

The Kiewa Hydro Electric Project as it is known today is a vast area of mountains river valleys and gorges and into this came the surveyors and investigators of the SEC in the early 1920`s. By 1927 there had been established tent camps at various points throughout the area. In the early 1930`s a timber framed building was built on the Bogong High plains near Wallace`s Gap and became known as the SEC cottage.

In this cottage the first Hydrological Observers of the commission lived and worked out on the high plains. An early resident of the cottage was Adrian Rufenacht, later to become a foundation BSC member and Life Member. He and his wife lived there from November 1934 to August 1936 at a time when there were no roads and visitors were few. In their first 15 months of their stay they neither got near a road nor saw a motor car. After the cattle had been mustered and brought down to the valleys in April they felt `like a king and queen of the Bogong High Plains` they would be alone for weeks on end the only visitor being the packman who brought the weekly provisions of bread and meat on Saturdays, weather permitting.

It was in this setting in 1936-37 when Martin Romuld was the observer that the more adventurous members of the Commission, living in tents and huts located at Bogong Staff Camp as it was known, then started to pay visits to the plains and to Martin in particular as he was still the only living soul in the plains throughout the winter in his role as hydrological observer.

It must be remembered that in those days there was no road, only a packhorse track from Tawonga (Mount Beauty was unheard of) through to the plains. The present road follows the track roughly and at times, if you know where to look the original pack track can still be seen after all these years.

Under these conditions the early skiers packed themselves on foot plus skis provisions etc. to Mahon`s hut at Rocky Valley to spend what was left of the weekend trying to learn the art of skiing. Trips were made across the plains to Martin Romuld`s cottage and here in the evenings around the fire yarns would be told over and over and plans would be made for improving the lot of these early skiers, from these evenings was born the infant of the Bogong Ski Club. The club was duly constituted, office bearers elected and got under way on Wednesday July 17th 1940. In the months leading up to this historic occasion informal discussions composed the constitution and the future members set about to make preparations for their new sport. Many of them lived in the SEC accommodation in Bogong called Kiewa House which naturally had a copper in the laundry, this was ideal for `steaming` the wood in preparation for bending it to

make the wooden skis the first members were to use in the 1940`s. A pity that the other Kiewa House residents had to do without washing for the days it took to `steam` the wood for a pair of skis.

From the early beginnings the list of foundation members was declared and on these broad shoulders fell the work of setting up and organising the affairs of the club a few of these tasks being, letterheads, bank accounts, badge design and availability of equipment. The club was unfortunate to have a poor season for the first winter with both light snowfalls and short period of cover, however enthusiasm was high and parties made several trips to the snow in parties of up to eight people.

With the close of the first year of operation the club was already looking for the ultimate in accommodation, the lining of a hut for their own use during the 1941 season. The membership by the end of the first year totalled 22 and the bank balance stood to credit of £15.0.7, not a very large figure by today's standards.

At this time the CRB mess hut stood at Rocky Valley from the time of construction of the access road for the hydro electric scheme. Arrangements were made to use this building during winter after some internal work was done in the form of lining it with tent fly's obtained from the SEC as camps closed down on the High Plains. Throughout the 1941 season there was a small but steady stream of new members to the club and activities started to develop as overnight accommodation was now available even if rather Spartan. September the first of the club's Annual Dinners and presentation of prizes held in the Kiewa House dining room at Bogong. The Club Champion for that season was Mr. W.L.(Bill)Godfrey who at that time was the club's treasurer and had been the foundation secretary. A fitting tribute to a fine and willing worker for the club Mr. Godfrey`s name was the first to appear on the championship shield donated by Mr .J Chase, this shield still hangs with pride in the lodge today.

In the latter part of 1941 the first plans for a club lodge were drawn up and after approval were to be sent to the Chief Architect (SEC) for finalisation.

By the time of the 3rd Annual General Meeting in May 1942 the club was feeling the effects of wartime conditions. Firstly the manufacturers of the trophies for the 1941 season advised that they were unable to meet their orders and deliveries would be indefinite. Secondly members of the Club began to join the Armed Forces and to this end the entrance fees and subscriptions were dropped to half for the duration of the war. Next came petrol rationing and the abolition of

## The Early Days

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transport to the High Plains, which up to this point had been provided by the SEC. After much investigation into various types of transport available including horse drawn vehicles it was decided to advise members that there was only one way of getting to the plains, to walk! It remained this way for a good many years with vehicles being able to get only as far as Howman`s Gap during the winter.