

# PERISHER HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Issue 2 June 2009

## President's Report

I am delighted to report that the Perisher Historical Society (PHS) is building momentum at a manageable pace as you will read in this newsletter. The committee has achieved a comfortable understanding of our direction and priorities. We are accepting that a 'home' for the Society is a little way off, so as you will read, static display of memorabilia and our mission is the immediate course.

A goodly portion of the activity is involved in spreading the word that the Society is a reality. To this end the second Annual Dinner is a great catalyst. It was great to have gathered up such a wonderful range of people for the dinner, who have all enjoyed the area and contributed so much to skiing development by their involvement. My thanks to those who attended for their enthusiasm and support.

Whilst our bank balance is growing, there will be much demand on our funds as time moves forward; so we are very grateful to The Man from Snowy River Hotel for their generous assistance in hosting this important fundraising event.

As the word spreads, so does the feedback from people with information and memorabilia,

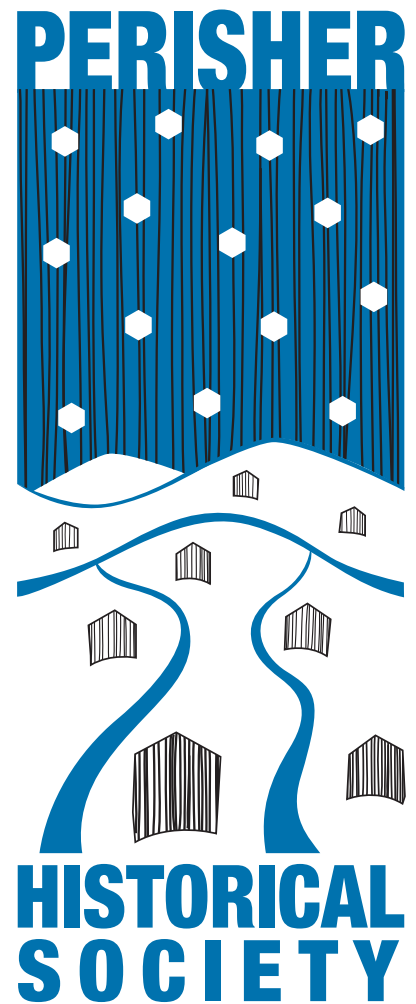
which is so encouraging. The committee is enthusiastic about the Ski Lodges History Project which we believe will do much to spread the word to ski club members and thus unearth important data and memorabilia.

My sincere thanks to the committee for their continuing support and enthusiasm and we look forward to the release of the promised web site shortly.

Philip Woodman

## NSW Ski Association Records

His time as President of the NSW Ski Association many years ago prompted PHS President, Philip Woodman, to ask the question – 'do the past records of that association exist, and if so, would they be willing to pass them on to the PHS?'. After making contact with Wendy Wilkinson, Executive Officer for NSW Snow Sports (formerly NSW Ski Association), an arrangement has been made for the PHS to collect the boxed items and see what precious information exists for historical review and archiving.



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# Sponar's Chalet (Hotel Kosciusko) and KAC turn 100

Over the last few years a number of lodges have been celebrating 50 year anniversaries. This year PHS would particularly like to recognise and congratulate Sponar's Chalet (originally known as Hotel Kosciusko and colloquially as 'The Pub') and the Kosciusko Alpine Club (KAC) on their shared centenary.

Hotel Kosciusko was pivotal in providing tourism accommodation and developing snowsports away from the Kiandra area. Completed in 1909 and opened for that year's snowseason, it was part of a tourism push in the first decade of the twentieth century by the NSW Government that also included the Summit Road to the top of Mt. Kosciusko and 'new' Bett's Camp. 'The Creel' lodge at Waste Point was also part of those early initiatives and provided accommodation for tourists after it was vacated by the men who built the road and the Hotel Kosciusko. The Hotel Kosciusko and its adjacent ski runs would be for many guests their introduction to the snow and, for some, the inspiration to form clubs and build lodges a little further up the road at what is today Perisher Valley and Smiggin Holes.

The stately grandeur of the former Hotel Kosciusko was never going to be reinstated by the government after the 1951 fire, but Tony Sponar saw the potential of the remaining former staff quarters and in 1959 resurrected the building and opened up Sponar's Lakeside Inn (Sponar's Chalet). Today Sponar's Chalet is owned and managed by Penny Miller and Peter Abbott.

The fond memories of guests of the former Hotel Kosciusko are well captured in the following passage from memoirs recently donated by Olive Cann to the PHS:

*It was quite sad when the fire took the old 'Hotel Kosciusko' and it disappeared overnight, though, luckily no lives lost. It had developed a sense of presence + character, and nowadays, (at my age of 85 years) when I go up the mountains to see the flowers in summer, I always see it still, a gracious, gabled building, right in front of the staff quarters,*

*- that now being 'Sponars'. An interesting building too, but old 'Hotel Kosciusko' sits etched on my mind. People who have stayed here will always speak of this place with nostalgia - though now there are not many of us left to remember!*

A good historical account of the Hotel Kosciusko can be found in Rick Walkom's book - 'Skiing Off the Roof' - and a summary is given in the NPWS 2009 winter edition of Resort Round-up. A précis of KAC history can be found on the KAC website at [www.kac.org.au/history.html](http://www.kac.org.au/history.html) but a more comprehensive history is just around the corner in a forthcoming publication by KAC historian - Peter Southwell-Keely.



*'A gracious gabled building' that 'had developed a sense of presence and character' - Olive Cann (image courtesy of the Laurie Bell collection).*



*An aerial view of the Hotel Kosciusko in 1946 (source: SMH)*



*All that remained of the Hotel Kosciusko after the 1951 fire (image courtesy of the Laurie Bell collection).*



*Sponar's Chalet today - remnants and renovations of the original Hotel Kosciusko (photo by Dave Woods).*

## Display Cabinets

Perisher are generously providing space for a large display cabinet to be built at the southern end of the Skitube building this winter. The cabinet will provide an opportunity to display some of the items donated to the PHS as well as promote resort history and the PHS itself. The committee is planning to rotate items over time so that visitors have something new to look forward to. Perisher may provide another display cabinet located in the Perisher Centre next season.

## Ski Lodges History Project

Redwood Lodge member, PHS committee member and retired heritage architect, Donald Johnston, has committed his expertise to undertake the Ski Lodges History Project. Donald's extensive experience will be invaluable for this project which will capture a wide range of information including the social history surrounding ski lodge and club creation, a profile of their foundation members and resort building developments across the Perisher Range.

To date, much history has resided in various sources, including published club books, unpublished documents, files, letters and personal memoirs. This project is an attempt to collate such information into one database which would be continually updated by the PHS as more history comes to light and as prior recorded facts are reviewed for their accuracy. It is envisaged that these data will be lodged on the PHS web site and with links to each club's own web site to increase the knowledge base and improve information accessibility. Donald is already trialling a template on his own lodge.

In the next few months, Donald will be seeking a representative from each lodge who can coordinate

and collate historical information, as well as being an ongoing contact between the lodge and the PHS. Information Donald will be seeking for the database will include:

- the type of group and the reason for coming together;
- a profile of founding members who turned the concept into reality;
- the number of initial members and the number of current members;
- a history of the building; and
- the significant contributions made by some of the members to the club or lodge over the years in areas like social and sporting events, administration and maintenance.

If you would like to contact Donald before he contacts you, please email: [johnston@acenet.com.au](mailto:johnston@acenet.com.au)

## Ron Deane - Vale (by Scott Wheeler)

Snowy Mountain's tourism pioneer Ron Deane passed away recently aged 82 after a lengthy battle with cancer.

Ron's links to the region go back to the fifties when he purchased Beaver Tours and conducted popular Snowy Hydro tours from Cooma. Spurred on by this success and the interest in the snowfields generally he went on to purchase motels and lodges and later, using his large Sydney coach company Clipper Tours, introduced countless thousands of people to the region via the popular ski tour programmes. At the height of weekend coach tour popularity in the 1980s, Clipper Tours would regularly run up to 21 escorted coach tours every weekend.

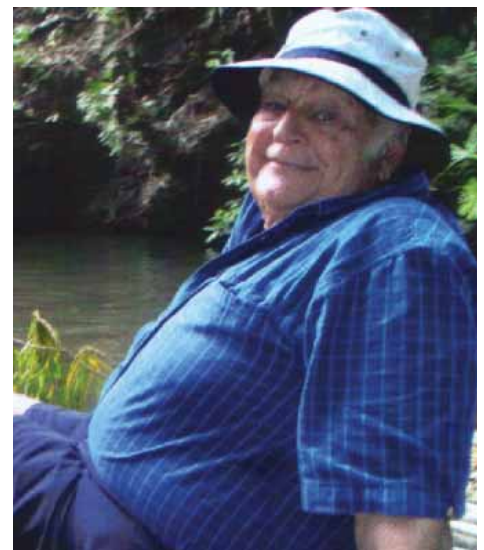
His first significant purchase inside the Kosciuszko National Park was the large Ski Rider Hotel Motel complex in Wilson's Valley. Using that as his base he ventured further into

the Perisher Ranges with purchases of The Matterhorn, Perisher View and Corroboree Ski Lodges. In 2001 Ron purchased The Stables Apartment complex which enabled the group to offer all standards of mountain accommodation in the Perisher area.

From very humble beginnings, Deane's Snow is now the largest 'on snow' accommodation provider in the NSW Snowy Mountains and continues to be a major tourism stakeholder. Even in his latter years Ron was still very committed to his original vision and was excited by the opportunities the recent lease extension and new bed offer gave to the region, both of which he committed the company to.

He did express disappointment that he did not see the Perisher Village Plan come to fruition after all these years, because he firmly believed it would breathe new life into the region and serve as a catalyst for more investment, culminating in Perisher's recognition as the pre-eminent snow destination, a vision he shared from the 1960s.

The Deane family plan to continue the business Ron started over forty years ago but without a doubt it sadly is an end of an era, with the passing away of one of our local tourism's more colourful characters.



Ron Deane (image courtesy of the Deane Family).

## Ted Winter - Vale

It is also with regret that we note the passing of Ted Winter – poet, athlete, high school teacher, bushman, a fierce advocate for the preservation of the Kosciuszko huts, a foundation member of Yeti Alpine Ski Club in Perisher Valley and a passionate tourer of the Snowy Mountains – on skis and on foot. At the age of 100 years, Ted left an inspiring legacy of achievements and contributions to this country, including representing Australia in pole-vaulting at the Empire Games in Sydney in 1938 (an early version of the Commonwealth Games). With his extraordinary athletic prowess Ted loved the challenge of touring in the wildest storms, day and night, and traversing the hardest terrain.

Ted was always keen to impart his knowledge to younger and older folk alike, always wanting to share his passion and enthusiasm for the natural wonders of the Snowy Mountains and his skill in navigating with confidence through the mountains. Introduced to skiing in 1935, Ted was never a downhill skier, always championing cross-country skiing and touring and even making his own skis. Ted was instrumental in the planning for a lodge at Perisher Valley and in the summer of 1962/63 helped to construct Yeti Alpine Ski Club. Skiing well into his mid-80s, Ted spent his latter years in a retirement village at Faulconbridge in the Blue Mountains – an area where he lived and explored for many years when he wasn't traversing the Snowy Mountains.

Perhaps Ted Winter was best summed up by a fellow journeyman – Paddy Pallin:

*'Lean as a greyhound, tough as a snow gum, the survivor of many a storm, Ted Winter probably knows the Snowy Mountains better than any other person.'*



*Ted Winter in his element with Mt. Jagungal in the background (image courtesy of Reet Vallak).*

## Another Successful Dinner

The evening of Saturday 6 June will be remembered as another successful dinner marking a major social and fund raising event for the PHS. This year Brian and Anne Smith kindly hosted the dinner at The Man from Snowy River and catered for the 77 guests with a fine three-course meal. Capital Wines kindly provided a tasting of their Canberra region cool climate wines for guests as they arrived. Besides allowing old ski pals to reminisce, the evening included three very interesting presentations. Donald Johnston introduced the Ski Lodges History Project while Bert Gardner presented an interesting account of his early days of skiing, building Orana Lodge and how he made his own skis from spotted gum and remnant toe-plates salvaged from the ruins of the burnt-out Hotel Kosciusko. Bert then donated these skis to the PHS, for which we are very grateful.

The main post-dinner presentation was left to Kosciusko Alpine Club (KAC) member and historian, Peter Southwell-Keely, who gave a fascinating chronology of skiing history in the Snowy Mountains, the development of KAC and its contribution to Australian snow sports. The essence of Peter's presentation was gleaned from his recently completed book which should be available in the next few months – we are all looking forward

to this publication and will promote it in the next newsletter.

Perisher Historical Society is most grateful to The Man from Snowy River Hotel for generously donating the profit of \$2,100 from the dinner to the Society.



*Dinner guests at The Man from Snowy River Hotel – fine food and history were enjoyed by all (photo by Dave Woods).*



*PHS Secretary/Treasurer, Pam Woodman, receives Bert Gardner's kind donation of home-made skis that he built in 1952 from spotted gum, including toe-plates retrieved from the ruins of the Hotel Kosciusko (photo by Dave Woods).*



Donald Johnston presenting an outline of his Ski Lodges History Project (photo by Dave Woods).



KAC historian, Peter Southwell-Keely, entertaining dinner guests with a chronology of people, places and events central to the early development of skiing and KAC (photo by Dave Woods).

## PHS Networking Working!

An unexpected benefit of establishing the PHS came to light when an inquiry was received from Danielle Ecuyer - the daughter of Jean-Claude Ecuyer. Jean-Claude was an iconic Swiss ski instructor (although he was naturalised in 1961) who was instrumental in the development of professional ski instruction in Perisher Valley. He was also the co-builder of Perisher View Motel and Chalet Chez Jean.

With help from PHS, Danielle has contacted a number of Perisher identities, who were friends and/or colleagues of her father throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

## PHS Committee Elected

As flagged in the last PHS newsletter, the inaugural PHS Annual General Meeting was held on 31 January 2009. The 14

members present at the meeting provided a quorum from which the following office-bearers were elected to replace the original steering group:

President – Philip Woodman  
Vice-president – Judy Thomson  
Secretary/Treasurer – Pam Woodman  
Committee Member – Garry Huggett  
Committee Member – Donald Johnston  
Ex-officio Member (Perisher) – Peter Brulisauer  
Ex-officio Member (NPWS) – Dave Woods



PHS members at the inaugural Annual General Meeting held in Jindabyne on 31 January 2009. Back Row (left to right) – Judy Thomson (Vice-president), Lynne Murray-Walker, Pam Woodman (Secretary/Treasurer), Philip Woodman (President), Garry Huggett (Committee), Dave Woods (NPWS representative), Chrissie Webb, Peter Brulisauer (Perisher representative). Front Row (left to right) – Pat Davis, John Davis, Max Old, Pat Edmondson, Sue Edmondson.  
Photo by Fred Murray-Walker.

## Your Committee Members Profiled

### Philip Woodman (President)

I was introduced to skiing in 1956 by my uncle Phil Green of Merriment Ski Club. On Wynyard Station, the year after I left school, I overheard three people discussing building a ski lodge. I then joined and helped to build Ku-ring-gai Lodge where I met my wife Pamela who later became Booking Secretary. I played

my part in administration and maintenance of the lodge.

Numerous members of Ku-ring-gai have been actively involved in the sport and its administration and so I went to a few Perisher Ski Association meetings. After a break of a few years I went to an AGM of what was by then the NSW Ski Association. Keith Line dragooned me to be Secretary of the Perisher Zone; I was unaware this made me the Zone nominee to the NSW Ski Association committee. Apparently I must have had too much to say at the meetings as at the end of the year I was nominated as President. This meant involvement with Australian Ski Federation on which I served for 10 years including acting as Vice-President to Peter Bailey and Geoff Henke.

Skiing seems to have provided leadership to sport in many areas including the sensible approach to the integration of professional athletes and the development forward planning - to mention just two. Pamela and I have both loved being involved with skiing, the Snowy Mountains and have had wonderful enjoyment from the camaraderie enjoyed by skiers.

### Judy Thomson (Vice-president)

I fell in love with the Snowy Mountains, Perisher Valley and Ku-ring-gai Alpine Lodge (KAL) on my first visit in 1965. By 1968, lessons from Adam Zapenski and Bill Foster and attendance at KAL work parties had given me some basic skiing skills and KAL membership, so I took off for a job in Switzerland which allowed me to ski every weekend. Back in Australia in the mid 1970s, I was introduced to cross-country skiing by some Victorian visitors and spent many happy hours bushwalking on skis, standing around in blizzards taking times for cross-country

paces and enjoying the wonderful camaraderie, songs and stories associated with langlaufing. For many years I've been lucky enough to share downhill skiing weeks at Perisher with Pam Woodman and more recently we've teamed up to get the Perisher Historical Society off the ground.

### **Pamela Woodman (Secretary/ Treasurer)**

My introduction to Perisher and its surrounds was in a three day bush walk in January 1963 which included camping out one night on the side of Mt. Twynam. My skiing days commenced in 1964, skiing every year except for years off having children, Tim and Sarah, who both ski and their children have now been introduced to Perisher. So I have put in the necessary hours beside race courses and enjoyed some involvement with disabled skiers. Touched with the beauty of the area both in winter and summer I have much difficulty leaving each time, finding any excuse to come back. I have been looking after the running of Ku-ring-gai Alpine Lodge for some twenty five years now. Through Philip I have met many interesting people from his early days of Perisher, I realised that I needed to take the opportunity and record their memories.

### **Donald Johnston (Committee)**

My interest in skiing and the Perisher Resorts area began in 1958 (age 17) when as an architectural undergraduate working for the then Consultant Architects to the Kosciusko State Park Trust, I was given the task of preparing many architectural drawings for some of the Park's buildings and private ski lodges,

as well as attending site meetings during construction over a five year period. As a foundation member of Redwood Ski Lodge in North Perisher since 1963, I have keenly observed the growth of the resort areas over the past 50 years. Having a Heritage Architectural background also prompted my interest in joining the Perisher Historical Society. As a committee member I am currently preparing the Ski Lodges History Project for the web site database.

### **Garry Huggett (Committee)**

I was raised in Cooma and commenced working for NPWS in 1971 where I met many of the people who were influential in shaping the ski industry. My appointment as head of the NPWS Resort Development Control section in 1986 entrenched my connection with snowsports where I oversaw many of the developments in each of the resorts. I left NPWS in 1997 at which time I held the position of Resort Manager. My connection with the ski resorts continued when I worked in the Property and Development section for Kociuszko Thredbo P/L where I spent seven years. I am currently a practising solicitor in Jindabyne.

### **Peter Brulisauer (Perisher)**

I have spent every winter since 1975 in the resort where my parents Kurt and Di Brulisauer operated well known hospitality businesses including Kurt's Keller and the Valley Inn in the early 1970s. As CEO of the Perisher Ski Resort, I'm a keen skier and 'telemarker' and I have a keen interest in the history of the resort and the history of snowsports generally.

### **Dave Woods (NPWS)**

My interest in snow sports evolved as a youngster walking and skiing the Perisher Range in the 1970s and from working with the NPWS in Kosciuszko National Park over the past 20 years. Residing in Perisher Valley in the 1980s and Thredbo in the early 1990s, I have had a long held interest in all aspects of Australian history with a particular enthusiasm for the unique role and relationship skiing and resorts have played in shaping the park and south-eastern Australia. Since 2000 I have been the Resorts Environmental Liaison Officer which has allowed me to meet some wonderful people, many of whom shared their stories and passion for snowsports. It was these interactions that inspired me to be a part of a fraternity that aims to preserve this social heritage.

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## **New Members**

Since the last newsletter was published in December 2008, the PHS has gained another 15 financial memberships. A warm welcome is extended to:

### **Ashley Blondel**

### **James Daniel**

Yvonne Gregory  
Garry & Glenys Huggett & Family  
Illawong Ski Tourers

Donald Johnston

Jenny Knutson

Ian Lansdown

Mirrabooka Ski Club

Ann Mitchell

Gary Russell

### **Peter & Diana Southwell-Keely & Family**

Telemark Ski Club

Doug Thorne

Deidre Turner

*Bold indicates 5 year membership.*