

PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 22 Winter 2019

Notes from the President

Judy Thomson – Vice President

Some time ago Judy told me that, whilst very keen to maintain her involvement with the PHS, she would be happy to step down as Vice President.

Judy was the first person Pamela called upon to assist her in creating the PHS. On 25 October 2005 Judy, Pamela and I formed a Steering Committee. Judy and Pamela travelled to Queanbeyan and met with the NPWS Regional Director, Alastair Henchman, to discuss the project and met with his enthusiastic endorsement. Subsequently Dave Woods of NPWS was gathered into the group and two years later on 6 August 2007 the PHS was incorporated. At the first Annual General Meeting on 31 January 2009 Judy was elected Vice President, a position she has held to this point.

A stalwart supporter of the Society from the very start, Judy generously donated the early seed funds and has been of inestimable assistance to me, for which I remain ever thankful. She set the editorial standards of the PHS Newsletter and together with Dave Woods produced the bi-annual quality document which stands as a hallmark of the Society. Judy is continuing her active involvement with the Newsletter Group in her role as editor.

Consequently, I have approached Peter Southwell-Keely to fill the VP vacancy. We are all well aware of Peter's extraordinary and enthusiastic support of the Society and I am delighted that he has kindly accepted the role.

International Recognition for John Davis and his Book

Early last year the Society submitted John's wonderful book, *A History of the Early Development of Perisher-Smiggin's*, to the International Skiing History Association (ISHA) for consideration for an ISHA Book Award. I am delighted to advise that in a large field of publications it has been awarded an Honorable Mention.

This the second of the Society's publications to be internationally recognised and endorses our investment of time and funds. How delighted we would have been to be able to tell John and Pat in person that their priceless memories were now on the world stage.

Do make sure that your club has at least one or two copies on the club's reading shelves.

Hotel Kosciusko Project

For some years Donald Johnston has been toiling away gathering all manner of material, photographs and stories related to the Hotel Kosciusko. This included very successful calls for information through the RSVP



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column of the *Sydney Morning Herald* which unearthed a really surprising number of responses.

Sorting the data into a logical order and creating an accompanying text has been a mammoth task. The process has now reached a fifth draft. The challenge now is how best to present this work. Currently standing at 380 pages, it is at once a significant collection of the data for historical reference but probably unlikely to walk off the shelves in this form. Personally, I am amazed at the amount of data and memorabilia that Donald has unearthed.

Our thanks are due to Chris and Jenelle Brangwin for working with and enthusiastically supporting Donald.

AASHA Meeting

My thanks to all 11 PHS members who attended this collaborative event. From all reports (see page 7), it was well presented, interesting and enjoyable. Pamela and I were disappointed that we were not able to attend.

It is good that the general consensus is that AASHA is a network whose objectives have been prioritised as:

1. An annual conference,
2. Want to use the conference for the purpose of professional development,
3. Contact point for those interested in Alpine History,
4. Maintain a clear structure and
5. Act as a broker for future collaborations.

Jean Findlay

Jean Findlay was a well-known identity in the early years of both

Thredbo and Perisher Valley - best known in Perisher for her lodge Valhalla and her riding enterprise including trail rides and camping trips on the Main Range. Jean died last year and an old friend of hers, Janet Dawkins (Alexandra Ski Club), has created a fine photographic presentation of Jean's life and activities which she has presented to the Society.

The images are sensitively arranged, mounted and notated in a logical chronological fashion in A3 presentation folder. PHS archives are enhanced by this work and we are most grateful to Janet Dawkins for preserving this slice of history.

Death of Laurie Seaman

The Society learned of the recent death of Laurie William Seaman (08.01.1929 to 04.05.2019), whose father tragically perished with his friend Evan Hayes in the winter of 1928 whilst holidaying with members of the Millions Club at the Hotel Kosciusko. PHS and Union Club member, Andrew Horsley, recognised that the skis used by Seaman on the fateful day were held by the Union Club with which the Millions Club had ultimately merged. Andrew persuaded the Club that the skis should be provided better exposure and thus they are on annual rotational loan between PHS and the Thredbo Historical Society. To date we have not found a suitable location for their display, so they remain at the Thredbo Museum.

The Society and members offer their condolences to Laurie's wife Liz and his family.

On the Kosciusko Huts Association website there is

an outstanding account of the tragedy, the search and the investigation. It is a downloadable PDF.

<https://khuts.org/index.php/heritage/tourism-and-recreation/960-death-on-the-summit>

PHS Insurance Cover

Members may be comforted to know that the Society has insurance organised via the Royal Australian Historical Society of which PHS is a member. Cover is provided under two policies - Group Personal Accident and Combined General Liability.

Regards,

Phillip

NOTE

Copies of John Davis' book, *A History of the Early Development of Perisher-Smiggins*, are available by contacting PHS at: phsadmin@iprimus.com.au The cost is \$49.95 plus postage.



DIARY DATES

Hello in the Snow

4 pm Tuesday 6 August 2019
Marritz Hotel, Perisher Valley

Perisher Cup 2019

Saturday 14 September
Teams of four
(Alpine, XC, jump)
Sponsored by Perisher Resort
and SLOPES

Twelfth Annual PHS Dinner

A snowy ride in the big Charlotte Pass snowcats delivered guests to the newly-opened Stillwell Hotel at Charlotte Pass for the 12th Annual PHS Dinner on Sunday 9 June. The cosy hotel bar and restaurant was soon buzzing as members and friends caught up over welcome drinks and delicious canapés.

After a most enjoyable two-course meal, Wal Costanzo took us back to the 1950s and the early days of the Brindabella Ski Club, which began life as the YMCA Ski Club of Canberra in 1951. Early ski trips revolved around a series of old buses of dubious reliability. As we saw, would-be skiers were often obliged to push. Until 1955, when the Snowy Mountains Authority offered the club one of the three remaining cottages at Guthega, members often slept in or under the bus or dosed down in old huts at Smiggins.

With the acquisition of 'Tiobunga', the club's membership started to grow and their long-running building programme started in 1958, with additions to the southern end of the lodge. Club members, some skilled tradesmen, others enthusiastic volunteers, then built a second lodge at Guthega. 'Kylla' was opened by Sir William Hudson in July 1960. The club helped the SMA (Cooma) Ski Club (now Tate Ski Club) install a rope tow on the Tate East Ridge in 1957 and, in 1961, relocated Johnny Abbottsmith's Ski Haven Tow from Smiggin Holes to Guthega for use as a beginners' tow.

By the end of the 1960s, the club decided to build a new lodge in Thredbo, which had the advantage of better access, parking, good lifts and après ski facilities. The ill-fated 'Carinya' was built in 1968/9, with a

second stage completed in June 1997, just a month before the lodge was destroyed in the Thredbo landslide, with the loss of a club member.

The construction of the club's three lodges and extensions/rebuilds were undertaken almost entirely by club labour. As Wal showed, working together in this way built a great esprit de corps and welded together a very cosmopolitan membership.

Our thanks to Hannah McCormack, Manager Stillwell Hotel, and her staff, and to Charlotte Pass Snow Resort management for making this such a memorable event.

Below:

*The Costanzo family - Wal, Joan, Connor, Sandra and David.
Photo courtesy of Snowy Mountains Magazine*



Perisher Historical Society 12th Annual Dinner at Stillwell Hotel, Charlotte Pass



1. Leslie Ludwig and Peter Ward
 2. John and Sue Steggall, Zali Steggall and Tim Irving
 3. Judy Thomson, Brian Farmer, Lachlan McLean, Raylene Jarvis
 4. Lachlan Gray, Jessica Huggett, Lucy Blyton, Glenys Huggett
 5. Jane St Catherine, Marion Murri, Edie Young
 6. Tim Scanlon, Peter Macdonald, Andrew Cutler
- All photos courtesy of Snowy Mountains Magazine

Charlotte Pass Staff Reunion

by Rick Walkom

They came from near and far in May 2019 for a Charlotte Pass Village (CPV) Staff Reunion in Sydney organised by yours truly. When word was passed around, Larry and Nan Adler, well respected by all in the ski industry (Larry taught skiing at Charlotte Pass in the early sixties), were among the first to reply. One ex-snowcat mechanic, Danny Russell, said he would not miss it for quids and drove down to Sydney from central Qld. Another current snowcat mechanic, Nick Pierce, rushed out and killed a fatted calf, loaded some prime BBQ cuts into the

saddle bags of his motorbike and raced up from Berridale. Even mountain legend, Freddy Lunzer, extricated himself (with his wonderful partner, Christine), from a mountain-top cabin up Kosciuszko way and travelled to Sydney. Johnny Campbell, a much admired 80s ski patroller, though extremely unwell, insisted that his sisters take him along, much to the joy of all his ski buddies.

The reunion was held at Manly in the home of Rick and Linda van de Velde (Linda, an ex-ski instructor and Rick, formerly in ski merchandising). Though

given little notice, about 65 ex-CPV staff attended, including former ski instructors, lift operators ('Who-me's in CPV speak), cat drivers, ski club founders, a village doctor, lodge managers, former CPV managers and directors, ski patrollers etc. Someone was overheard to say she thought a few looked as though they were out on 'Day Release' from Cooma. All guests were banned from discussing knee and hip replacements and very wisely name tags were issued.



In my welcoming speech I posed a few questions - "What is it about skiing at Charlotte Pass that is so seductive; so life-changing for so many?"... "Is it the mesmerising beauty of the surrounding mountains?"... "Is it the camaraderie in such a small, isolated alpine community?" ... "Is it the physical exhilaration of skiing or is it the boozy nights in the Schloss Bar dancing to 'Galapagos Duck' or 'Willy's Babe Magnets' that seduces people into returning year after year?"



Willy Qua, one of Australia's finest jazz musicians, was invited to share a memorable event. He recalled 'The Great Village Vindaloo Disaster'. He related how he had travelled down from Sydney one day lugging a huge pot of his favourite curry. He placed it in the 'Cell Block' staff quarters fridge and warned all the staff not to touch it, especially those who were prone to getting the 'munchies' after a big night in the bar. His intention was to have a staff curry meal the following night. Surprise, surprise, it was the weekly 'Boat Races' in the bar and the staff couldn't help themselves. Next morning Willy got up to discover a deathly quiet village - the scheduled 8.00 cat was still parked in the village, those who had booked private lessons were milling around with no instructors in sight and the ski lifts had become 'self-loaders'.

Freddy Lunzer was the Guest of Honour (looking very much like Van Morrison) and, whilst he did not make a speech, was made well aware that the reunion was in large part a celebration of his life in the mountains for over 60 years. There are a thousand

stories (mostly hilarious) about this wonderful character. One of my fondest memories is from 1975 when Freddy woke me in the middle of the night and insisted I put my skis on. Outside, the night was perfectly still: there was a fresh dump of sparkling powder snow, illuminated by a full moon. The fact that the snow was knee deep did not faze Freddy in the slightest. He pointed up to the top of Little Stilwell Mountain high above the Chalet and, in total silence, we sidestepped (yes, sidestepped) the entire way - a seriously loopy two-hour ordeal. The reward - a never to be forgotten sunrise over the Main Range and half a chook that Freddy must have purloined from the Chalet kitchen. We then skied the deep snow down into Wrights Creek before crossing over Spencers Creek to the base of Guthries Poma. A silly grin appeared on Freddy's bronzed Austrian face when a counterfeit lift key magically appeared in his hand (curiously he was never a lifty). The lift was started and away we went, leaving two glaringly obvious tracks all the

way up the lift line. By the time we put the first tracks down the home slope to the Chalet front door, the manager was waiting for us with arms tightly folded. He glared at the tracks up the hill, glared at the culprits, shook his head and went to breakfast!

As many would remember, Freddy was usually employed as a snowcat driver. Rather than wear the company uniform, Fred made his own - a neat jacket made out of a chaff bag and a matching chaff bag cone-shaped beanie. He always drove his beloved Bombardier cat flat out, with one hand on the wheel and the other holding a 'roll-er-own' in a long-stemmed cigarette holder.

The party went on for many hours - the laughter grew louder, the porky-pies more ridiculous, the true confessions more shocking and the grog situation dire. It was a wonderful celebration of a time when young lives were thrown together and lasting friendships forged in a unique 'Island in the Snow'.

*Photos courtesy of
Randy Weiman - Hot Shots Thredbo*

Sixth AASHA Conference

by Peter Southwell-Keely

The Northern Tasmanian Alpine Club (NTAC) hosted the Sixth Australian Alpine and Snowsports History Association (AASHA) Conference at the Ben Lomond Ski Resort on 3-5 May 2019. Ben Lomond is about one hour south east of Launceston and the final approach to the resort is via the spectacular 'Jacob's Ladder', a heavily-switchbacked road up a 45 degree slope with incomplete safety barriers. The Ben Lomond plateau is very rocky and treeless with low tussocky grass. Delegates stayed at NTAC, the Tasmanian Rover Ski Club and one or two other lodges.

The conference opened with the usual Friday drinks, nibbles, soup and bread at NTAC, a very warm and convivial start to proceedings. Greg Rowlings (NTAC President) and Genevieve Fahey (AASHA President) welcomed delegates.

The conference proper began at 9.00 am on Saturday 4 May with Graeme Holloway outlining the vicissitudes of his early commercial enterprises, mainly ski gear rentals, during the sixties and seventies at Ben Lomond when he was the first commercial operator in the resort. Roger Nutting then described the substantial number of mountain huts that have appeared around Ben Lomond, a number of which still exist.

Ambrose Canning outlined the early history of the resort from 1935 to 1965 including the difficult construction of 'Chateau Dumitchmill', a hut named after its three builders Alan Dumaresq, Bill Mitchell and Ern Mills. The Chateau is located within metres of, and protected from the weather by, Giblin Peak and is only a short distance from, and 3 m lower than, Legge's Tor, the second highest peak

in Tasmania. Ambrose then showed a fascinating film of the 1939 construction of the 'Chateau' which can be found at <https://vimeo.com/129063320>.

After lunch and talks on the flora, fauna and geology of Ben Lomond by Stan Matuszek and John McDougall, Ken Dawes hosted a parade of skiing fashions through the ages featuring many of the delegates as mannequins. Ken has been collecting historic ski clothing for decades and the parade was a real highlight of the conference.

Karen Smythe (Falls Creek Historical Society) outlined plans for the 2020 conference at Falls Creek and was followed by brief area reports from the other societies.

The AGM of AASHA took place following afternoon tea. Genevieve Fahey (NAMA) was re-elected as President with the following committee members



*Jacob's Ladder, the switchback road to Ben Lomond.
Photo by Peter southwell-Keely*



– Alan Fredericks (Thredbo HS), Chris Brangwin (Perisher HS), Karen Smythe, (Falls Creek HS), Greg Rowlings (Northern Tas AC), Michael Wadsley (Ski Club of Tas), Jason Nightingale (NAMA Mt Hotham), Ron Finneran (Disabled Winter Sports), Graeme Holloway (Observer, Thredbo HS), Peter Southwell-Keely (Observer, Perisher HS).

A wonderful conference dinner was held in NTAC during which Graeme Holloway described the NTAC involvement in the conception and construction of the Jacob's Ladder road and particular problems with its construction. After dinner Tony Gardner and Shann Turnbull reminisced about the 1955 Australian Championships held at 'Little Hell' (Ben Lomond) and we were treated to some great old footage of the event.

On Sunday, delegates undertook one of three walking trips to (1) Chateau Dumitchmill, the Summit Hut and Legge's Tor or (2) 'Little Hell' or (3) around Ben Lomond Resort.

Delegates then took lunch and farewelled the resort at 3.00 pm. A wonderful conference was had by all and many congratulations are due to Greg Rowlings, his committee and all the extra helpers. It was a rare treat to see Ben Lomond as we may not have the opportunity again.



*Photos from top:
Parade of skiing fashions
NTAC Hut
Ben Lomond
Photos by Peter Southwell-Keely*

Three weeks in Red Hut. Part 2

by Brian (The Admiral) Anderson, Liz (Betty) Armstrong (nee Swain) and Peter (Pete) Stitt

Some further highlights from the June 1953 trip to Red Hut by five young members of the Sydney Bush Walking Club (SBW). See Newsletter 21 for Part 1.

Ski Lessons

Apart from a few small drifts, the only large areas of skiable snow when we arrived were about 3 km up the Summit road and on the Main Range side of the Snowy River, so this is where we went to 'perfect' our virtually non-existent skiing skills.

For instruction we had a book sold by Paddy Pallin titled 'Frozen Lessons'. We would read this and one by one, try to emulate the instructions on, say, how to execute a snow plough turn, with the others looking on and providing critical advice. At the bottom of the slope you either took your skis off and walked up, sometimes on the grass beside the drift, or herringboned up on the snow. We were all fit, however the vertical metreage (footage in those days) was minuscule compared to now.

Although by the end of the three weeks there was enough snow for the Chalet tow to operate, some mechanical problem prevented this from happening and even if it had, we would not have been able to afford it. The result was that five fit young bushwalkers became even fitter and acquired at least basic skiing skills, as in the occasional stem turn - really!

Johnnie Abbottsmith

One glorious morning early in the piece, we were standing around in the sun outside Red Hut drinking tea and coffee whilst in the process of making a bushwalker's snap decision (a process that might take up to a couple of hours of animated discussion) on what to do that day, when up the road walked one Johnnie Abbottsmith (a pioneer character of the NSW ski fields) with (shock horror) Whisky, a dog, in the National Park. Johnnie was going in to do some work on the Ski Tourers rope tow in the Lee-Northcote Basin. Would we be available to help with some heavy lifting? Snap decision made and we all took off with Johnnie for the day.

On the way Johnnie explained that Whisky was the lead mutt in his sled team; however the dog team had not been the success that he'd hoped. He said that the twin problems were that Oz snow is much wetter and heavier and the terrain somewhat steeper than in Alaska and northern Canada where dog teams were used.

A pleasant day was had walking in to the Basin in glorious weather, inspecting Kunama Hutte, and the tow hut, and assisting Johnnie. A day or so later when the weather was lousy and the snap decision for the day was to play cards and maybe take a walk down to the Chalet, Peter went back to the tow hut to help Johnnie once more.



And in May, three years later, Pete broke his right leg skiing outside Kunama Hutte, the first broken leg of the 1956 season, courtesy of those non-safety US Army disposal Kandahar bindings. He was carried out on a stretcher.

A few months after that Kunama Hutte was destroyed in an avalanche (19 years old Roslyn Wesche was killed) and the tow hut burnt down some three weeks later.

Rosso and the Chalet Doctor

We discovered that the Chalet doctor was female, rather unusual in those days, and not only female but also young and seriously cute.

Later on, when the snow had built up a bit, one morning saw us skiing on the slopes outside the Chalet, on snow all of 200 mm deep. Rosso suddenly fell very heavily; it turned out that he had run one ski through a loop of fencing wire partially buried in the snow. He got to his feet rather groggily and, having taken a glove off and felt around his face, he announced, almost in triumph, "I'm bleeding, I'm bleeding, I'll have to see the doctor".

We all gathered around and sure enough Rosso was bleeding copiously from his lower lip:

he had put a tooth through clean through it. Rosso was ceremoniously escorted to the surgery whereupon the doctor said that she would stitch his lip. As she was concerned about the possibility of concussion, she also announced that that we should leave Rosso at the Chalet for observation and come and pick him up later in the day.

The weather packed it in shortly thereafter so the rest of us retreated to Red Hut. Late in the day Pete went down to the Chalet to rescue Rosso from the clutches of the doctor. Turned out that the needles were blunt and the cat gut old and stiff (for which the doctor apologised profusely), so the stitching had been fairly painful and although Rosso was deemed not to have been concussed, he had taken a nasty knock. He had been well looked after at the Chalet after 'The Treatment', nonetheless it was a rather sore and sorry Rosso who trudged back to Red Hut through the snow late that afternoon.

The Everest Party

When news came through that Ed Hillary and Tenzing Norgay had succeeded in climbing Everest, the Chalet organised a celebratory party and kindly invited the Red Hut mob. To us it was a case of Chalet = warm, Red Hut = cold to bloody freezing (literally). So any excuse to go to the Chalet... besides, they had, wonder of wonders, flush dunnies.

We attended in our 'very best' attire, eager as ever to be in the nice warm Chalet. However that night the heating in the lounge was on High +++ and all of us found that we began to

shiver, with increasing intensity. We ended up leaving early to return to our sub-zero Palace. The shivering stopped almost as soon as we left the Chalet, however we had a walk back in deep snow on an ink black night.

And a few months later, Peter plus a few other Aussies in Auckland, having just purchased ice axes, found themselves invited by members of the Auckland Section of the New Zealand Alpine Club to join a crossed ice axes Honour Guard for now Sir Ed Hillary and George Low on their return to NZ. We felt total frauds, but appreciated the invite; even more so the invite to the talk that Ed and George gave a few nights later to their home branch of the NZ Alpine Club.

The Admiral and the Blizzard

Jean Moppett, wife of Tom, then President of the SBW, had a lot of back country skiing experience and took a motherly interest in our plans. Jean offered sage advice on a range of issues, including when caught in a heavy blizzard, don't go outside to answer calls of nature. Rather use a can and get rid of the contents later. The Admiral considered this to be "Discuussting".

Then our 'Big Blizzard' struck. By the evening of the second day or third day, the Admiral was still holding out, but going increasingly crossed eyed with the effort. After dinner and a game of cards, we went to bed. At about 9 pm and with the blizzard at what we considered to be crescendo status (we learned what true crescendo status was, some hours later)

the Admiral announced that he could stand it no longer and that he was going outside to answer a VERY URGENT call of nature. Accordingly he got up, got dressed and disappeared, like Titus Oates, into the blizzard.

Meanwhile the four of us waited and waited and waited, getting increasingly alarmed as time went by. Eventually we decided that a rescue expedition was called for, so Rosso and Pete got up and got dressed. Just as we were about to open the door there was a thump, the door opened and in a flurry of snow the Admiral, all 6' 4^{1/2}" (194 of them centimetre things) of him, fell flat on the floor, a shivering mess. He was promptly dragged in and the door shut.

On leaving the Hut the Admiral had found himself standing knee deep in powder snow. Even if he dropped his pants, in squatting, his bum was going to be in the snow. With perfect prescience the Admiral perceived the inconvenience of this and staggered about (literally, in the dark and with massive gusts screaming over Charlotte Pass) until he found a scour behind a large rock.

The scour was a maelstrom of snowflakes. With his pants down the snow rapidly built up on his hairy legs, not unlike dags of mud on the wool of a sheep. With the very urgent call of nature answered, he then had to find his way back to Red Hut. He was only about 50 m away downwind, but it was pitch black, with no lights in the Hut, a screaming blizzard and a weak torch. After a considerable amount of stumbling about he made it to the door.

We got a blanket around the Admiral, got his pants off and commenced to knock the snow (much of which had turned to ice) off his legs. We suspected that The Admiral appreciated the girls' efforts in this operation more than that of the boys. And then back to bed.

All very amusing in retrospect, however there could have been serious consequences. It was deemed that Jean Moppett had offered sage advice indeed.

And a few hours later we all awoke with the wind truly screaming and Red Hut shaking. Comparing notes the next morning we found that we had all been lying awake in fear and trembling that Red Hut was going to come apart around us.

The Chalet Over-Snow Transport

The Chalet had obtained about six of the US Army disposal vehicles (Weasels) for over-snow transport. They were small, seating perhaps six, fitted with rubber tracks, skid steering and a canvas canopy.

Looking back at it, experience in

operating these machines was limited. After the Big Blizzard there were quite a few people to move out of the Chalet back to Smiggin Holes and a heap of powder snow to get through, with more falling.

Rather than sending say, two machines unloaded down to Smiggins and back to pack down the snow on the road, about four were fully loaded up and set off. Some 50 m short of the Chalet gate posts (they are still there), the first machine ran into a blinding snow flurry. Instead of simply letting go of the controls and waiting for the visibility to improve, the driver took a hard right and went straight into the creek. If memory serves us correctly two other machines pulled a track in the deep snow en route to Smiggs, leaving one to get through unscathed.

With disabled Weasels, people and luggage scattered along the road between the Chalet and Smiggins a major rescue operation ensued. Luckily the weather improved.

The Sleeping Bag

With a clapped out sleeping bag and three weeks in Red Hut fast approaching, to be closely followed by a skiing, tramping and climbing trip to NZ (the trip turned out to be a year), Pete decided he needed a replacement. And, again with limited funds, what else to do but make it. A walled sleeping bag was considered, but rejected as being beyond the designer's sewing capabilities. Col Putt suggested a three layer bag in which the inner layer zig zagged back and forth between the two outer layers.

This was considered doable, the disadvantage being that it required a little more material and would be slightly heavier than a walled bag. Against this there would mostly be three layers of material (plus Superdown) between the occupant and the outside world and a minimum of two layers; so it would be warmer for a given quantity of down filling. A high quality light weight japara was located at the local sail maker.

Paddy Pallin and John Morgan (then Paddy's right hand man) were interested in the project and generously offered to supply 550 Loft Superdown (the best then available) at a good discount.

The problem of the light muddy colour of the japara was solved by SBW club member Alan Wilson supplying a bright, almost fluorescent green dye. This needed an organic solvent (Alan prescribed petrol), with the colour to be fixed by ironing; after a (very) careful drying. With all the technical and financial problems solved, construction proceeded apace.



In use, the sleeping bag was a great success; its only problem was that the ironing had done absolutely nothing to fix the bright green dye. The result was that in the early days of use, and especially in Red Hut when it was brand new, a leprechaun would emerge from it each morning, to the amusement of the other four members of the expedition. Must have been contagious since, some mornings, Betty seemed to have collected the odd smudge of green dye.

Après Ski Activities

In a small hut, crowded with people and gear, where evening temperatures were generally hovering just above freezing and occasionally well below, where there were no tables, no chairs and two hurricane lamps, one of which was often in the kitchen when dinner was being cooked, après ski activities can be best described as limited. And in those days we were virtually teetotal.

In these conditions, reading was confined to daylight hours and particularly to poor weather days. The main entertainment



was playing cards. Generally two people would cook dinner, mostly commencing before dark. The other three would sit on the lower bunks in their sleeping bags playing cards. Dinner would be eaten on our knees (in our sleeping bags up to the waist) with more card playing after dinner.

Bev and Betty each brought along newly purchased mouth organs with the intention of learning to play and thus entertain us. However the instruments proved to be seriously out of tune and the two budding musicians soon gave up on the exercise - cheers from the boys.

After our discussions with Johnnie Abbotsmith on his problems with dog teams, Pete set out to design a mechanical equivalent, with ribald advice from the rest of the crew. This required less light than reading and many sketches resulted. All versions had a single track and two skids, as for a modern skidoo. The final design had a tray mounted on two skids with a seat at the front, pulled by a single track. Power was to be by a single cylinder 4 stroke Briggs & Stratton motor mounted on the track and steering by a bar that could slew the track in a similar manner to Chinese rotary hoe drawn cart. A few years later the first Skidoos appeared with the same Briggs & Stratton motor.

And there were lengthy and sometimes philosophical discussions.



Epilogue

Pete Stitt wrote part of this story fifty nine years later in August 2012, sitting in Southern Alps Ski Club Lodge at Charlotte Pass, looking across the valley to where Red Hut once stood. It was crushed in the thaw following the record 1964 snow season.