



PRESIDENT'S UPDATE - JULY 7th

SASHA NEKVAPIL: It is with regret that we open this Newsletter with the news of the passing on June 10th, of Sasha Nekvapil, one of Thredbo's iconic personalities, Australian skiing identity and a life member of Thredbo Historical Society. Articles further into this newsletter pay tribute to this gracious lady.

SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING: The Society's meeting at History House on 27th May saw the special resolution to amend our constitution passed unanimously, in order to have our Thredbo Ski Museum Development Fund qualify for Deductible Gift Status with the ATO. At the same time our constitution recognised and adopted the 2009 Model Constitution for Incorporated Bodies such as ours, as set out by the NSW Dept of Fair Trading. There are several points in this 2009 model that I would like to draw to the attention of members:

- 1 It provides for communication with members by electronic means, fax or post.
- 2 It provides flexibility for members at an AGM to determine the number of members elected to the committee.
- 3 It does not provide for the use of proxies.

SYDNEY COCKTAIL FUNCTION: Over 50 people attended a most successful evening at RAHS History House in Sydney to enjoy cocktails and conviviality plus an interesting array of special guests and speakers. After the welcome to guests, the new Society patron Alan Rydge, Chairman of Amalgamated Holdings was introduced. Alan, a member of the Society for 8 years now, said he was pleased to be invited into the role and complemented the Society on the direction it is taking and the enthusiasm of its members and volunteers for its objectives.

Skiing author and historian Rick Walkom was introduced and spoke about a donation of a pair of 1930s wooden skis, which he wished to make to the Ski Museum. The skis were acquired from the abandoned Mt Stillwell restaurant of the Kosciusko Chairlift that ran from the Alpine Way to Charlotte Pass. Rick provided some interesting anecdotes of his time in Charlotte Pass and expeditions to the historic lift line. Rick had also donated to the Society an original Kosciusko Chairlift chair with its colourful canopy (now restored) and proudly displayed now in the museum. The Society is most grateful for this generosity. *(continued Page 2)*

THS CALENDER OF EVENTS –2014

MID WINTER DINNER

Date: Wednesday July 23rd
Time: 6.30 for 7 pm
Venue: The Denman Hotel, Thredbo
"Launch of Faces of Thredbo Honour Board"
Cost: Members: \$75
 Non Members: \$85
RSVP: July 20th, Marion Murri
 02 6457 6806,
mmtvl@bigpond.com

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING November 22nd
Venue: Thredbo (venue to be confirmed)



Alan Rydge, Jerry Krejzar, Joe de Falco & Gillis Broinowski at Sydney Cocktails

THREDBO MUSEUM – Winter

Opening Hours: 1 – 5 pm
 Peak: July 1 – August 31, 2014
 (closed Mondays)
 Other: Wednesdays & Weekends Only
 September – October 7
 Plus public holidays and special events

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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE *(continued)*

GUEST SPEAKER MATTHEW QUOMI a Sydney architect, is the son of an Electric Power Transmission employee. That construction company built some of Thredbo's lift lines in the 60s and was later involved in the construction of the Alpine Way to Charlotte Pass, "Kosciusko Chairlift".

Matthew is writing a book on this iconic lift line traversing some 5 ½ kms which operated in 1964/65 before succumbing to severe winter weather conditions experienced on the Main Range and its ultimate financial demise. His talk was supported by an excellent choice of historic photos of the lift line and the conditions it experienced. Matthew's presentation was a revelation to many and held the audience's attention throughout, with many questions on its conclusion. Matthew is a THS member.

THREDBO SNOWFALL COCKTAILS: Again this was our best attended "Thredbo Cocktails" yet with over 40 in attendance. See separate report further in this newsletter.

COLLECTION DOCUMENTATION PROJECT:

This has been steadily progressing with consultant Deborah Spoehr, under our M & G NSW Grant of \$7500. The grant provides for 21 days of professional help in getting our collection documented onto a recommended software program (Mosaic). 17 Days have been utilised with the remaining 4 days to be used after winter.

This will not complete the project but maybe see it 50% completed. We have had to support the project with our own finances quite considerably, particularly in the area of IT hardware and support to approximately \$5000. However it is a most important priority now and for the future in managing a collection well in excess of 6000 items, many historically significant and displaying that to the public. We have had preliminary discussions with the Australian National University in Canberra regarding the possibility of being involved in

their Internship program for Graduates to assist with the project.

AASHA: The inaugural meeting of the Australian Alpine Snowsports History Association was held at Mt Buller on 17 May with 25 in attendance. Thredbo had 5 representatives present, Perisher 2, Tasmania also had 5, 1 from Mt Hotham, 3 Historians/Authors plus about 10 from Mt Buller. The meeting endorsed a proposal to appoint a 6 person steering committee to develop a constitution under the Victorian code for associations. Thredbo was nominated to hold the next AASHA meeting in May 2015.

MUSEUM VOLUNTEERS: As we head into winter we again send out the call to members to assist in volunteering to man the museum from 1.00pm to 5.00pm on opening days. As many of you make your annual winter pilgrimage to Thredbo and possibly would like some variety, community service and socialising on your visit, then this is an opportunity for you. Our 13 member ski clubs provide a good number of enthusiastic volunteers in this regard and we always welcome their contributions.

Should you have any interest in assisting then please contact me, email: alanf@bigpond.net.au or mobile: 0417 401 403.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTIONS: Shortly members will receive their annual subscription notices for the 2014/15 financial year. We again seek your support of the society in continuing your membership, which provides the bulk of our operating income, enabling us to continue our activities as a not for profit volunteer based society. On completing the form members are asked to complete the election of how newsletters are received – electronic or hard copy. We are strongly recommending to members the electronic option as it will assist in containing our substantial printing and postage costs into the future.

Alan Fredericks

2014 MID WINTER DINNER - FACES OF THREDBO

This year's Mid Winter Dinner on Wednesday 23rd July (same week as the Thredbo Masters) at The Denman Hotel will see the launch of our Faces of Thredbo Honour Board. The first five names to be recognised have been selected and will be awarded with this honour by an announcement on the night by a special name in Thredbo – Stuart Diver with Reggae Ellis as MC. Randy Weiman is coordinating a cameo film/ slide show of the profile and contribution to skiing and Thredbo of each recipient of the award. This will be one event not to be missed as the icons of Thredbo and skiing there are recognised.

Bookings are essential to Marion Murri on Ph 02 6457-6806 or email mmtvl@bigpond.com.

A memorable night is promised!

SASHA NEKVAPIL (1919 –2014)

The Angel of Thredbo

*An attractive woman and loved by all
So soft and beautiful*

*Sasha gave Thredbo a spirit of achievement and love
She came to us at the very beginning of it and
Fell in love with Australia and showed us the way
No other person or woman gave the fashion and flair
To our mountain village as Sasha did
You have gone away now to a new place
Where our spirits go, and when our turn come to be
Your memory will stay on for always
You are Sasha of Thredbo forever to me*



Lindsay Sidwell

Sasha Nekvapil, July 2011

During her 90th year, THS member Jerry Krejzar spoke with Sasha Nekvapil during her annual ski holiday in Thredbo. This account resulting from the conversation, illustrates her fascinating personality.

I am comfortably ensconced sitting on Frank Prihoda's (Sasha's brother) lounge, nibbling on her home-made cottage cheese pockets, chatting, occasionally in Czech, when Sasha exclaims; 'today a man on the lift looked at my skis and said', 'how long have you had them?' I said, 'I bought them about 5 years ago and I am very pleased with them!' 'No' he said, 'throw them away'. He had those with the round tips, 'they are so much easier', he said; 'and what technique do you ski?' I said, 'I don't know!' 'You have to start *the new one*, skis apart, arms in front, it is so much easier. Look at my son,' he said, who was with him on the lift, 'we were taking him yesterday, in 24 hours he could turn, and by the end of the day he was on the main run, because of *the new technique!*' I said to him, 'that he would have done me out of my job, as I used to teach,' and that was the end of the whole thing. 'So funny, he had no idea who he was talking with' I said to Sasha as she concluded her story. No idea that he was espousing his views on skiing technique, to a champion skier, who came 4th in the combined slalom at the 1948 St Moritz Winter Olympic Games? Not likely!

Each year Sasha returns to ski during the week of the Thredbo Masters; 'if somebody would take me to the top of the Master's course, by skidoo, I would race. I feel much safer on the course than up at Merritt's, what with all those skiers and snowboarders, most of them skiing much too fast for their ability, and quite often out of control.' Sasha and I have a bit of a thing going, and as her current 'toy-boy' we agree to sit together at the Master's dinner on the Saturday night. But alas, I am stood

up! Tradition dictates that Sasha join her 'old team mates'; Bill Bursill, Kurt Lance, Simone and Bob Arnott, and Beryl and Alan Smith, who religiously get together each year.

Sasha started to ski as a 15 year old in the Krknose (Giant) mountains in her homeland, the former Czechoslovakia. Together with her brother Frank, her cousins, uncles and aunts, the whole family, usually 3 times a year, during the mid-term holidays, at Christmas and Easter. 'I started racing then as a junior, I suppose. I was 16 in my first race and I came 3rd in the juniors. I was very upset because I was sure I was going to win, but I could hardly stand on skis, so no wonder!'

At the start of the 2nd World War Sasha was just 20, 'younger then when I went to University in Prague, but at the start of the war Hitler closed the University,' she says. 'We were not Jewish so we were not unduly persecuted, we had a bad time like everybody else, cold and hungry.' I say to Sasha that she was very lucky as not too many people were aware that many of the city's University students, the elite, were rounded up and shot by Hitler. 'Yes, they were executed, shot,' she replies.

It was during the War that Sasha went to ski in St Anton, as it was part of the 'Greater Reich' at the time. 'Yes there were some underhanded machinations to gain travel permits and that was only within the Reich, of course, but only for that specific place, and, and only by a certain train and back again,' Sasha explains.

Getting back to those Winter Olympic Games, in St Moritz, in 1948, I ask Sasha how the atmosphere felt at those Games. *(continued P.4)*

'It was wonderful, we got dressed up and went to the dances, and we were invited to meet Moira Shearer, she was a big star, an American, it was great.' 'Putting on the Ritz' I say. 'Yes, there was a Ritz, there were hockey teams, and people got dressed up. In 1948 there was Tony and Brchel and 3 girls, there were always 3 girls in all the big races, and we are still good friends!'

A sudden political change occurred in Czechoslovakia in 1948, the communist putsch, the end of democracy as we know it, life changed for everybody. 'I was racing in Switzerland. This was some months after the Putsch, because after the Putsch we were trying to get out and couldn't. When I was racing in Grindelwald with the Czechoslovakian Women's Team, before I was to go home to Prague at the end of the Games I had a telephone call from my husband Karel saying, 'we are going skiing tonight,' so he and Frank were defecting that night. 'I was leaving the next morning, so on the next morning I absconded. When the racers were returning we changed trains in Zurich at Enge, I just didn't get on the train, I defected.' Sasha tried to arrange Swiss entry visas for Karel and Frank, but to no avail. Karel and Frank had made it to St Anton to join Tony Sponar where they managed to survive by ingeniously running the first ski-lift, powered by Frank's World War 2 jeep, in the adjoining hamlet of St Christoph.

Once Sasha and Karel settled in Melbourne I wondered whether they, with an accent, were treated like many of the 'reffo's', commonly discriminated against in those days. 'Not at all, no, no, we were so lucky because we were good skiers, we started out on the right foot, they looked up to us they loved us!' Sasha and Karel began their skiing careers in Australia, 'first at Mt Buller, as caretaker's, of a club lodge, 'The Postal Institute' in 1951.'

In 1952 once Tony Sponar had invited them both to teach at Charlotte Pass, Sasha started to teach for the first time at the Ski-School. 'I remember that I had a book, and I learned how to teach from the book! I had no technical skills, we were just ski-racers, we did not have the technique, so with teaching I learned how to ski beautifully, by teaching.'

It was in the winter of 1954 at The Chalet that Sasha first introduced Sydney based architect Eric Nicholls to Tony Sponar, which in effect was

the first seed sown towards the future development of Thredbo. By now Sasha had already ignited the passion for skiing, touched, and inspired the hearts of several successive generations of Australians skiers; but it was to be here in Thredbo that she was to finally leave her own mark and heart for good.

In 1958 with sixteen hundred pounds and a bank loan Sasha and Karel with the help of Bela Racsco, a Hungarian architect, invested their life-savings to build Sasha's Lodge. A Viennese builder Otto Ernegg started the work in January 1959 and Thredbo's second commercial lodge opened on the June long-weekend of the same year. In 1960 Sasha opened a big wardrobe of ski wear to start-up her ski boutique. In 1963 extensions to the original lodge saw it double in size to become one of Thredbo's most exclusive European style chalets.

Once Jan Nekvapil, Karel's brother took over the lodge and renamed it 'Black Bear Inn', Sasha and Karel built 'Sasha's Apartments' and from there Sasha's Sportswear was eventually born. Sasha over the years travelled the world to choose fashionable ski-wear for Thredbo's ski cognoscenti and built a loyal retail following. Karel fostered junior racers and became one of the founders of the Thredbo Ski-Racing Club, and in the mid 60's a junior race, Sasha's Cup, was established.

As a pioneer and local identity in the early years, I ask Sasha how she feels about the village now. 'It is all sort of foreign to me' 'Foreign, why?' I ask. 'There are so many lodges and they are so beautiful, most of them. People demand only the best; they demand service and they get service. It was a village and it had an Australian cachet, whilst now it is sort of non-character. They want to give it 'an Australian identity' which is not all that strong because many, many years ago there was not much of it' (an Australian identity). I say 'there tends to be more of a cross section of society coming nowadays.' Sasha says 'that is with the advent of the snow-board, that element has arrived now, yes. Before the snowboarders it was more glamorous.'

Reluctantly our chat comes to a conclusion and my thoughts turn to the chap sitting next to Sasha on The Cruiser at Merritt's, pontificating about

WINTER PARALYMPIC GAMES SOCHI MARCH 7-16, 2014

Australia's team consisting of nine athletes plus support staff at the Winter Paralympic Games in Sochi from March 7th to 16th, 2014, could not have had a more disastrous start to their campaign when they were advised that one of their development athletes had a horrendous fall at a World Cup Snowboard event that resulted in his death.

Matt Robinson from Perth with an upper arm disability was competing at a World Cup event in Spain and fell sustaining serious back and head injuries. He was transferred immediately to hospital in Barcelona where he was stabilised. It was decided to transfer him by air ambulance back to Australia and under the supervision of a AIS doctor and nurse they flew from Barcelona to Kuwait. It was there that Matt suffered a heart attack from which he did not recover.

Back in Sochi the Australian team whilst preparing for the alpine event, were devastated to hear the news. At the opening ceremony all team members wore black armbands.

Back on the training slopes the team suffered a further blow when Cameron Rahles-Rehbula our dual bronze medallist in Vancouver four years earlier, fell sustaining a hairline fracture of the shin and facial injuries which was to rule him out of the Games altogether.

Icy, rutted and the spring snow conditions were far from ideal for all nations competitors which was reflected in the high numbers of DNF's in all the alpine events. [Sit skier Victoria (Tori) Pendergast compared her final event down the bumpy course to riding on a bucking horse - a feat clearly visible in the television footage. *Editor*]

Australia finished the Games in 19th position with two bronze medals. Thredbo skier above knee amputee Toby Kane took bronze in the Super Combined. Toby, a medical student currently

studying in Melbourne added to his bronze medal in the Super G attained in Torino, Italy in 2006.

Jess Gallagher blind skier from Highton Vic with Christian Geiger, her guide took Australia's second bronze in the final event of the Games in the Giant Slalom. A feat she repeated from her Slalom performance in Vancouver four years earlier.

One of the true highlights for Australia was the performance of cerebral palsy boarder fourteen year old Ben Tudhope from Manly, who in his first major competition finished 10th in the inaugural Snowboard Cross event at these games.

Ex Thredbo ski instructor and Paralympic Head Coach, Steve Graham was proud of how his athletes performed considering the loss of their fellow Paralympian together with the ever-changing snow and weather conditions.

The youngest athlete of the 550 competitors from 45 countries who competed in Russia from March 7-16, Australian snowboarder Ben Tudhope, 14, became his country's youngest flag bearer at the closing ceremony

Australian bronze medallist, Toby Kane was one of two athletes awarded the prestigious Whang Youn Dai Achievement Award. The award recognises athletes who not only succeed on the sporting field, but also inspire teammates and the international community as a whole.

Ron Finneran



Toby Kane

NEWSLETTERS BY EMAIL???

Would you prefer to receive an emailed copy of the Newsletter? If so, please email me at aab5@bigpond.com. *Chrissi Webb, Editor*

NEW MEMBERS:

Disabled WinterSport Australia
Ben Rushton
Maureen Roberts

LAVINIA CHRYSTAL

Congratulations to our THS member Lavinia Chrystal who acquitted herself so well at the Sochi Olympics, coming 40th from 90 competitors in the Giant Slalom and placing 32nd from 87 competitors despite all the challenges thrown at her prior to acceptance into the Australian Winter Olympic team. Lavinia's goal for Sochi was to be the first Australian finisher, which she achieved in the GS and nearly did in the SL (Greta 31st, Lav 32nd).

Lavinia is now back at Sydney University where she was awarded the prestigious Sydney University Blue Scholarship which help fund the completion of her Masters of International Management in June next year. However this will not stop her from training during the southern hemisphere and competing in races at Thredbo, maybe Hotham and some in New Zealand.

AT the end of our winter Lavinia is going to the Ivey Business College outside Toronto, Canada,

until December. At the completion of exchange she intends to train in Colorado with the aim of representing at the World Championships in Vail/Beaver Creek in February, 2015.



Lavinia Chrystal competing in the Sochi Olympics

IN THE MUSEUM

This summer season we welcomed Chas Skinner as a volunteer in the Ski Museum. Chas' enthusiasm in opening the museum at 10 am and sometimes earlier, impacted on the number of visitors by increasing the total to 2501 visitors as against 1831 last summer. Together with Frank Prihoda, they kept the museum open every day except Mondays, during the January school holidays.

The collection of memorabilia now includes the restored Kosciusko Chairlift (1964-65) donated by Rick Walkom in conjunction with Alan Fredericks, and the iconic Laurie Seaman skis which are on a two-year-loan from the Union of the Sydney University Union & Schools Club. Several trophies won by Danny Collman have been donated by Darryl Collman and Olympian Jenny Owens kindly added her clothing from the Salt Lake City and Vancouver Winter Olympics to the Collection.

The special display this year features "Ski Lifts of the Snowy Mountains" with the Kosciusko Chairlift seat being a major attraction. Because of the plethora of ski lifts, the display centres around the initial lifts installed prior to 1964.

Digitalisation of the collection continues. Deborah Spoehr of Conservatrix instructed both Graeme Holloway and myself in the operation of the Mosaic programme.

The oral histories of Karl and Ursula Berchtold who taught during the reign of Leonhard Erharder were recorded by myself during the summer. It is hoped they will be printed by the mid-July, ready for you to read in the Ski Museum. The material recorded by Edie Swift for the oral history of Kosciusko Chairlift operator Louie Reinstadler, was invaluable in the preparation of interpretive material for the Ski Lift Display.

Chrissi Webb

Comments from visitors:

Daisy Stevens, Lyneham ACT:

I liked finding the oldest skis

Russel Bailey, Oberon:

Jolly good old chat with Chas

Lana Sugur, Morne, France: *Trés interessant*

Dailys, Sydney: *Thanks for the Easter eggs*

Anne Olsen, Mosman: *Chrissi is such a friendly lady. Great fun for us Norwegians*

Jenny & Paul Duhs, Jindabyne: *Very good display*

PINDARI SKI CLUB

The origins of the Pindari Ski Club can be traced to Betts Camp in 1957, when a group of young skiers discussed the lack of accommodation in the mountains. To ski regularly, they realised, they would need their own lodge. They canvassed other skiers and called a meeting at 'The Barn' at the Mosman Wharf where the Pindari ('high place') Ski Club was formed with a nucleus of Rovers and Senior Scouts from Mosman and Roseville.

A site was obtained in Thredbo and a lease signed, and in 1959 and 1960 the club built a 14-bunk lodge next to what is now Bela's Corner at the intersection of Banjo Drive and Bobuck Lane. The Pindari Ski Club Co-operative Ltd, as it has been since 1958, occupies this site still. Founding chair John Culliton and secretary-treasurer Alan Murray were critical in getting the club established while Mike Smith (an architect) and Brian Heasman (who built the foundations and concrete floors and did the block work) played key parts in building the lodge. Ron Carr, Alan Douglas and Col McRae were other important figures in the early days.

The lodge was a creature of its time, small in its footprint with tiny bunkrooms and a loft for overflow accommodation. It was largely pre-fabricated in Sydney by the members and trucked to Thredbo for erection. Initially it was expected to cost £2000 but by the end of 1960 some £7085 had been spent on construction and furnishings. In addition to a bank loan and a levy on members, several newcomers had to be admitted to pay for it. It is said that the weekend working parties camped beside the lodge, even in winter, cooked on open fires and showered at the original small hotel, then the sole business establishment in Thredbo.

From the start Pindari was fully catered during the ski season, all meals cooked by live-in staff. An early tradition, maintained still, was 'club dinners' in which members and guests would eat at the same time at a single long table.

Operating profits were good, the borrowings were soon paid off and the club was able to focus on lodge improvements. Major re-building projects were undertaken in 1975 and

1983 from which emerged en suite bathrooms, larger rooms and, eventually, the 22-bed facility of today. The bunks, not meeting changing tastes and standards, disappeared and today three of the beds are queen-sized. The kitchen, lounge room and dining area were enlarged and a club room and a games room added. Parts of the original structure have been retained including foundations, the basement stonework, a door to the basement and much of the floor of the lounge room.

Today a board of 11 under the presidency of Kate Trimble oversees the operation of club and lodge. As a co-operative, the club pays no dividends to members and no trading of shares is permitted. Many of the originals are still active more than 50 years after joining, and they comprise a sizeable proportion of the present roughly 200 members.

For a small club Pindari has done well in the Thredbo Interclub, the principal racing event on the local calendar, in 2011, 2012 and 2013 finishing sixth in the Nekvapil Shield among the 13 participating clubs. Tom Lewis has twice come third in the men's division, and in 2011 Kerrin Bleicher was the third fastest woman. Ian Pilz, now 80, has skied in the event since the early 1990s: he was the first-ever Pindari entrant. The club also participates in the Thredbo Junior Interclub where Tom Lewis was the fastest skier for three years in a row.

Chas Keys (with thanks to Kate Trimble and the Pindari Ski Club website)



Pindari Ski Club July 2011

SYDNEY COCKTAILS – May 27th 2014



Philip Woodman, Matthew Quomi & Pamela Woodman



Louise Kennedy, Rick Walkom & Jan Glover



Graeme Holloway, Philip Woodman, Andrew Horsley, Laurie Seaman Jnr & Chrissi Webb



Beryl Smith, Joan Pring, Annette Sturt & Bev Bennett

A highlight of the Sydney Cocktails evening was the introduction of octogenarian Laurie Seaman Junior by THS member Andrew Horsley, who is also a member of the Sydney University Union and Schools Club in Bent St Sydney (UU&SC).

The club held the skis and poles of Laurie Seaman (1894-1928, a member of the then Millions Ski Club), found with Seaman's body on Mt Etheridge in 1928 following an ill-fated trip to the summit of Mt Kosciusko with colleague Evan Hayes.

The UUSC has now loaned the skis, poles and plaques to the Society for 2 years followed by a

further 2 years on loan to the Perisher Historical Society. These are now displayed in the Ski Museum together with the camera and film that were also found at the time on the body of Laurie Seaman together with the skis, all now classified as significant items.

Laurie Seaman Jnr said it was his wish for some time to have these skis displayed and he was pleased with the outcome. Following the function, Laurie made a donation of \$1000 to the Thredbo Ski Museum Development Fund. We thank Laurie and are extremely grateful for his gesture and philanthropy.

SNOW FALL COCKTAILS (Thredbo) – June 14th, 2014



Matthew Quomi and Cees Koeman test the restored Kosciusko Chairlift seat



Toni Sarri, Barry & Marg Young



Rashida and Russel Nuridin



Reggie & Melissa Phillips, Lynne McIntyre, Eric & Elsa Hanlon



Ed Denny welcomes guests as Marion Murri, Matthew Quomi and Cees Koeman look on.

Forty *Friends of Thredbo* and guests enjoyed Matthew Quomi's personal account of his research into the dream, construction and fate of the Kosciusko Chairlift (1964-65). His talk was accompanied by a large number of images taken during building, operation, demolition and resurrection. These will form the basis of the book which he is writing about ski lifts.

The evening was hosted by Ed Denny, and organised by the THS social committee – Anne Collet, Marion Murri, Ray and Lynne Temperley.

KOSCIUSKO CHAIRLIFT – AUSTRALIA’S “LONGEST” CHAIRLIFT

Australia’s longest chairlift was actually two chairlifts which met at the Bella Vista central drive station (2075 metres above sea level) on the Ramshead range. The chairlift between the Thredbo Valley and Charlotte Pass ran from a point on the Alpine Way a few kilometres north east of Thredbo to the newly purpose built restaurant on the top of Ramshead Range and then down to Charlotte Pass, over a combined length of 5.5 kilometres. The lift line was extended by a couple of kilometres so that passengers could see Mt Kosciusko from the chairlift.

The building of the lift commenced early in 1963 and was completed in 1964. The building of the Chairlift was commenced by Transfield and completed by the Electric Power Transmission company on behalf of Kosciusko Chalet. The Chalet was at the time owned by a syndicate with Broken Hill Holdings a major shareholder. The project reportedly cost 1,200,000 pounds. It ran during the 1964 and 1965 season before going into receivership.

The two-seater chairlift was designed to have a capacity of 350 persons per hour in both directions and to be used as an access lift for Charlotte Pass as well as a ski lift. The Alpine Way to Bella Vista station lift had a Carlevaro drive unit. Altogether there were 50 Mueller towers and 8 stations. The "cell block" at Charlotte Pass (now staff accommodation) was the bottom station so the lift line ran almost perpendicular to the present chair at Charlotte Pass.

The chairlift was in two sections. Within each section were stations/platforms for getting on and off to allow skiers to have access to the snow on the range, including the George Chisholm Course in the Twin Valleys area. The stations/platforms were called in order: Alpine Way Terminal Station, Snowline Station, Bella Vista Station Top Station - Ramshead Restaurant, Wrights Creek Station, Main Range View Station, Chalet Terminal Station. At the central Bella Vista station where the Ramshead Restaurant was located there was some staff accommodation to ensure maintenance of the lift at all times.

The chairs had brightly coloured fibreglass canopies that one pulled down for protection against the wind. In addition, there was window

in the middle so you could see where you were going. The whole thing was pretty dicey in bad weather. Once or twice, the chairs came off the pulleys and down they went, passengers and all. At that time, chairlift technology was relatively primitive and other nearby operators may have had similar problems. The second lift, which terminated at Charlotte Pass, hardly ever ran due to the high wind problems. In addition, there were problems with snow banking up on some of the towers. The operators may have been a little unlucky in opening the project in one of the biggest winters in terms of snowfall (and possibly windiest) on record.

High winds caused operational difficulties and the operators had great difficulty rescuing passengers if the chair broke down. Because the chairlift traversed remote thickly wooded areas on the Ramshead Range, passengers were at great risk of death by exposure, although no one did die on the chairlift. Shelter, food, rescue and first aid equipment was installed at all the stations in order to meet Department of Labour and Industry requirements.

One of the chairlift operators, Louie Reinstadler wrote *"By the end of June in 1964, the weather had closed in and a blizzard started which lasted for thirty one days. There were two marine wind recorders fixed to the operator's hut. Both were ripped off by the wind. The last reading, before being ripped off, was 106 miles an hour. It became so bad, it was frightening. The wind must have reached at least 250 km per hour. Some days we could not do any work outside at all. If we could get outside, all we could do was shovel snow."*

At the Chalet the guests were given a day ticket to shovel snow, which they could never use as the snow came faster than they could shovel. When the weather broke and we could see out past the platform and down the lift line, between Rights Creek and Stillwell, from Tower 11 to 13 we could see that the lift was under snow."

Louie commented that lifts running for such a long distance and exposed to high winds could never prove to be a success. At the end of the 1965 season, as the running costs became too high and the lifts became too unreliable, the company decided to close down the lifts.

(continued Page 11)

KOSCIUSKO CHAIRLIFT – AUSTRALIA’S “LONGEST” CHAIRLIFT *(continued)*

In the book “Skiing off the Roof”, author Rick Walkom said “After only two seasons a decision was made to close down the £1.2 million chairlift and alpine skiers lost their potentially fabulous asset....In retrospect, the wind defeated the scheme and it still mocks this monument to a failed endeavour. Some said the grand scheme had simply come before its time. Kosciusko Chalet Ltd. went into receivership in November 1965 and the chairlift did not operate again on the decision of the receiver. The company could not generate sufficient funds from its operations to finance further trading. ...”

The Thredbo Valley terminal is still there. It is an isolated building on the north side of the road that has, at various times, been a ranger station, accommodation for park workers and a police station. The Stilwell restaurant is a ruin after it was demolished by the Australian Army in the 1980's.

Once dismantled the chair was sold to Jamberoo Recreation, after having been kept in storage for at least 15 years. The Eddy family bought the chairlift and transported it to Jamberoo. As the lift was isolated inside a National Park it was removed, in pieces by helicopter, as the alternative was to drive vehicles "off road" and this was not permitted.

Once in Jamberoo the chairlift was upgraded and erected by experienced

contractors from "the snow". The drive unit required a new motor, the sheave assemblies (which were the cause of most of the derailing problems of the original lift) were redesigned, the cable was replaced and new chairs built around the frames of the originals. The remainder of the chairlift, including the towers and bull wheels, was in good order and was erected without modification.

Compiled by Chrissi Webb

References:

Wikiski.com/wikiki/index.php/Thredbo_to_Charlotte_Pass_Chairlift (2014); Reinstadler, A (2014); Walkom, R (1991); "Ski Australia" April 1993; Thredbo Historical Society collection.



Kosciusko Chairlift (1964-1965)

THS COMMITTEE : 2013/2014

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FRIENDS OF THREDBO MEMBERSHIP

FEES 2014/2015

- Individuals: \$45/1-yr; \$225/5-yrs;
\$450/10-yr
- Family: \$60/1-yr; \$300/5-yrs
- Group: Club \$220/year
Corporate Gold: \$1500/yr
Silver: \$1,000/yr
Bronze: \$500

Stop Press :

Welcome to Maureen Roberts who has volunteered to take on the role of Secretary following Michelle Palmer's decision to stand down due to work and family commitments. Thank you Maureen and Michelle. AF

THREDBO HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOOK ORDER FORM (2014/15)

Order Details: Name: _____

Address: _____

Postcode _____

QUANTITY	PUBLICATION DESCRIPTION	PAYMENT
	Andrew, Roger: Thredbo – My Story Soft Cover, 156 pages, 29.5x21cm. colour photos Cost \$40 Postage & packaging \$18	
	Sonia Howard (2013): Flame of Leviticus – a biography of Kurt Lance 108,650 words 30 colour pages Cost \$35 Postage & packaging \$12	
	Clarke, Norman W Clarke (2006): Kiandra – Gold Fields to Snow Fields Hard cover, 178 pages 22x29cm, b&w photos Plus 2010 Supplement Lapland Snow Shoes in Australia Cost \$20 Postage & packaging \$18	
	Cross, Wendy (2012): Australian Skiing: The First 100 Years Soft cover, 270 pages, 30x21cm, b&w photos Cost \$39.95 Postage & packaging \$16	
	Darby, Jim (2006): Thredbo 50 – a commemorative book Hard cover, 123 pages, 22x28cm, colour photos Cost \$20 Postage & packaging \$16	
	Edmondson, Michael: The Australian Alps – Classic Mountain Landscapes Hard Cover, 85 pages, 26x18cm, colour photos Sale Price cost \$18 Postage & packaging \$16	
	Hughes, Geoffrey (one of the founders of Thredbo) (2007): Starting Thredbo Soft cover, 44 pages, 21x31cm, colour & b&w photos Cost \$20 Postage & package \$16	
	Mitchell, Elyne: On the Trail of the Silver Brumby Compiled by Honor Auchinleck (2012). Hard cover, 255 pages, 25cm x 28 cm, 125 colour plates. Cost \$49.95 Postage & packaging \$18	
	Southwell-Keely, Peter: Out on the Tops: The Centenary of the Kosciusko Alpine Club. Hard cover, 319 pages, 21x28 cm, 530 photos Sale price cost \$25 Postage & packaging \$18	
	Southwell-Keely, Peter (2012): Highway to Heaven: A History of Perisher and Ski Resorts Along the Kosciuszko Road Hard Cover, 256 pages, b&w & colour photos Cost \$40 Postage & packaging \$18	
	Sponar, Tony (1995): Snow in Australia – that's news to me Hard cover, 362 pages, 15.5x23.5cm, photos Cost \$20 Postage & packaging \$16	
	Swinbourne, Helen (2006): Accordions in the Snow Gums – Thredbo's early years Soft cover, 128 pages, 29.5x21cm, b&w photos Cost \$20 Postage & ackaging \$16	
	Walkom, Rick (1950): Skiing Off The Roof – the Kosciusko Chalet at Charlotte Pass (2nd edition 2008) Soft Cover, 178 pages, 21x42cm, b&w photos Cost \$35 Postage & packing \$16	
	Russell, Rebel Penfold: Tommy Tomasi – a life well travelled DVD, PG rating, Duration 44 minutes Cost \$25 Postage & packing \$9	
	Russell, Rebel Penfold: Thredbo 50 Years DVD, PG rating, Duration 32 minutes Cost \$25 Postage & packing \$9	
	Weiman, Randy: One Man Alone – Malcolm Milne Val d'Isre 1969 DVD, Cost \$10 Postage & packing \$6	
	Weiman, Randy: Kurt Lance - Last time on the Main Range DVD, Cost \$10 Postage & packing \$6	
	TOTAL AMOUNT	

Ordering & enquiries

Mail: Ski Museum, Thredbo Historical Society Inc, PO Box 6, THREDBO 2625

Phone/Fax: 02 6456 2279 (Museum Administrator), Email: aab5@bigpond.com

Cheques payable to: Thredbo Historical Society Inc.

Direct Payment: Thredbo Historical Society Westpac Bank BSB 032- 728 Acct 106314 with details: surname & book