

## CLUB HISTORY – John Tulloch

Through 1972 and early 1973, a group of enthusiastic young people, mostly with farming backgrounds, who generally lived in the Ararat, Stawell, Great Western area of Victoria, decided to look into the possibility of building a ski lodge at Mount Hotham.

The prime movers of the project always had a passion for the prospect of a club of their own and the common thread of interest in the country with many being farmers provided a bond that has always been the backbone of the club to this day.

In 1973 a “Prospectus” was written, to be circulated amongst interested friends. The Prospectus noted that the Department of Crown Lands and Survey had made available a limited number of sites, and that, as these were being snapped up quickly by other clubs, the pressure was on to form a club as quickly as possible. The Prospectus anticipated that accommodation would be available to shareholders/members at \$4.00 per night and visitors for \$6.00. People using the Lodge would provide their own food and chores would be shared on a roster basis. To finance the club, 100 memberships would be sold for \$250.00 each, which would provide sufficient funds to build a suitable building. In addition, debentures could be purchased by member’s spouses, for \$100 and the debenture-holders would have the same accommodation privileges as the members. . The club would be known as “Burrumbeep Ski Club”, being named after the home property of the foundation President, Andrew Gubbins, “Burrumbeep”, at Maroona, south of Ararat.

The first committee of the club consisted of

- Andrew Gubbins – President,
- Roger Heard – Secretary
- John Bennett – Treasurer

General committee members:

- Bill Kilpatrick
- Dion Ross
- Owen Smart
- Rick Stevenson.



A meeting was held about May 1973, and members who had subscribed and some potential new members were brought up to date with progress. It became clear in the early stages that member’s contributions only, would not be sufficient to complete the lodge, so the structure of the club was changed in order to raise bank finance. A Co-Operative Society was formed and to finance the building of the Lodge, it was decided that members would pay a once only membership fee of \$230 plus purchasing shares in the Co-Op. Members purchased 200 shares each with a face value of \$1.00 in the Burrumbeep Ski Club Co-Op, and these shares would be paid up to 10 cents each (total \$20.00). Against the uncalled capital of each share the Government would issue a Guarantee which the club could then use as security for a bank loan. The total paid by each member therefore was still \$250.00 each.

In 1973, an architect was engaged to modify original plans to a point at which Stawell Timber Industries would be able to quote on the prefabricating of the structure. Their quote for the building was \$27,900, and a further \$6-8000 was anticipated for furniture fittings and equipment.

The first Annual General Meeting of the club was held in May 1974, and it was clear that the opening date for the lodge would be delayed by 12 months due to the slow uptake of memberships, and also the design required modifications to accommodate requirements by the Mount Hotham Committee of Management. Whilst there was great enthusiasm by prospective members in the early stages, it became a bit of a struggle to achieve the target of 100 members, and as at the 10<sup>th</sup> August 1974 there were still only 76 paid-up members. The rural sector, and in particular woolgrowers, were facing financial hardship during the early 1970's. A major effort

was put in to attract new members to join up so we could have the required 100, and during the ensuing year, much preparation work was undertaken to prepare for construction during the following Summer/Autumn.

To assist in the extra expense involved with the building it was decided and agreed unanimously, at a General Meeting on 17<sup>th</sup> November 1974 that a levy on the memberships of \$50.00 each would be required. A program for volunteer work parties was proposed and the Department of Crown Lands gave approval of the plans in November 1974.



Construction of the building commenced in February 1975 and progress was brisk with site clearing, excavation, and footings being prepared etc in time for the bricklayer to start on time. There was great activity on site during March, with many volunteers attending to help with preparations, since STI would be at Hotham to erect the building on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> April 1975. It was reported in March that an enormous amount of work had been done by about 60% of the members and several had given outstanding service.

The Lodge was habitable from about July 1975, although conditions were rather crude, and a lot of work was still required to bring it to an acceptable standard. It was the first lodge to be built within one season at Mount Hotham.

A newsletter to members in November 1976 advised that for the season 1976 (the first full season that the lodge would be occupied), income was approximately \$7000 and expenses approx \$5000, a small net profit of \$2000. It was a great result for the Club to be posting a profit in this first full year. Over the years the club has been managed with care by honorary committee members, and almost without exception a reasonable cash profit was achieved, despite some poor snow seasons. There may be only 1 or 2 years in the history of the Club when profit has been minimal. This is testament to the good management of successive Committees. Excess funds have been invested in interest-bearing investments.

The Club was incorporated in 1985 on the recommendation of our legal representatives, and the Co-Op dissolved.

Over the years, it has been the general policy the club to continually upgrade the standard of accommodation and the club has evolved into a building now which is very comfortable and of a significantly higher standard than when first built. Apart from the Club having to raise finance for the major extension in 1983, which also required a small contribution by all the members at the time, all improvements thereafter, have been financed by the club's profits. As well as a number of major structural improvements, there has always been ongoing maintenance of the lodge, which has been carried out either by club volunteers or professionals as required.