

BOGONG SKI CLUB



ABOVE: Bill Minty helps Heather Minty on the tow rope. In the background is the Snow Crystal Inn.

BELOW: Kevin Shoebridge, Marg Martin, Anita Martin, Lorraine Smith and Julian Brown at the top of the tow in the 1960s.



The Blitz, the club's old SEC vehicle, at the end of the road in the 1940s approaching Falls Creek ... from there it was often a long walk in to the lodge, carting supplies.

Mrs Martin says in summer they would all leave as much gear as they could at the lodge so they didn't have so much to carry up in the winter.

The original plan to establish the Bogong Ski Club was hatched by SEC employees, all keen skiers, while they were having a yarn around a fire. It started with 22 members and a budget of 15 pounds.

Many early members, who lived in SEC accommodation at Kiwara House in Bogong, found a better use for the copper in the laundry than washing clothes.

It was ideal for "steaming" wood in preparation for bending it to make the wooden skis the first members used in the 1940s.

After the club was established in 1940, it was located in a temporary hut in the Rocky Valley area and was then relocated to its present site at Falls Creek Bowl, where it remains today.

Over the years, the ski-in ski-out site has been rebuilt and refurbished to accommodate members' needs.

Generations of families from the North East and beyond have learnt to ski there and enjoyed wonderful snow holidays during the past 70 years. Today the club, which has 211 members, is still very much family-orientated.

At first, membership was restricted to SEC employees, but was opened to the community in 1957.

The club also ran the Falls Creek Village tow and provided accommodation for the operator in the early days of the resort.

Life member Lawrie Edward, of Bendigo, who joined the club in the 1960s, says he likes to think that the Bogong Ski Club chose the site for Falls Creek.

"When we had to select another site for the club house we chose the bowl where Falls

who have been club members for 50 years, say they too enjoyed the camaraderie of the early days.

"There would be working bees to chop wood in summer and it was all good family fun," Mr Purcell says.

"We would go up and chop three or four truck loads of wood and do repairs to the lodge, even children would be involved in helping."

Mr Purcell, a life member, has pleasant memories of walking through the snow to the lodge.

"Even though it was often quite a walk, I have great memories of the silence," he says.

"It wasn't easy getting the kids up there when they were young — we had three so it meant one had to walk and we carried the other two on our backs in rucksacks."

Mr Purcell says city folk weren't often prepared for the snow and he can remember several women arriving in skirts.

In those days it was a very social affair.

"You could drop in to other lodges and as long as you took two bottles of beer you were always welcome in any club," he says.

Many a beer drinker, though, was converted to whiskey.

"It was a lot easier to carry up a bottle of whiskey than lug bottles of beer," he laughs.

Mr Purcell, 75, still loves skiing today, especially at Falls Creek in fine weather.

Club president Martin Juniper, 32, of Melbourne, has been a member since birth and has a photo to prove it.

"My parents have a photo of me on the table at the lodge, so you could say I have been a member all my life," he says.

Mr Juniper and his family spent school holidays at the club even after they moved from Melbourne

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I remember we had to walk through the snow to the lodge in the early days as there was no road in.

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BELOW: Glen Gannon, Heather Smith, Chris Gannon, Topsy Smith and Carol Stewart out the front of the old lodge in 1960.

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