 5 including Harry Black as Treasurer and Roma Gray, the first and at that stage the only woman member of the Club, as Assistant Secretary. There were 10 financial members and cash in hand was \$2.05 (£1. 0. 6.5 to be exact). The YM.C.A. Ski Club of Canberra was precariously in business!

## **Wanderings in the Wilderness (1951-1954 and Club Transport)**

The purchase of a bus was the motive for formation of the Club and the first years of the Club's history are indissolubly linked with this vehicle. A Silver Crown Power "Reo" (1938 model) ACT registration 4-176, it operated at Coffs Harbour for many years and then on the Queanbeyan/Michelago run. Its purchase was financed by loans of \$300 from Club members and a \$400 loan from the bank. Ally Nish and Tim Ingram, two well-known Canberra businessmen, displayed their faith in the young Club by guaranteeing this loan. They also assisted and stood by the Club in later projects. The

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bus was at the one time the hope and bane of the Club. Members worked desperately, night after night to get it into condition for each trip and its cantankerous behaviour was the constant theme of Club meetings. Space does not permit a detailed record of the old "Reo's" history, but a perusal of its log provides a testimony to the perseverance of the early members and a great deal of amusement (in a sick sort of way). A few extracts will suffice to give the flavour. On its very first trip it arrived at Smiggins with a member squatting on the right mudguard hugging a 4 gallon drum which delivered petrol through a tube, straight into the carburettor; whilst another member, perched on the left mudguard, received water containers through the windscreen and poured them into the radiator. On its second trip it left 5 hours late due to a faulty distributor and had two blow outs on the way to the snow. A 1955 entry reads:

"The bus behaved well; however the following need attention - bumper bar loose, new horn mounting needed, knock in engine, oil gauge needed, electrical relay sticking, whine in differential and a window fallen out!"

On one occasion the headlights went and the bus called in at Waste Point for repairs. The lights could not be fixed but an old fire engine light, some 18 inches in diameter, was found in one of the huts there. This was bolted to the bumper bar and connected direct to the battery. The bus moved off, preceded by a beam of light which illuminated the road for up to 3 miles ahead. Oncoming cars, thinking that there was a runaway train on the road, pulled over to the side and waited for the apparition to pass.

Finally breaking down on Saturday 27 August 1955 when a con rod went through the engine block, it was towed to Cooma and left there. It was finally bought by Jim O'Sullivan, a garbage contractor, who wanted it mainly for the wheels and tyres which were scarce at that time. The body of the bus eventually became one of his more luxurious pigpens.

The bus made 8 trips in 1951, 9 in 1952, 12 in 1953 and 9 in 1954, while average number of passengers per trip rose from 13 in 1951, to 18 in 1953, only to drop back to 15.5 in 1954. Some trips were made to Mount Franklin but most were to Kosciusko, principally to Smiggins. Drivers were always difficult to obtain as they needed a special bus driver's licence. One applicant for such a licence who was failed by the instructor exclaimed "But I drove a tank in the German army". He was hardly mollified when the tester replied "That's what I mean!" Some older members may well remark that not all who handled the bus like a tank were failed!

On the early trips, most of the party slept on the floor of the bus, whilst a few hardly souls camped beneath it. At Smiggins the Club, in 1951, used the ramshackle "Black Hut", which at least boasted a door and windows -- even if it only had a dirt floor! In 1952, they used the "Pink Hut" which had been built as a shelter shed for day skiers. In 1953 the Club was tossed out of the "Pink Hut" and members were forced to sleep in a variety of huts over the next two years, including huts at the Creel, Thredbo, Spencer's Creek, Sawpit Creek and the Park Trust Barracks at Waste Point. The pattern for Club trips was something along the following lines. Departure time was laid down for 7 p.m. Friday, but invariably departure was much later. (One typical late departure occurred in 1954 when the head gasket blew 17 miles from Canberra. Returning to Canberra to

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Harry Naphthali's house, the 19 passengers coffeeed and then slept on the floor until repairs were effected by 2 a.m. Saturday. The group finally arrived in the mountains at 8 a.m.)

The arrival picture may be imagined. At 2 or 3 a.m. on Saturday the bus chugs into Smiggins. Stiff figures emerge into the frosty air. Unloading commences. Large tarpaulins are laid down on the hut floor; palliasses, pillows and personal gear are dumped down; blanket partitions are pinned up to give the girls a measure of privacy; cooking gear and food is brought in; the old fuel stove is fired up and soon fills the place with such a thick fog that the blanket screens are hardly necessary. A few hours later breakfast is under way and the skiers summon up their energy and stagger off into the snow for a strenuous day's skiing.

From 1951 to 1954 the Club grew steadily. Membership rose. The habits of working together and running a club under great difficulties brought about a strong club spirit. General meetings became more frequent and better attended, as members relived the experiences and privations of past trips. Revenues rose, but money was always tight. The 7 man committee would meet to determine which outstanding bills could be paid from the scanty cash in hand. Gradually, however, the overdraft was reduced and members' loans paid off as the Club drifted slowly into solvency.

The bus had therefore created the need for a club to raise the money to buy it and to operate it. The bus made skiing possible and while it was a constant threat to the solvency of the fledgling organisation, the need to repay the debts to which it had given rise was a goad to the continued survival of the Club. The bus was a focus for Club activities, it demanded dedicated work to keep it going and it threw members together into a tight group for the weekend. Out of all this only a strong community spirit (or civil war) could emerge. The old "Reo" bus was thus the core of the Club's origin, survival and growth. So central to the Club's early life was the concept of Club transport, that until 1962 no thought was given to trying to get by without it. Even when a third bus -- the Morris - consumed three gear boxes in 1960 it was decided to persevere with Club transport.

The Club's second bus was a 1950 "White" bus (with spare engine) purchased in 1955 from Mr. Bruce Balmain of Cooma. Its registration number was ACT 10-853 and its engine and chassis originally came from an Army scout car. It cost \$1,600 and, in fact, was bought by the YMCA Board, as this sum of money was beyond the Club's resources. The Club nevertheless assisted in the purchase with a loan of \$500 (which the Club later turned into a donation). For those familiar with the imperfections of the "Reo", the acquisition of the "White" bus seemed to open a new era in Club transport; In place of the side benches and worn cushions there were steel-framed seats with, as was proudly pointed out, Dunlopillo upholstery. Although at the time it seemed unimportant, the accessibility of the engine from inside the bus greatly added to comfort in repair work and many hours were spent with the "mechanics" poring over the engine like witches around a cauldron and the passengers, when not required to push, contributing ribald suggestions from the rear. Trips with the "White" were, in fact, far from trouble free. At various times there were the conventional things like broken axles, internal faults (requiring the gear box or carburettor to be taken to bits), and large

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chunks torn out of the radiator by the fan. In addition, the bus sometimes failed to function for individual and exotic reasons. It had, for instance, a metal plug normally functioning as a kind of safety valve on the cylinder block. When provoked by specially rugged conditions the bus was apt to spit the plug out onto the snow so that water promptly leaked out of the block. Replacing the plug after it had been found and allowed to cool down would have been easy if one could have got at the place where it went in. But this was not so, and the most successful of the techniques developed for replacing the plug involved sticking it to a thin piece of wood with klister (in those days, of course, klister was simply klister and had not gone into technicolour).

Few members opposed the decision in 1958 to sell the bus!

Harry Naphthali, who became President in 1957, played a vital role in keeping the bus going, repairing it and doing much of the driving. In 1956, with Harry at the wheel, it left Guthega in a blizzard as part of a convoy consisting of three SEA Landrovers, one front-end loader and a couple of private cars. It took 3 hours to cover 12 miles and at one stage the bumper bar and fog light were torn off when the bus was being towed by a grader. Some years later the bus, so suited for a snow trip, was used to transport 20 Colombo Plan students to the snow for an introduction to skiing. On the return trip, the brakes failed on the approach to Iron Pot Creek, in those days crossed by a narrow bridge at the centre of a very tight S bend which was negotiable at a maximum speed of 30 m.p.h. and then only in a good car! The driver missed the gears on the descent to the bridge and with Harry Naphthali, a passenger on this trip, hauling on the hand brake with his one good arm (the other being in plaster) the bridge was negotiated on two wheels at 50 m.p.h., with the passengers pale enough to satisfy even Arthur Calwell, and the squealing of tyres drowned only by those of the passengers. A subdued and shaken party proceeded on its way to Canberra.

The Club next decided to buy a Morris Mini bus, seating 11 passengers. It was purchased in 1959 for \$3,020, financed to the extent of \$1,600 by the Club and the remainder by a bank loan.

No consideration was given to getting by without Club transport and, indeed, the Committee gave it priority over the Tiobunga extensions, if restrictions of finance forced a choice between the two. On the rapidly improving roads this bus gave the Club the least trouble of any of the three buses and enabled the Club to transport its car-less members to the snow during a period when private transport may not have met the need.

This bus at least had the distinction of being the only one to have outrun a Bredbo policeman who pursued it on one occasion to book it. Expecting speeding vehicles to stop in the presence of the law (his Landrover being governed at 50 m.p.h!) the policeman was more than flabbergasted when the bus driver continued unperturbed on his way. The operation of the bus became increasingly expensive because the numbers using it fell to 2 or 3 per weekend. It was sold in 1962 for \$650 (to a person with 9 children who needed something more than a car!). Thus ended the period of Club transport. It was no longer needed in a situation of general car ownership and

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greatly improved roads which resulted in people being more prepared to take their cars to the mountains.

"The bus" had been a central feature in the first period of the Club's history and represents the heroic era of the Club. So newer members, be patient and bear with the old timers who are often inclined to reminisce on the days of yore, and to tell the tales (which do not need to be embellished) of privation and mechanical mayhem which were their inescapable lot in those early years.

## **The Promised Land (Guthega 1955-1958)**

Although we have sped ahead by bus to 1962, we must now return to 1955, which marked a fuming point in the Club's history. A "cottage" of its own had become an increasingly common feature of Committee discussions from 1953 onwards. The S.M.A. were asked early in 1954 for a hut at Spencer's Creek without result. The 1954 records note, with scarcely concealed sarcasm, Guy Kemp Robinson's plans for a steel prefab lodge at \$80 per square, but sketch plans for a Club hut were actually drawn up and discussed with the Park Trust. These were deferred because of lack of tradesmen, and lack of confidence in the Club's ability to erect a hut with voluntary labour or to find the funds to finance it. A letter from the Park Trust in August, criticising the Club's use of Smiggins Hut, highlighted the need for a place of its own.

This ferment led to the establishment of a Hut Committee whose driving force, the then Vice-President' Doug Anderson, negotiated with the SMA. to obtain one of several huts becoming available at Guthega, Munyang and Island Bend. On 24 May 1955, the S.M.A. officially offered us Hut "C" at Guthega, an area the Club had visited for the first time in August 1952. Since the Club had abolished "Trustees" in its constitutional revisions of 1954, the YM.C.A. Trustees signed a lease for the hut, acting for the Ski Club. The lease charge was \$368 per annum.

The YMCA Board offered to provide sleeping, cooking and eating equipment from the YM.C.A. Camp at Stuart Island. Accordingly, in what turned out to be one of the more hilarious journeys of the Club, the old "Reo" was rushed out to the Camp, there to be loaded full of beds, mattresses, blankets, pillows and an incredible array of cooking utensils and other paraphernalia. Crammed to the roof inside and loaded high above the roof outside, the bus staggered off on its long journey to the empty ski hut waiting at Guthega. Two-tier bunks were erected and a drying room put into operation.

The Guthega cottage was not, however, the Tiobunga we know today. In fact, the "Old Four" bunkroom is the only part still, more or less, in its original state. There were also two six-bunk rooms, a two-bunk room off the kitchen, and crawling room for 8 or so in the roof. There was little competition for the roof accommodation which was either freezingly cold, or appallingly hot, and certainly never comfortable. The lounge room, measuring 10' x 12', accommodated up to 26 people and with a roaring open fire generated a cosy togetherness which can no longer be matched in Club lodges.

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Although the Club was now in business, the first trip on the June long weekend 1955 was not auspicious. On arrival, it was found that the locks had been changed by the SHEA., and when the sodden, frozen bus-load broke in, they found that all the furniture and heaters had been inadvertently removed by SHEA. workmen. Tin trays were heated in the oven and passed round to thaw out frozen feet. The heaters and some of the furniture were recovered next day from Island Bend. The first week party at the lodge did not fare much better as it was assailed by blizzards and snowed in. One car remained snowbound until October. Nevertheless the first year in a lodge showed an almost threefold increase in excursion receipts and in cash turnover and membership doubled to 179.

Acquisition of a lodge presented new problems for the Club. The lodge required maintenance and it needed alteration. A ski room, drying racks and shelving, bunks, etc., had to be built and the "Guthega work party" came into being. The new level of activity required more detailed book-keeping than previously and technical advice was needed. The process of booking, purchasing food and collecting and banking funds were all raised to a new, higher level of intensity and new policies and procedures had to be laid down. On some occasions up to 2.5 tons of food were transported to Guthega in lieu of the rear seats in the bus. The increased administrative load became apparent immediately. The Committee Minute Book for the 1954-1955 year (April to March) takes 12 handwritten pages to record 15 meetings. The 1955-1956 book needs 33 typewritten pages to record 28 meetings. As Doug Anderson took over the Presidency from Guy Kemp Robinson (President for two years), it became apparent that the increased workload required additional positions on the Committee to handle it. Positions to cope with bookings, transport and publicity were therefore created during 1956 and 1957. With a larger membership, which averaged 170 over four years, keeping in touch with members became a greater problem than before. To meet this a Club magazine was planned. The first issue of "Christie" appeared in May 1958 with John Rumble as Editor. (For more details see Chapter V).

These problems were connected with running a lodge, but the Club also had to focus on the problem of Guthega. The promised land was not exactly flowing with tourist buses and tows. Uphill transport and access were problems the Club had to face. The S.M.A. cleared the road when it could and the road was never blocked long enough to make skiing at Guthega impossible. But the walk-in from Perisher Creek or Mungyang was a regular feature, and although not so regular, snowed-in cars were by no means unknown. For three years there were no towing facilities. Members went touring fairly often or skied on the Blue Cow pastures and tennis court slopes, herringboning or zig-zagging their way to the top of each slope before an all too brief descent. The S.M.A. Ski Club took the initiative and installed a rope tow on Tate East Ridge in 1957. Club members assisted with labour. It was only 700' long and a long way from the lodges, but it provided uphill transport at last.

Throughout the late fifties the Club grew rapidly in its ability to cope with Guthega conditions and was able to look patronisingly at the activities of our neighbours, the Sydney University Ski Club, which seemed to include a high proportion of tyros. Roadside and other evidence suggested that when walking in from Perisher Creek the students applied the principle of 'Dump the food if you must, but the BEER MUST GET

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THROUGH'. The University boys affected an exaggerated impression of the piety of Y.M.C.A. Ski Club parties, the Y Lodge then being dry (see Chapter IX), to such an extent that on one occasion they serenaded members with hymns from under the bedroom windows at 2.30 a.m.!

In these first four years in Guthega, the Club came to face the tasks which have remained pretty much the same ever since. Its style of operation changed and the scale and pattern of activities increased to a level which today's Committee would recognise. The Club was at a stage where it could take the next step forward.

## **Building the Temples (1959-1963)**

Although the Club had acquired a new vigour, greater financial resources and rising membership, the limitations to its accommodation soon became apparent. In the 1958-59 summer, after much discussion and hesitation, and grave doubts in some quarters at the vast expense (\$2,000) involved, the Club extended the crowded lounge room of Tiobunga 16 feet. To its surprise it found that there were willing volunteers, enough tradesmen and the leadership of Audun Fristad to make such a task a pushover. The debts incurred were paid back in one season. As membership rose to 275 by the middle of 1959, the project to build a lodge of its own came to fruition.

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 made many wish to build at Perisher or Thredbo. A survey conducted among members showed Perisher to be the most popular choice. But the problem of accommodation while building, of running a Club with two foci of attention and questions of relations with the Y.M.C.A. (see Chapter IX) had to be considered. Although Club records do not reveal the full reasons, and memories are conflicting, the fact remains that a decision was taken to build at Guthega and under the leadership of Gene Herbert, who had been President for two years, construction of Kyilla went ahead in late 1959 and early 1960. The Club obtained an overdraft of \$2,000 (guaranteed once more by Tim Ingram), it had \$1,000 in Club funds and looked for \$4,000 in loans from members, for which booking privileges were to be given. The Club saw that the sum of \$7,000 needed to build the lodge could easily be found. However, the Committee's estimate of the cost, which they had even published in "Christie" in 1959, was \$10,000-\$12,000 (it cost in fact \$11,124). But they had some spare cash and felt that the Club would respond to the challenge once the building was started. This approach was an early application of "the Opera House Principle".

The design of the lodge was drawn up by Stan Blakemore and the foundations were prepared. A work party of five (Gene Herbert, Audun Fristad, Val and Heather Paral and Ludwig Limbeck) stayed a week at Guthega to erect the A-Frames and miraculously they did it with no casualties. Audun Fristad supervised construction on nearly every weekend, ably assisted by Gene Herbert. Stramit came to put on the roofing, the outside walls were sheeted and so the building gradually progressed to the stage where equipment and furnishings could be installed. Then it snowed! In April!!! Mattresses, electric heaters, carpets, equipment, food, the works had to be brought in over the

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snow from the car park. But work went on, with the eyes of the exhausted workers fixed longingly on the tempting snow outside. It was an exhausting but exhilarating achievement. The Club membership soared to 401, with over half of them new that year. To cover the costs, which mirabile dictu were rising to over \$10,000, a \$4 levy was struck and loans of \$5,500 were eventually raised. Thus, when, on 17 July 1960, Sir William Hudson, then Commissioner of the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Authority, drove up the (carefully cleared) road to open Kyilla officially, the lodge was finished.

The first year of operation revealed that some improvements were needed in Kyilla. These were incorporated in 1961 (but some problems are still with us). The windows, flush with the sloping roof, leaked and were replaced with the present "attic type windows". "Studio 7" was adjusted to its present shape, banning forever the covering shapes who huddled in fitful sleep against the wall on 2 ? feet wide bunks, perched 8 feet above the floor. Also members had found the experience of snow avalanches sliding down their necks on entering the front door (then located where the work bench is now), less than welcome. The entrance was shifted to the northern end of Kyilla and an airlock built. Rebuilding the bathrooms and coping with the regular leaks in these ensured that Guthega work parties always had something to do. But Kyilla was the Club's very own and opened a new dimension in Club activity.

Encouraged, or perhaps blinded, by the success of its efforts, the Club sought new heights to conquer. There were several reasons why the Club decided to re-build Tiobunga. The main one was a growing dissatisfaction with the sub-standard accommodation it provided. Kyilla had demonstrated that sleeping in high cupboards, unlit attics, or among potatoes in the pantry, was no longer an essential part of living at Guthega, romantic though it may seem!

The Kosciusko State Park Trust provided a second reason by declaring Tiobunga unsightly, structurally unsound, and a contravention of the Trust's building regulations, and therefore had to be brought up to the Trust's standards within five years. Plans were therefore drawn up for a two-storey Tiobunga accommodating 24, and for a Sauna Bath. It was proposed to reconstruct the old Tiobunga, which had been purchased from the SM A. in 1961 for \$1,500. A bank overdraft for a further \$2,000 was arranged, but the Park Trust was formalising its land tenure system and building control. The verbal OK, which had sufficed for Kyilla to be built, no longer sufficed and as January 1962 came, the plans for redeveloping Tiobunga were abandoned for the year.

After a temporary lull, caused by the onset of winter, the Tiobunga project was revived at a General Meeting of the Club in July; and the August General Meeting approved plans for a single storey structure which would extend south on to part of the area then occupied by the Sydney University Ski Club's lodge. The Club successfully tendered \$300 for the University Ski Club hut and the right to demolish it. Much of the material was used in the reconstruction of Tiobunga. Even the generous supply of empty bottles which came with the University hut proved invaluable when broken up, and used as aggregate for concrete. There was some concern that the order to demolish the University hut might not be given by the Park Trust, but finally the President, Robin Miller, who saw the planning through, had the satisfaction of laying the first hammer blow to the Ski Club of his Alma Mater. Bill Minty drew up the plans and a building

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committee initially comprising Bill Minty, Harry New, Audun Fristad and Robin Miller supervised the building. Paul Bradley, Wal Costanzo and Bob MacGregor were seconded to the Committee at a later stage. As President, Graham Young noted on the completion of the remodelling, Tiobunga had (and still has) the distinction of being the one building finished close to its estimated cost. From leased accommodation for 16 in 1959, the Club had gone to two lodges worth over \$40,000, accommodating 48, in 1963. It had done it with members' loans of some \$6,000 and a bank overdraft of \$6,000, of which it did not use more than \$2,000. Indeed, in 1963 the Club's cash deficit was only \$1,146 after paying for the cost of the Tiobunga reconstruction.

The building program of 1960-1963 had tied the Club firmly to Guthega, but the old problems - lack of ski instruction, lack of uphill transport and difficulty of access remained. Ski instruction had always been a major problem. Alan Bogg and other experienced skiers provided instruction in the 50's and in 1959 Henri Devoussaux, a ski instructor at Perisher, came across to Guthega on several weekends. This arrangement was not satisfactory however, and the Committee searched high and low for a permanent ski instructor. In 1960 Vat Paral discovered Walter Spanring, an instructor from Austria, who had just arrived in Australia. Walter came to Guthega in that year, staying in Kyilla. In the following year he built his own hut, with its miraculous supply of electricity, near the dam. Walter's continued presence in Guthega has provided more assurance of steady instruction than could otherwise have been possible. His attachment to the area and his vision for its future, in which he has invested such a considerable amount of his own money and time, must be acknowledged as having given a great boost to Guthega and thus to the Club.

Uphill transport was another problem. The S M A. rope tow which required skill to use, was a long way away from the lodges, especially at the end of a hard day's skiing, and was quite unsuitable for beginners. A beginners' tow was one of the few features of the Club's mammoth 1960-61 building program which came to fruition. Johnny Abbottsmith's old Smiggins tow was purchased and completely rebuilt in Canberra by Harry Napthali. It was erected on its present site at a cost of \$ 1,200 under Frank Juhasz's supervision. It was hired to and operated by Walter Spanring in 1961, and operated by the Club in subsequent years up to 1964. The S M A. tow hut burnt down in 1965 and a syndicate headed by Walter Spanring decided to erect the current T-bar. It was completed by the middle of the year and the Club's beginners' tow was sold to Walter in 1966. Towing still remains a problem of economics but it is assured.

Access too was a constant worry. The road was generally cleared and one can, as a rule, park closer to the lodges with greater ease and less cost at Guthega than at Perisher. But there was no guarantee of cleared roads at all times. In great snow years, such as 1964 (the year of the "Big Dig"), it was inevitable that some cars would be snowbound. Members kept a wary eye on the sky to see if the cars had to be taken down to Perisher Creek, and many is the eye which is not wary enough. One such unwary character (in the company of many others) was Evan Burge whose VW was so deeply buried in 1964 that a grader unwittingly drove over the top of it, prompting him to the literary masterpiece in the August 1964 "Christie".

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All these problems were connected with the general development of Guthega. In 1959 there were only three clubs and three small huts. Blue Cow, built in the summer of 1959-60 was followed by the Guthega Ski Club lodge, started in 1962 and finished in 1964. Turnak was built in 1963, in which year the Sydney University hut disappeared under the extended Tiobunga. The 120 beds in the area, nearly half in the YM.C A. Ski Club lodges, were an inadequate basis for the facilities which skiers were increasingly coming to expect. Inspired by Gene Herbert, who followed two terms as President with three as Publicity Officer, the Club actively pursued a policy of plugging for the development of Guthega. The aim was to preserve it as a Club area, but with basic facilities. To this end the Club submitted proposals to the Park Trust and also actively sought to persuade other clubs to come to Guthega and to publicise Guthega generally. The activity described above on tows and access, ski instruction and the institution of regular weather reports on Guthega were all part of the promotional activity. This was also the reason why the Club became a foundation member of the Guthega Council and provided much of its early finance. It purchased a rescue sled and parkas for the ski patrol and helped to get the patrol going. The Club was heartened (and occasionally apprehensive) from 1960-64 by the plans of Davwhit to build a \$2,000,000 resort at the head of the Guthega river. This development which would have guaranteed winter access and some facilities but would have left Guthega for club lodges, never came to fruition and the problem of access remained.

The new lodges raised the pace of Club activity to that of a small business and necessitated corresponding changes in organisation. These mostly came about in 1961 under the direction of the then President, David Goss. The first change was the incorporation of the Club under the A.C.T. Association's Incorporation Ordinance and the adoption of a new constitution. This gave the Club a collective legal personality, and gave it the right to own property, which it had not had under the old constitution. The increased membership and the new lodges increased the load on the Club's administration; a new office of Membership Secretary was created in 1960, and an addressograph machine was purchased in 1961 to facilitate the distribution of "Christie". Membership was limited for the first time in 1961 (to 450) and in subsequent years many who wanted to join the Club could not. The pressure on membership also caused some restrictions to be put on non-Canberra members, and since then the rules applying to new members have been under constant review. Greater use was made of sub-committees, to spread the load, and the responsibility of each Committee member was defined and much responsibility delegated in the 1961 reorganisation. A budget was drawn up for the first time for the 1961 financial year, not only to enable the Club's activities to be planned, but as an aid to administration, with the Treasurer authorised to pay money up to amounts approved in the budget. The old practice of the Committee approving accounts in advance was now quite impossible. The 1960-62 period therefore set the general pattern for Club organisation which has been followed ever since. It was not as informal as it once was, but it was set at the lowest level of organisation which was consistent with operating a club of such size.

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## The Pattern of Activities (Club Activities and Christie)

By 1962 the basic pattern of activities as we know them today had developed. General meetings have always been a central part of the Club's collective life. In the early years they provided an opportunity to meet and reminisce over the horrors of the previous weekend. They also had educational purposes with talks and films on skiing, touring and "what to take". Films were a regular feature, with some films being shown repeatedly. There are still some older members who twitch at the name of the "Red Devils of Kitzbuhel". Coffee and a chat after the meeting have also been a regular feature. But Club business did not go undone because of this social activity, Club decisions being fully discussed in meetings which sometimes went to midnight. General meetings have never been held in January and only twice in December, but since 1954 they were generally held every month in between.

The Club's social activities have also followed a regular pattern of recent years. The End-of-Season dance has been held regularly in October or November since 1957. From 1954 to 1960 the Club also organised one Saturday night dance a year in the Albert Hall, principally as a money-making activity. But they were not, however, generally attended by Club members. The Club also started off the Fashion Parade in 1960, and subsequently handed it over to the A.C.T. Ski Council (in 1962) to provide the Council with a fund raising activity. Since 1958, each season has opened with the President's Cocktail Party. The Club has also run barbecues, beach parties and various functions in members houses to socialise or to raise money. Much has depended on the views and energy of the prevailing Social Committee, set up for the first time in 1957, to organise all social activities in Canberra.

Members did not only go to the mountains to ski. Après ski activities in the Club's lodges have always been a feature and "Christie" has even printed recipes for Gluhwein to enliven them (try the "Crackenback Backcracker", August 1961 issue). With the new, or enlarged lodges, dances were held every Saturday night. At first this was done as a conscious part of Club activity, but it soon developed into a habit. The Club rule that "noisy activities cease at midnight" was a compromise between the needs of the skiers and the après skiers and often taxed the tact of party leaders. The most original means was employed by Robin Miller at a party in Kyilla in 1961 when he led a dancing throng outside in a Conga at the witching hour, and then dashed back and only permitted Kyilla dwellers to return (to bed). Work parties also provided opportunities for dances or barbecues, or just chatting and reminiscing.

As more and more beginners joined the Club, the Committee looked for ways of "breaking them in". The requirement of attending a work party as a qualification for membership, introduced in 1961, let people see the lodges, meet Club members (on the occasions they could find old Club members on work parties!) and see how the lodges operated. The building of the YJ.C.A. Centre in London Circuit in 1960 also provided an opportunity for learn-to-ski theoretical classes to be held in May each year from 1961 onwards. Get-fit classes were also commenced in that year and two or three beginner's ski weekends at Guthega were instituted to get beginners started.

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From the outset in 1955, Party Leaders were appointed to supervise the running of the lodges, to see that members got to meet each other, to collect outstanding money and to do the various things required including advising the Committee of food shortages or necessary repairs. In Guthega meals have always been organised on a communal basis (except for lunches in more recent times), since it seemed the best way to go about it in the limited kitchen space available and with the Club providing food. This system helped to build up community spirit and strong stomachs! The lack of outside attractions reinforced this decision for Guthega, but the wide variety of outside facilities and activities led to the reverse decision for Thredbo. Many members have displayed a lamentable ignorance of cooking. In one instance an overdose of yeast in a bread baking attempt led to an ever expanding loaf taking on the character of a monster from some science fiction story and only quick action prevented it from taking over the kitchen in Kyilla.

As the Club grew in the late fifties, the cohesion of the Club and the dissemination of information on the Club's programme, activities, rules and policies, became increasingly a problem. In the early days circulars were sent out from time to time. In May 1958 the first issue of "Christie" appeared. John Rumble, its first editor, in his opening editorial "felt that a Club this size (150 members), expanding every year, needs such a journal to pass on to you monthly information on Club activities, plans and items of general interest, including articles on skiing in Australia and overseas". "Christie" has appeared regularly since then. Mr. Yeti has reported the arrivals and departures, the engagements, the marriages and the arrival of offspring of members. Presidents and Secretaries have exhorted, cajoled, threatened and inspired. It has carried advice on skiing and a very useful series of articles on ski huts located on the main range. Members have written letters advocating this and that. Spurious archaeological articles on Guthega's pre-history, poems and puzzles have appeared, as well as the cryptic comments understandable only to those who knew what they meant already. Even a James Bond series set in Guthega has been a feature. It has recorded the skiing activities of the Club and its members, names of new members and loans received.

"Christie" covers have been changed every issue thanks to the yeoman service of Val Paral and Ralph Westen who produced the plates for many years. These covers have recorded many aspects of the Club activity. Only once (December 1962) has it appeared in technicolour but it set Tania Verstak on her road to being Miss Universe when the experienced eye of Val Paral picked out an attractive visitor to Guthega and recorded it on the June 1962 cover. "Christie's" quality has varied. For the first two years it doubled as a Club Handbook, but since the issue of a separate Handbook in 1960, which has been continued intermittently since then, it has given a wider range of articles, poems and humour. The long editorships of Pam Ferguson (1962-63) and the Floods (1964-65) perhaps were a high point of variety, humour and readability in the life of "Christie". Any lapse which may have since occurred derives largely from the reluctance of Club members to contribute articles etc., a feature which practically every editor of "Christie" has editorialised about. But it has remained a faithful chronicle of Club activities at all times and it is probably a misunderstanding of the name, rather than the contents, or perhaps the weekend fervour of its readers in the winter, which lead the National Library to classify "Christie" under religion!

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In the early days sartorial elegance was not the distinguishing feature of Club attire on the snow. Visits to the Sundeck at Perisher by a Y group with parkas muddy from putting on chains, with patched, or even split, pants roused feelings in the normal denizens of that place somewhat akin to those which a gang of hippies might produce in the Ritz. Some members have even skied in a water-proofed boiler suit and not felt self conscious. But, alas, time, affluence and the efforts of Mr. Unger have in large measure changed this image. Mr. Unger, who until 1969 ran the shop still trading under his name at Manuka, not only raised the Club's fashion status but also helped the Club over the years with regular advertising in "Christie", with running the Fashion Parades in the early 60's for the Club and with generous loans and donations to the Club's building projects.

A feature of Club life which can only be left out at risk of incompleteness is the role of the snorer. Until the Defamation Act is revised no personal details can be given. Sufficient is it to say that the quality of sound has varied from that of distant thunder to that of blunt cross-cut saw at one foot distance. The Club has found no ready solution to this problem which has famed wives for countless millennia. Most members encountering the problem have adopted Lenin's dictum of voting with their feet. Bunk rooms have gradually emptied during the night of all but the offender as the refugees sought some sleep on the benches in the lounge-room. Advocates of more direct action have belted the snorer with a pillow, but this solution is not conducive to friendly relations and is, moreover, only a temporary one. This was not the only feature of Club life which deprived members of sleep. The "Austrian Record" which featured yodelling songs of the Alps, was invariably played at top volume by early risers in the late 50's and early 60's in order to bring the rest of the lodge down to breakfast. Diligent research has not revealed, however, whether that particular record wore out or was consigned to the fire.

It would also be pleasing to pass in silence over that other feature of skiing life, the broken limb. It appears that the Bust such occurrence in the Club was in 1956, and so prompted the Committee to arrange for Dr. Holt to give up some of his valuable spare time to instruct members in first aid procedures. Such lessons have been given to Club members intermittently since that time. Problems of bringing those who had suffered this misfortune into the lodges from the snow, led the Club in 1959 to purchase a rescue sled (later handed over to the Guthega Council). The sled was purchased from Austria, with outgoing correspondence in English, incoming correspondence in German, and not a glimpse of recognition that two languages were being used. The Club waited with some apprehension to see what would actually turn up when the consignment arrived. This acquisition took the terror out of breaking a bone at some distance from the lodges, although Dorothy Brown, who broke a leg on the Rolling Grounds and was brought down to Guthega in the dark at top speed by expert skiers would no doubt wish to make some qualifications to that general statement.

The skiing season officially opens on the Queen's Birthday weekend and closes on the Labour Day weekend. Bookings for weeks fall almost exclusively in August and September, and weekend bookings are usually light in June. Although much depends on the season, it has been a source of amazement that members have shown themselves willing to stagger from Perisher Creek with crippling loads, through blizzards, hail or rain, to spend two days on uncertain snow in uncertain weather in the early part of the

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season, while in late September or October not even a cleared road, abundant snow, sunshine and warm weather, or cheap lodge rates, will lure them to the mountains. There are signs, however, especially with Carinya lodge at Thredbo, that summer usage (apart from work parties) may become a growing feature.

## Consolidation (1964-1968)

**The five-year period 1964 to 1968 was unmarked by serious building. No new Clubs moved into Guthega, and the multi-million dollar Davwhit project to develop a ski resort at the head of the Guthega river died a natural death.**

Perhaps one can say that, having had its fill of building, the Club concentrated on skiing. In 1964 we won the Balmain Cup for the second time, and organised ski touring became more frequent with an organised Club programme starting in 1966. In 1967 Junior Championships were held for the first time and a formal programme of junior skiing was introduced, taking a stage further the idea which had prompted the Junior Scholarships in 1961 (See Chapter VIII). The erection of Walter Spanring's lift in 1965, after the S.M.A. Tow Hut burnt down, gave Guthega skiers a better uphill transport facility than they had had before much closer to the lodges. The Club sold Walter its beginners' tow (for \$140) in 1966. The Club was not, however, lacking in snow transport, for it purchased a skidoo in 1968, a thought which doubtless set the ghosts of the pre-1955 members turning in their graves.

The period was ushered in by the 1964 snows which have become legend, as perusal of the Club's lodge log books for this period will bear out. Blizzards which blew up on 12 July (Balmain Club weekend) caught a large crowd of skiers and their cars at Guthega and continued to blow for the rest of the week. Cars were marked by poles, which in turn had to be marked by other poles in the mounting snow. Twenty eight people, including a large group of beginners, were stuck for a long weekend which ended only on Thursday when they skied out in a lull in the weather to the Island Bend turnoff by the old Kosciusko Hotel (Sponar's Inn), via Perisher Creek and Smiggins (a distance of some 10 miles). Week parties arriving in August 1964 were presented with a pure expanse of snow and had to guess where the door to Tiobunga was before digging down. To prevent the windows on the front of Tiobunga collapsing, snow had to be dug away every day and at one stage it was possible to ski right over Tiobunga without having to make it a ski jump. So great an impression did this make that the Annual Dance was called "Snowed In" and a retrek of the exodus was run the next two years (never with any of the original participants though). The heavy snows made their impact on the lodges. Both lodges sprang sundry leaks. Tiobunga was pushed 3" out of alignment and the suggestion that the vents which had appeared in the drying room would make the room more efficient, was greeted coldly by the Committee. Work parties in the following summer repaired the damage and "Christie" noted that the Tiobunga roof was now more likely to collapse under the weight of nails and Pabco than snow!

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Nineteen sixty-five (1965) turned out to be a poor snow year and utilization of the lodges slumped. This occasioned alarm and fear that the newly changed booking system allowing bookings to be made only three weeks ahead for weekends, had aggravated the situation. But the following years saw utilization revive and the new booking system continued. A minor revolution in food purchasing was also seen in 1965 with the decision, implemented by Graham Young, to use 'caterers' packs. "Christie" explained the savings which would result from this practice and suggested how members might adapt to the new procedure. The Club learned for the first time that it consumed 330 dozen eggs, 140 dozen cans of fruit juice and five hundredweight of sugar in a year. These ingredients went into the suggested menus and recipes which had adorned the kitchens since 1963. But the level of Club culinary art continued to be variable.

Membership numbers were maintained about the 460 mark, while turnover continued at about 100 a year, although in 1965 it fell to 40. In 1964 the number of women members, however, passed the number of men (262 to 231) marking the climax of a long insidious infiltration! As befits a man's organisation, women were at first only tolerated as affiliate members and as such did not have to join the YM.C.A. But they had always been numerous and in 1958 were accorded active membership (prompting the YM.C.A. to institute in 1959 Associate Membership for Ski Club Members). They were estimated at 45 per cent of Club membership in 1961, almost reached parity in 1963 and in 1964 achieved a majority. To prevent a takeover bid by the Y.W.C.A., the Committee has, since 1964, wisely refrained from publishing statistics on members broken down by sex!

The 1964-1968 period could therefore be described as one of consolidation. However, the absence of events which are grist to the reporter or historian does not mean that this was any less important a period. Club activities and life proceeded as active as ever. Committees led by John Mitchell, Derek Carrington, Don Stoddart, Bob McGregor and Paul Bradley were at work, adding to the Club's folklore and not least to the Club's finances, which looked like wiping out the Club's debts by 1970. Their efforts brought the Club to the stage where the "building bug" could once more raise its head. This occurred during Bob McGregor's Presidency and was to come to fruition as the Thredbo project under Paul Bradley. This development serves as the introduction to the next chapter.

## **Thredbo (1969-1971)**

By 1967 the Club was still enjoying the advantages of Guthega; beautiful scenery, relatively low costs, short queues and the absence of overwhelming commercialism. It had learned to live with the minor problems of the area; doubtful access and limited uphill transport. Club accommodation seemed about right for a membership of about 500 and with the good accommodation receipts of 1966 and 1967, the Club was in a position to repay all loans associated with the construction and improvements of the lodges at Guthega.

However many Club members, while closely identified with Guthega, were skiing at other resorts and it was apparent that many members wanted to ski the more challenging runs served by chairlifts and the longer T bars. The first issue of "Christie" in

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1967 even had a comment that the Club could buy a Snowcat and run a shuttle service between Guthega and Perisher and other places. There were also stirrings in the Club for building elsewhere. That same issue of "Christie", with the understatement for which it is renowned, suggested that "it would enliven the Club to build another lodge". The Editor of "Christie" at that time, Eleanor Stodart, does not recall the source of that suggestion and the relation between that suggestion and subsequent events will forever be a matter of speculation.

It is easy to forget that the Club did not always identify with Guthega. Huts at Spencer's Creek, Smiggins and elsewhere were considered in the early days. In 1957 serious discussions had been held with Kosciusko-Thredbo Ltd. about a site, and in 1959 the popular choice for a new hut was Perisher (so much for democracy!). Thoughts of building another lodge with first raised in 1964 (inspired no doubt by the difficult access to Guthega brought about by the big snow). The "Thredbo Lodge" was first discussed in 1967 within the Club administration by Bob McGregor, Rom Silinis and Don Stodart who were at that time the Club Executive. Bob McGregor raised the proposal for another lodge at the August meeting of the Club Committee and a Sub-Committee comprising Bob McGregor (Convener), Dorothy Brown, Paul Bradley, Rom Silinis and Don Stodart was appointed to investigate the construction of another lodge. Kurt Haggstrom and Alan Williams were subsequently appointed to this Sub-Committee at a General Meeting and Richard Cross and Bill Minty were co-opted.

The Sub-Committee unanimously recommended to the November General Meeting of the Club that a lodge estimated to cost \$25,000 to the second stage, be built at Thredbo. The lodge was to be built in three stages. A lodge in another area was recommended in order to give members more challenging and more variable runs, to make the Club more attractive for new members, to meet a tightening accommodation position at Guthega and to avoid putting all eggs in the Guthega basket, where snow clearance was a problem and future developments uncertain. Thredbo was the proposed site because of better access, up-hill facilities and apres ski attraction. Jindabyne was the only alternative considered since both Smiggins and Perisher had grave access problems for a Club based on weekend skiing. It was decided at the General Meeting to take an option on a suitable block, to canvass members for financial support and to consider further the actual construction proposals in May or June 1968 when the finance available would be known.

John Paynter, a Club member and then an architect with the NSW Department of Works at Cootamundra, offered to assist with the project and drew up a plan for a lodge which could be built in three stages. The plans were enthusiastically accepted by the Sub-Committee, the approach to Club members for loans was on the basis of those plans and the lodge has been built according to John's design. The cost to the second stage was envisaged at \$25,000 of which \$15,000 was to be a bank loan, \$7,000 loans by Club Members and \$3,000 from a cash surplus held by the Club. The bank loan was initially refused, but following approaches to the bank by Keith Arscott, the YMCA President, and a guarantee secured by a mortgage on the London Circuit premises of the YMCA, the loan was granted.

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The June General Meeting had already decided to construct stages I and II by voluntary labour and through the winter of 1968 final documentation and planning proceeded and the construction was enthusiastically commenced, right after the end of the ski season, on 7-8 October 1968. There were work parties every weekend right through until the following June.

There were of course many people associated with the project. There were over forty people each weekend at some of the later work parties and it is estimated that nearly 400 people have done some constructive work in connection with the lodge. The Club will always be indebted to the tradesmen in the Club who rallied around the project and in particular Bob McGregor (who as Convenor of the Building Sub-Committee organised the materials and supervised the work), Paul Bradley, Kurt Haggstorm and Peter Oram (who was President in 1969). Apart from contributing their own skills weekend after weekend they were instrumental in gaining help for the Club from other tradesmen (Fritz Moeller was one such tradesman "conned" into joining the Club so that he could install the electrical wiring for the lodge). There were other regulars at the work parties. Jock Williamson spent many hours in Canberra servicing and loading the Club's 6 ton Dodge truck purchased to transport materials for the building of the Thredbo lodge. On one occasion Jock is reputed to have taken a half-truck load of rubbish to the Thredbo dump and returned with a truck load of "rubbish" but this was put to good use at the lodge. Bob Joblin "became a carpenter" on the project and Wal Costanzo and Roger Smith, two "Tiobunga Tradesman", again assisted at work parties. Don Stodart, Secretary of the Sub-Committee, also made a substantial contribution to the building of the Thredbo lodge through his assistance in work on the documentation associated with the project, his participation in negotiations for the bank loan and in undertaking to handle enquiries, bookings and to arrange transport for work parties (This sentence inserted by the Authors). Dorothy Brown worked behind the scenes after being "lumbered" (and still is) with the arduous task of maintaining the loans register for the Thredbo project. There were shortages of workers in the early stages but the hard core appeared on most weekends and by 28 March 1969 the first timber was placed on the foundations - three months later than planned. The excavations and pouring the concrete foundations had taken nearly six months of back breaking work at each weekends, and had produced some anxieties regarding the use of the lodge during the imminent snow season. This resulted in the cooks rising at 6 a.m. on Saturdays and Sundays in order to get the workers on the job by 7.00 a.m. It also meant that on many occasions work on the lodge continued until well after 7.00 p.m.

Lockup stage was reached by mid-May when light snow fell and work parties continued unabated until the end of June and continued somewhat abated on into July. The lodge was just habitable at the end of June (for those who did not try to use the staircase!).

The workers stayed at Scoyocrafilivata Ski Lodge (known as "Palmer's" due to pronunciation difficulties) and it was in this lodge that Margot Mackie and a hardworking Catering Committee made a tremendous, perhaps critical, contribution to the continuity and eventual success of the work parties. Margot and members of her Committee made all the arrangements for the purchase, cooking and serving of food to, at times, very demanding work parties and schedules.

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The work in making the lodge habitable by June 1969 represented such a tremendous effort from those closely associated with the work and responsible for practical completion that it left a number exhausted for the winter season, an exhaustion compounded by financial difficulties.

At the end of May 1969 it became apparent that there was a deficit in the Building Account and that the costs of the project were higher than had been estimated. John Hogan, who had been elected as Treasurer of the Building Sub-Committee, had a difficult time in determining the actual expenditures. These were finally ascertained to be about \$12,000 over the budget of \$20,000 for stage I. The mild panic which resulted was largely resolved through a magnificent response to an urgent request to members for additional loans and by fully drawing on the \$15,000 bank loan, \$5000 of which had been intended for State II.

The loans made by Club members ranged up to \$750.00 and there were twenty loans of over \$200.00. A total of about \$14,000 was eventually loaned by Club members and the early repayments of the last \$5,000 instalment of the bank loan were personally guaranteed by a few Club members. This response on loans and to work parties demonstrated the abiding attachment to the future wellbeing of the Club by many members.

The final stages of the lodge are being completed at a more leisurely pace. Nineteen seventy saw the inside of the lodge almost finished and temporary access to the road constructed. The sustained effort at Thredbo was necessarily reflected in work in abeyance at Guthega and the 1971 work parties were concentrated there. Nineteen seventy-two should see the stone facing of the concrete walls and the completion of the first stage of a truly magnificent lodge. The lodge was named "Carinya" (meaning a happy home) in 1971.

Carinya represents a new era for the Club. It has already shown that it will have a high summer usage, a new feature of Club activities. Fears that it might drag people away from Guthega have not eventuated and to date it seems that lodge utilisation at Guthega is higher than ever and now very nearly at its maximum. Carinya gives members access to more varied, if more expensive skiing. It has raised cash turnover and profit to a new peak and the indebtedness of nearly \$30,000 should be paid back well within the maximum of 15 years agreed by the Club. It has also raised Club activity to the brink of what can be done adequately by a purely voluntary organisation, a point made by President Roger Smith in his 1970 Annual Report before proceeding to become only the third person to accept nomination for President for a second term.

The second focus of activity has some implications for the Club and these implications have still to work themselves out. Perhaps it will not be until the 30th anniversary of the Club that these can be truly assessed and so enable the Club to think of new lodges or replacement of the Guthega lodges.

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## **Out on the Snow (Competitive Skiing and Touring)**

Those who have persevered to this stage will doubtless be wondering why the Club was named a "ski" club. But the Club has a creditable record out on the snow. The first success came in 1952 when Club membership was boosted by a large number of young German tradesmen. They came in the main from Bavaria and were superb skiers. Three of them represented the Club at the Australian National Championships at Mount Buller; the Club subsidising them to the extent of \$88, despite its precarious financial position. These unknown men from an unknown Club took Australian skiing circles by surprise when Rudi Steiner came fourth in the slalom and Siegfried Bollinger tied with the Australian Olympic representative Billy Day, as National Champion. This first success illustrated two consistent themes; most of our men champions have come from Europe, where they learnt their skiing; and the Club has backed their endeavours. 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. Over a period, this has amounted to hundreds of dollars. The Club has always had, and still boasts a cosmopolitan character. The late 50's saw an influx of Austrians who provided the basis of our alpine strength, and Norwegians who strengthened our nordic teams. The 1957 Balmain Cup team consisted of three Australians, a Czech, an Austrian, an Italian, a Norwegian and a Pole. Our 1964 winning team contained people from Poland, Finland, Japan, Norway, Hungary (and even Australia!). Nor were these the only nationalities represented in the Club. The important thing to note is that the Club did not think in terms of nationalities, but as a Club. The Robertsons, Jones, Smiths (and Gosses) could bask in the reflected glories of the Nerdals, Dudzinskis, Parals and Kilpinnens, who were to the Club not disembodied representatives of European countries, but Hal, George, Val and Robbie (as the Christian names were rendered by Anglo-Saxon tongues unable to grasp the original). As an exercise in practical cooperation and integration the Club has been unselfconsciously effective.

Skiing competitively was recognised in 1954 when Val Paral became the first Club Captain, a position he was to hold for three years. He propelled the Club into the Balmain Cup, sought to add skill and direction to the mere enthusiasm of the past, and roped in many of the experienced skiers from Europe. George Dudzinski became Club Captain in 1958 and held the position for five years. In the ensuing twelve, whether on the Committee or not, he was always at the centre of the Club's skiing activity. Not only George, but the names of the whole family can be found in the Club's skiing records.

Competitive skiing for the Club collectively started in 1953 with slalom competitions against the Alpine Club. Our records (at least) show that we won! These competitions continued until 1957 when they were superseded by the ACT Championships. Since 1954 competitive team skiing has been catered for by the Balmain Cup. In those days (unlike today) all New South Wales top racers took part, so that competition was keen and the standard high. It took 10 years before the Cup was won fairly and squarely by the Y Ski Club. The Club ran the Balmain Cup for the first time in 1956, the big snow year, when the road was permanently closed from Perisher Creek. It was not easy to run three events in two days for 36 racers without access to the village. Yet one must

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consider that only a few years earlier the National Championships were run from Gungahron or Twynam with no recorded grumbles about a six to eight mile hike to the course for alpine events. In 1960 the Club won the Balmain Cup by half a point, helped by F.I.S. tables which favoured nordic events in which we were strong, and by a successful protest on the eligibility of some of the members of the Alpine Club team. This shattered an already strained relationship between the two clubs which took several years to heal. In 1964 the Club had its best aggregate of good skiers and won the Balmain Cup decisively. Richard Down, a spectacular and stylish skier for several years, reached his peak in the slalom in 1964. Ken Ikebe, a Japanese diplomat, rising skier Mark Dudzinski, and declining but still very competent father, George, at 41, proved a formidable downhill combination. Hal Nerdal, Peter Ormay and Robbie Kilpinnen were the mainstays of the nordic team. Since that time the Club has declined in nordic events and been variable in standard in alpine events, so our subsequent record is best passed over in silence.

Siegfried Bollinger's success in 1952 does not stand alone in individual events. Hal Nerdal who joined the Club in 1958 won the NSW (1958, 1960) and National (1959, 1960, 1961, 1962) Nordic Championships and represented Australia in the 1960 Olympic Games at Squaw Valley. Robbie Kilpinnen won the National Langlauf in 1963-64 and in 1964 set the 8 hour, 11 minute Kiandra-Kosciusko record which still stands. Bev Hannah was in the Inter-dominion Team in 1961 and in 1965 Mark Dudzinski became the youngest person selected for this team, after chalking up an impressive set of wins at varying junior championships in previous years. In more recent years Heather Minty has shown great promise as a competitive skier. In 1969 she was selected in the Inter-dominion Team. She won the NSW and Australian Junior Championships in 1970 and in both 1969 and 1971 was selected to train with the ANSF squad in Europe. She came fourth in the Commonwealth Games Ladies slalom held in St Moritz (1971).

The Club has also sought to improve its skiing standards without having to rely on imported skills. The Junior Scholarship scheme initiated in 1961, and Junior Training and Junior Championship in 1967 were steps in this direction. The basis for selection as a Junior Scholar was potential rather than standard of skiing at the time of selection, and the Club hoped that by promoting junior skiing in this way it would lay the foundations for a higher standard of skiing among Club members in later years. The Scholarship offered a week's free accommodation at Guthega, instruction from Walter Spanring and free towing for the week of the Scholarship. Initially the response was poor - on some occasions only two Juniors presenting themselves for the selection tests. But the scheme was not without some success with Heather Minty being perhaps the most notable winner. It is in fact regrettable that lack of parental interest led to the Junior Training program lapsing in 1970. Perhaps the time has come to seek to revive this scheme to raise our own champions. The lapse of this scheme is even more regrettable because it was our example which was followed by the Australian National Ski Federation, and by some other clubs with great success.

Not all members were champions, but the key to Club skiing has been enthusiasm rather than skill. Club Championships have been opportunities for all to take part. They started in 1956 when Helmut Frei became our first Men's Champion and M. Anderson

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the Ladies' Champion. Club Championships have been run in a more picnic atmosphere than competitive races and many have taken part who would not be seen dead in any other championship race (or is it, would be seen dead!). A vivid recollection to one of the authors is Ken Kerrison turning off too early in the downhill in one Club championship and going over a large snow drift at top speed. Not only did he record the longest jump of the season but also the most memorable quote uttered at 20 feet above the ground "What the Hell am I doing". The next skier followed his path but recorded a shorter jump and no memorable quote.

But if all Club members cannot be champions, they can at least tour. Guthega is an ideal position for touring and this was one of the attractions which drew the Club to Guthega. Touring has thus been more an activity in our Club than in most others, spurred on in the early days by lack of tow facilities. However, as the columns of "Christie" show, the Club has a group of hard core tow-bashers not afraid to express their views. Touring on the main range in the early days was limited by lack of shelters and the Club, inspired by George Dudzinski and Robin Miller, has urged action to repair and stock the old stockmen's huts on the main range. In 1966 Tin Hut was repaired by the Club and other huts were made habitable. Organised ski tours started in 1964 and the result was a greatly increased touring fraternity. In 1966 an organised Club touring program was commenced. In 1962 a tour from Guthega to Cabramurra by Tom Bevan and George Dudzinski over three days was a 2CA news item. In 1966 women and juniors were making it a weekend trip with parties going in opposite directions, exchanging cars and spending the nights in Grey Mare and Mawsons respectively. As organised touring increased in our Club as well as in other Canberra Clubs, participants became confused as to who was organising tours and so in 1970, a joint touring program was drawn up which provided a greater range of more varied tours than one club could run alone.

Beyond its own bailiwick the Club has played an important role in the ACT Ski Council, one of the four bodies affiliated with the Australian National Ski Federation (ANSF) The Club suggested the formation of the Council to the Canberra Alpine Club in 1957 and for many years, these two clubs constituted the Council. The first ACT Championships were held in 1958 and were won by George Dudzinski, who has represented the Club on the Council for most of the time since 1958. The Club still plays an important role on the Council, and there are now five member clubs with others on the point of joining.

## **The YMCA Link**

Many both inside and outside the Club have been confused about the nature of the Ski Club's link with the YMCA This has in the main derived from ignorance about how the YMCA Operates. The YMCA is a practical, action-oriented organisation which sets up clubs to carry out particular activities. These clubs are autonomous and aim at excellence in their particular field. The religious aspects do not loom large and people join them, not to join the YMCA, but to join a good sailing, judo, or basketball Club. These clubs usually have a good spirit of fellowship and a strong corporate spirit, and many people go on from the clubs to become active in the wider work of the YMCA

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But this is not a condition or expectation of membership. People of all religions and of none have joined and become leading members YMCA clubs.

The Ski Club was set up in 1951 just like any YMCA club. It was however in some respects different from other YMCA clubs. It was then an exclusively adult club; it operated outside Canberra and consequently away from the framework of Canberra YMCA activity; and it exercised control over greater assets and finances than other groups. These differences, and the misunderstanding of the nature of YMCA clubs led, in the first 10 years of the Club's life, to frequent suggestions that the link with the YMCA was unnecessary or even undesirable. Dropping "YMCA" from the name of the Club was raised as early as the 1952 Annual General Meeting and as late as the May 1965 issue of "Christie". In 1954 and 1959 there was serious discussion on the establishment of a separate club. This is a very real part of the Club's history, and reflected problems, which were resolved in the early 60's. An examination of how the problems were resolved explains the basis for the present excellent and mutually beneficial relationship between the YMCA and the Ski Club today.

For members the major irritant was liquor. The YMCA is not a teetotal organisation, and has never given an instruction to the Club on consumption of liquor in Club premises. But in November 1954 the Club, basing its decision on the YMCA's general attitude, determined that no liquor would be allowed in any lodge acquired by the Club. It was not as easy policy to enforce nor was it popular. It is doubtful if it would have ever been adopted if the Club had had some previous experience in running a lodge.

In 1961, the policy was quietly changed to allow consumption of liquor in the lodges. This brought the drinking, which had been going on in the bunk-rooms, into the open (although this had been done already in Canberra in 1958 with the institution of the President's Cocktail Party), but in doing so the Club kept it under control. It was an application of temperance in its real meaning and has been followed ever since. No problems have arisen from it. It removed an irritant which was blamed on the YMCA

For those running the Club, the greatest problem was the unsatisfactory legal status of the Club. It is no coincidence that the most serious discussion of establishing a separate Club arose in 1954 and 1959 when the prospect of acquiring new property focussed attention on this problem.

The normal practice with YMCA clubs was that all property vested in the YMCA but with the Ski Club's property, the status was unclear. Doubts as to whether the Club could take out insurance, purchase materials etc., dangerously limited the ability to control its assets. Enquiries by David Goss, in attempting to regularise the Kyilla lease and to purchase Tiobunga, prompted him to obtain authority from a sceptical Committee to negotiate with the Board of the YMCA to incorporate the Club. After initial hesitation the Board agreed and accepted the Club's Constitution which basically applies today. The Club adopted the Constitution in May 1961 and was incorporated in June 1961. It was a tribute to the Board's foresight (and nerves in the light of the then strained relationships) that they should agree, for it created a position unique in the Australian YMCA. The Ski Club is in fact a legal entity in its own right as is the YMCA. It owns its own property and has full powers to operate within the framework of its own

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Constitution, which also sets out its relation with the YMCA. Since incorporation there have been very few problems and relationships between the Club and the YMCA have been extremely cordial.

The links between the Club and the YMCA brings practical benefits to both and it must be admitted that the help given the Club by the YMCA has not always been widely known or appreciated by Club members.

The Club has always used the YMCA Office for bookings. The YMCA provided furniture, including mattresses, for Tiobunga, without which it would not have been possible to operate. The Y purchased the second bus in 1955, and operated it at a loss for three years. Since the London Circuit Centre was built in 1960 the Club has used it for its Dry Ski School, Get-fit Classes and more recently for meetings. The Club has an office there. And finally, the YMCA guaranteed and was largely responsible for obtaining the \$15,000 bank overdraft for the Thredbo lodge.

In return since 1961 the YMCA has received some \$800 in association fees each year. Members once had to be full members of the YMCA but since the YMCA at that stage offered few other facilities to members few actually joined. The present practice of a \$2 affiliation, collected by the Club, was introduced in 1961. The YMCA also has recruited several active workers for its general activities from the Ski Club.

The mutual benefits go further than these obvious practical ones. The Club obtains an identifiable image, and location, and a link with a larger world-wide association. There can be little doubt that the YMCA name has opened doors which might otherwise have remained closed to the Ski Club. The YMCA in turn obtains strength from the progress of the Ski Club, which it founded and which forms an integral part of its activities in Canberra. Together the YMCA and the Ski Club pioneered endeavours in adult activities and female membership in the YMCA and evolved a new pattern of mutual relationship which is unique in the YMCA organisation. We are both stronger because of the link.

## **The Character of the Club**

We have looked at the particular stages of development of the Club and its activities in different fields. It is now time to look back over the whole period to try to distil the character of the Club which has developed.

The Club has gone through three different stages and may now be embarking on a fourth. The first stage was the period 1951-54. This saw the Club as a small group (less than 100) of bus-borne nomads. The bus was the centre of the Club's life, but it did not require a great organisation. It was the period of camaraderie and intimacy of shared privations. The second stage was the period 1955-1958 where a leased lodge became a second centre to the Club's life. The membership climbed into the second century, the organisation expanded and the Club adjusted its thought processes to lodge operation. After a transitional year in 1959, when rapid expansion in membership occurred and building experience was gained in extending Tiobunga's lounge, came the third stage 1960-1968. This saw the Club owning two lodges, committed to Guthega, with membership in the 400's and finances more than doubled. It saw the establishment of

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the structure and operation of the Club and pattern of activities as we know them today and took the Club beyond the stage where even the active members could expect to know everyone. The building of Carinya lodge in 1969 could usher in yet a fourth stage.

This change and adaptation as the Club grows has been as much a characteristic of the Club as any other. The Club has not been afraid to innovate. In some periods membership requirements and bookings procedures were changed almost every year. Over the years committees, faced with the need for extra funds have tended to raise membership fees which, since 1955, have risen from \$2 to \$18 for a new member; accommodation charges (at Guthega) on the other hand have risen only 25 cents during the period. Membership revenue is 30% of accommodation revenue as compared with some 11% in 1955). Changes have arisen out of the Club's growth, and the dynamism which brought it about has been a further characteristic of the Club and one bound up with the willingness to innovate. The Club has always sought new fields to conquer and has responded to the challenges which it has had to face. The question for the 70's will be - what are the new fields? This question can hardly be answered, not even by the current Committee, because of another feature which has characterised the Club, namely that people do not stay long on the Committee. Only six people have served six years or more and only an additional eight have served four years or more (see Appendix C). In fact, in the first 20 years, 14 Committees have consisted of at least 50% new members and on only two occasions have the number of new members on the Committee been below one third of the Committee. Never have half the members of any Committee had experience on two previous Committees. This constant change is a major part of the explanation for the dynamism of the Club. Committee members work hard, are wrung out and then retire. The tendency for fresh Committees has removed inhibitions against doing things which had failed before. The Club discussed and rejected Incorporation in 1954, but in 1961 it became a reality to a Committee which knew nothing of the previous attempt. In 1961-63 it was generally accepted that major building projects had been completed. But in 1969 Carinya was built. Excessive continuity of Committees could have killed both projects. The Club has never been run by a clique of old-timers who regard the Club as their property. This is a characteristic shared by very few ski clubs and seems a unique feature which we should try to maintain, provided of course, that the essential leaven of a few older hands continues in the Club counsels.

Like the Committee, the membership itself is constantly changing. Over 100 new members join each year and therefore over 2,000 people must have belonged to the Club over the years. The other aspect that over 100 members do not rejoin each year has been a cause of concern from time to time. Many of course are transferred from Canberra as part of their job. Others are accounted for as those who tried skiing but did not like it. We have been an open Club with minimum vetting procedures or red tape as obstacles to new members. We have attracted many who wanted to try out skiing because of our dry ski school and learn-to-ski weekends. Some undoubtedly have left as they improved and wanted more facilities than Guthega offered. Perhaps this category will be reduced with the building of Carinya. Others have no doubt in time found the burdens of work, family commitments and the establishment of new houses too demanding. Whatever the causes however, the membership turnover is a source of

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strength (as well as of finance). It provides new blood and many who join to try out skiing decide to stay and become active members. If we did not have such a membership turnover we would perhaps be a very different type of Club.

Perhaps the first casualty of such a change would be the "do it yourself" nature of the Club. New members learn this immediately they apply, as they discover that attending a work party is pre-requisite for membership. The Club's lodges have been built and largely financed by its own members. The Club is operated by voluntary labour and with no paid or hired help. Just to run the Club a hard core of some 20-30 really active people is needed and these people have always been found, even if on occasions some arms have had to be twisted. This in turn has led to vigour rather than red tape being characteristic of the Club's organisation. The Club for all that is very well run, but with the minimum, rather than the maximum "organisation" to keep it that way. The result of this is the emergence of a Club, the value of whose assets has grown to around \$100,000 in ten years.

The result has also been the emergence of a club spirit, which would not be so strong without the experience of shared activity. It enables people to identify themselves with the Club. Club spirit is further fostered by the fellowship members have found in the lodges. Guthega's lack of commercial apres ski facilities has fostered apres ski activities in the lodges and this, together with the communal catering arrangements has enabled members to meet each other, which need not be the case at Thredbo or Perisher. Harry Black has noted the tracks of many members ending in matrimony and Mr Yeti's column in "Christie" testifies to this. Perhaps it also explains why many drop out of active skiing! The end result has been a Club characterised by a unique pattern of social and skiing activities, open to new members and ideas, dynamic and vigorous in its approach, which has opened up the sport of skiing to many who would not otherwise have tackled it.

All this has been achieved in the brief space of 20 years. As we look back perhaps we can permit ourselves a feeling of quiet satisfaction.

## The Future

All growth brings with it change and in change we lose some things we might have preferred to retain. The spirit of the hazardous and unpredictable bus trips to the mountains, and the days when one might expect to know all club members are gone for good, but not without regret. The new stage in which we now stand with activities in two different areas in the mountains will bring further changes. Will the club grow to 650 or 700? If so can it be run on a completely voluntary basis? Can it utilise its lodges on a membership of 550? How can unity and a club spirit be maintained with a membership of even 550 with two focuses of attention? These and many more are the questions to which the Club will have to address itself in the future.

It will be the task of future Committees to resolve them, and the greatest task of all will be the discovery of new challenges for the Club to meet, since the Club has so far progressed by settling and meeting new and different challenges. There is work on Carinya for several years' work parties even without commencing the third stage.

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Beyond that, further building can hardly be undertaken without an expansion in membership which would put the Club onto a commercial and somewhat impersonal footing. YMCA Hilton at Perisher thus seems unlikely! Perhaps the development of touring facilities on the main range offers the challenge; or new departures within the Club to promote a corporate spirit, to avoid the dangers inherent in routine operation of the inheritance from the past. There are challenges enough and there is no reason to suppose that the Club in the future will be less successful than in the past in finding them and meeting them.