

WARRUGANG NEWS



BOOK 2

THE STORY OF WARRUGANG

1963 and 1964

Introduction to Book 2 1963 and 1964

To make a book of reasonable size, the number of years included in a book is determined by the number of pages of Warrugang News published in those years. The editors, George Failes, Rod Power, Ann Sefton and Rajah Davenport were very industrious in 1963 and 1964.

These were years of consolidation for the Club. Minor improvements were made to the Lodge. The septic tank was not working properly and a new one was constructed to the Kosciusko State Park Trust's specifications. This did not fix the problem. There was an unpleasant smell in the area in front of the Lodge. The bacteria on which the operation of a septic tank depends do not like cold. To function properly in the winter, the tank would have needed heating. This problem persisted until the Lodge was connected to the sewer in 1980.

Members were dissatisfied with dormitory accommodation. There was a push for rooms for married couples and families, and planning began for an extension to provide this. It was not only finance which delayed construction. There were negotiations with the KSPT about the terms of the lease and about what extensions would be permitted.

The main financial problem was that the agency handling bookings had not passed all the booking money to the Club. The agency was in financial difficulties and looked like going bankrupt owing the Club over £1000. Swift action by the Board recovered all the outstanding booking money. The agency did survive but the Club changed to another agency. There was concern about the number of members who had not paid their subscriptions. There was also concern about the cost of phone calls being made but not paid for by residents of the Lodge.

An ongoing problem for the Board was the practice of people turning up at the Lodge for the weekend without having booked, and camping in the common room. The Board's efforts to stop this do not seem to have been very successful.

Before 1963, it was possible to park in a car park at Smiggin Holes. From 1963, the KSPT banned overnight parking at Smiggins during the snow season. There were various alternatives suggested, Wilson's Valley, Waste Point or near the park entrance, with shuttle buses to Smiggins. For the 1963 season, the bus terminal was at Waste Point. It was moved to Sawpit Creek in 1964.

In 1964, the Board instituted Associate Memberships, initially for people on the waiting list with the intention that they should progress to full membership as vacancies occurred. They had no voting rights, but did have a priority booking period and slightly lower accommodation charges than non-members.

Lu Vozab resigned as Hut Manager after the 1963 season. Ruedi and Anneke Kunz were appointed for the 1964 season. Sadly, at the start of the season, their baby son Michael took ill and had to be rushed to Cooma Hospital where he died of gastro-enteritis.

1964 was memorable as the year in which Perisher had too much snow. The snow was so deep that the lifts could not operate, power and telephone lines failed and transport in and out of the valley was blocked. This is reported in Warrugang News Volume 5 Issue 7. Here is the story as told by Barbie Graham.

"1964 was the year of the big snow. It fell and fell until by early August, it was nearly up to the eaves on all sides. A little triangle at the top of a window on the north side was the only source of daylight so the stay-at-homes lived in Stygian gloom during the periodic power

failures. These conditions were an inducement for us to go out and ski, despite most unpleasant conditions on the majority of days of the fortnight I was there. Initially, some lifts still ran and classes were held, but the conditions were so bad that one day, my class had to repair to the “Man” for a blackboard lecture on technique. Another outdoor hazard, apart from minimal visibility, was the overhead power lines. The snow level was so high in places that a tall man could almost reach up and touch them. One day during this period a call went out round the Valley for volunteers to help dig out lodges like “Ben Bullen” and “Yeti” which were thought to be in danger of being pushed off their foundations by sheer weight of snow. Sturdy Warrugang had no such problems, attesting to the methods used by its (admittedly mostly amateur) builders in the 1950’s.

“On 10th August with especially bad conditions and acute boredom setting in, Ruedi complained to the assembled company that he was tired of digging out the basement door (our only way to get in and out of the building). So it was decided to construct an access tunnel from a wind scour around the big rock to the north, to the basement door. There were two teams of tunnelers working from both ends and Chief Surveyor Hank Beaverstock, braved the weather and probed with his slalom poles to ensure the two met up. The eventual breakthrough was a great moment with handshakes through the initial hole and noisy congratulations lubricated by a bottle of Pernod donated by Ruedi. Later work refined this feat of engineering which was eventually 10 metres long, about 1.5 metres wide and almost 2 metres high. In time for the Thursday party night, its walls were more or less smoothed with niches in them to accommodate candlesticks and its entrance was equipped with a flight of steps. It was much admired by our visitors.

“At the end of our fortnight, the weather improved but with all the oversnow transport broken down, the only way to leave the Valley was to don skis and rucksack and ski down to Sponar’s which was as far as snow ploughs had cleared the road. The accumulated snow lasted well past the October long weekend that year.”

Don Barnes June 2010