

As a club entering the 60's we have now reached some important milestones. The membership is now open to all, not just SEC employees or local Kiewa employees like the early days. The Falls Creek village is starting to grow and develop modern ski facilities but all the lifts and downhill skiing is still in the bowl area. The club is moving towards a rebuilding program, the days of the old hut are numbered.

[1] By 1961 the club was feeling quite proud of its achievements and felt that it was worth celebrating its coming of age and accordingly a party for members was organised at the lodge on Queens Birthday. The celebrations were to take place on the Saturday evening and were to be a large dinner with life members and senior SEC people attending. During all this activity Tom Wilmot, Helen Minty and about six other lodge and Bogong friends decided that things were a bit quiet and so went for a walk which took them up the line of the old rope tow up the summit by which time a young boy in the party had become tired. Tom and Helen and most of the group still had energy left so they gave him strict instructions not to go anywhere and left him at the last pole on the tow, they wanted to go on a little further over to the side where you can see the sun setting over Mt. McKay and Feathertop.

Our young friend after a few minutes began to get lonely up on this big strange mountain as it was getting dark and decided that the others must be lost so he headed down to the lodge and give the bad `news`. Meanwhile the main group had returned to the meeting place at the top of the tow, no one there, what do you do? After looking around for some time they also decided that the lad must be lost and had to head down to give the bad news because by now it was just on dusk.

As they came over the ridge to be able to see the Falls Creek bowl they were greeted by the sight of about 8 car headlights shining up the slopes looking the `lost teenagers` Tom say that he spent a very subdued evening mostly in the bunkroom and missed most of the celebrations which were enjoyed by everyone else after this little disturbance.

This weekend was also the time of another memorable but not so enjoyable incident. The electricity supply was connected to the village during the summer of 1960/61 and of course the club connected to the supply. This would have increased the comfort in the lodge with electric heating and an electric stove now available. However there is an unexpected down side. Many will remember the electricity transformers installed behind the lodge to supply power to the bowl area and lifts. To install this substation an earth stake has to be driven in to the ground in a nearby position. This steel stake was installed and connected up and all was well. It was not

until the heavy lodge occupancy on the Queen's Birthday weekend that the problem became apparent. The stake had gone part way through the sewer line to the septic tank, not a problem if there are only a few people using the toilets and showers. However a full lodge in party mood soon showed up this deficiency. The dreaded call of "flushing" sent fear through everyone in the shower as they tried to get out or at least up away from the shower outlet. A special award should be struck for the very brave team who had to locate and fix the problem the next day.

The year 1964 broke all records in the short life of Falls Creek and Bogong Ski club. The snowfalls kept on coming, the blizzards continued and the depth kept on increasing. The two main lifts were the Summit and Village T bars both of which were buried up on the ridge near the top of the lifts. A trench was cut to allow use of the Summit lift. The ski club building was at ground level and in a normal year a few steps had to be cut up to snow level. At the peak of the '64 season this had developed into a tunnel up from the door because the snow level had reached the peak of the ridgeline of the roof. All that could be seen was the top of the ridge with the chimney showing out, almost to the point where you could ski over it. There have been seasons as big as this since but the building is higher and there is machinery to move the snow away.

Following this incident and many other similar problems Brian Purcell, David Sharpe and others were determined to see the construction of a new lodge. By June 1962 club members had "agreed that accommodation be provided for 24 persons and if possible we rebuild on our present site." Finance was a major problem, Club members were unwilling to put large amounts of money up and banks were not prepared to lend to the club without a clear title. After discussions over several years it was finally decided to ask each member to buy debentures of £50 and that a Cooperative with compulsory membership for BSC members to be formed. Both of these measures are still in place as a means of financing club operations and for future building developments.

Progress was slow, people were getting impatient and at the 63 AGM there was no one wanting to take on the job of secretary. Finally Brian Purcell agreed, [\[2\]](#) "on the condition that we build a new bloody clubhouse". He was elected. Even out side club circles Ron White, Kiewa chief engineer was known to say to Brian and David in one of their frequent huddles

[\[3\]](#)

"haven't you two got that ski club built yet?"

The selection of an architect was also difficult but after two sets of drawings, which were for a very large building, which would have been outside the club's finances a third, architect Andrew Reed put up acceptable plans. This still had problems such as the continuing problem of snow

collecting on the verandah but it looked good and there were lots of people offering to shovel snow off the roof as necessary. In spite of the problems Andrew's plan was accepted on 13th June 1965 for a 24 bed ski lodge with bunkroom style accommodation. The members of those days were sufficiently far sighted to ask the architect to make provision for future expansion, a wise move as we have now expanded to a 40-bed lodge.

After lengthy negotiations with builders and revision of plans to suit the club's needs a price of [[4](#)] \$28847.00 was accepted for a Mt Beauty builder Ron Blake to demolish the old lodge and build the new one over the summer of 1966 - 67. The reconstruction was completed on time and by the opening of the `67 ski season members were able to use their luxurious facilities.

During the early 60^s a former member Manfred Brunner made regular visits to the lodge and recorded it on movie film. This film can be seen on [You tube.](#)

Of course the new facilities caused a boom in membership and bookings quickly exceeded available beds particularly during weekends and school holiday periods. Under the guidance of Secretary of the time Eric Martin the accommodation was increased by innovations such as converting some bunks to $\frac{3}{4}$ size and by developing an area below the lodge fondly called "The Executive Suite". This was an area below the main building with its own toilet and shower and the old 3 deck bunks. The big disadvantage was that you had to go outside to get from it to the main level of the lodge. It was strictly for overflow accommodation.

We now had a modern lodge with communal living areas across the front, large windows to give views up the frying pan and down the valley across to Spion Kopje spur. The service areas, drying room, ski room, toilets and showers were used to separate this from the six bedrooms across the back. This concept works so well that the present day lodge is still laid out with the same areas.

At later stages in the 70's and 80's the lodge was extended by a total of 3 modules to give more bunkrooms, a larger dining room, more ski storage, a separate locker area and an enlarged drying room.

[1] Thanks to Tom Wilmot and Helen Fairbrother (nee Minty) for their report on this “adventure”

[2] Brian claims that he did not say this, but admits that is something he might have said. I have two reliable witnesses

[3] David Sharpe, interview

[4] During the negotiations Australia had changed to the use of Decimal currency. (£1 = \$2)