

WARRUGANG NEWS



BOOK 3

THE STORY OF WARRUGANG

1965 – 1970

Introduction to Book 3 1965 — 1970

Transport to Perisher Valley continued to be a problem. The shuttle buses from Sawpit Creek went only as far as Smiggin Holes and there was only limited oversnow transport from there to Perisher. In 1969, the shuttle bus route was extended to a terminal in Perisher Valley opposite the White Spider. Getting to Sawpit Creek from Sydney was not easy. The Hume Highway was, for the most part, only a two-lane road and it was very busy. A common subject for conversation was alternative routes to avoid the congestion. It was accepted practice to arrive in the early hours of Saturday morning and camp in the lounge for the remainder of the night. Provided that you arrived after midnight, you were not charged an extra night's accommodation, but the breakfast was extra.

The Annual Race Weekend continued to be held throughout the 1960's, though the finding of suitable sites for alpine courses became more difficult with increasing numbers of club lodges and people in the Valley. In later years, on a number of occasions Warrugang chose the same date as Boonoon and more or less the same course. Complications arose when runners found themselves on track for the wrong club's finishing line. As our members' skiing proficiency increased, so too did the heat of competition. In 1966, some degree of caution set in after Ron Carroll, trying hard to outperform his friends in the jump, unfortunately had a disastrous crash and an extremely serious broken leg.

The Easter Work Parties in the 1960's were very popular, with a lot of conviviality and fun along with a considerable amount of maintenance work completed. Barbie's diaries record that she and Ann Sefton cooked for 25 people in 1964 and for 30 in 1965.

The old Aga stove and the water heater were converted from coke to oil fired in 1965, with two oil tanks behind the Lodge. (They are still there though no longer in use.) This saved work for the manager who no longer had to keep shovelling coke to keep the fires burning.

After much negotiating with KSPT, the Club got permission to build an extension, but the Club had to agree to a reduction in the number of people who could be accommodated from 24 to 20 (including the management). The extension, referred to as the "Blue Wing" because of the carpet used throughout, was built in time for the 1966 season. An outline sketch of the plan was published in Warrugang News Volume 8 Issue 3. The four new bedrooms were each equipped with an upper single and a lower three quarter bunk.

In the members' preferential booking period, preference for the rooms was given to couples. This led to complaints that a non-member spouse of a member would get preference over a member without family. It was clear that dormitory accommodation was no longer considered acceptable. Almost immediately, planning began for a further extension.

From 1966, bookings were no longer made through a commercial agent. The Club appointed a Booking Officer to handle bookings. The first Booking Officer was Myrna Burke. There was still a problem of people arriving at the Lodge without having booked.

The theft of a pair of skis from the Lodge during the 1967 October long weekend started discussions about security. This discussion is still going on.

Ruedi and Anneke had a daughter Heidi, a son Rato, and acquired a St. Bernard pup which they called (William) Tell. The pup grew to be enormous. A professional photographer posed Anneke, Heidi and Tell for a photo for use for postcards. Amateur photographers took advantage of this to take their own photos of the group.



Anneke, Tell and Heidi (Photo by Jim Brennan, 1968)

The dining tables and matching benches still in use were made by Max Gault in time for the 1968 season.

The old Aga stove failed during the 1968 season. It was replaced by a gas stove, fuelled from gas bottles outside against the kitchen wall. This led to complaints that the new stove had no provision for making toast.

From the minutes of the Board meeting, 11 February 1969: “On the motion of Messrs van der Kaag and Neil, it was resolved that booking of rooms be restricted to married couples or persons of the same sex.” I wonder if this resolution has ever been formally rescinded.

The work parties became family affairs. A large group, including teenagers and small children attended the Easter Work Party in 1970. It was intended to repaint some of the walls. A blowtorch was used to burn off old paint. One of those present reported that the party went to lunch unaware that they had set fire to the wall. All thanks must go to the Oldina member who rushed down the hill to tell them that the lodge was on fire. In those days, there was no Fire Station in the Valley and the nearest fire engine was in Jindabyne. To get to Warrugang, it had to get through roads choked with traffic on such a fine Easter Saturday. By the time it arrived, the fire was mostly out thanks to the many people who brought fire extinguishers to our rescue from lodges all around the Valley. The fire burnt in the roof the length of the building, charring but not burning right through the roof beams, so the roof remained intact. We were just so lucky with the timing. If it had smouldered during the day and broken out during the night, it could have been extremely dangerous and our situation far worse. As it was, we spent a rather draughty and chilly couple of nights due to holes burnt in the kitchen walls and the ceiling of the womens’ dormitory. To top things off, we had a light snowfall on the Sunday night but were still counting our blessings and the fact that we had recently acquired our first insurance policy which included coverage for fire. Fortunately, the fire had been extinguished before any catastrophic damage was done and temporary repairs were made allowing the Lodge to be used for the 1970 ski season.

In 1967, the numbering of the issues of Warrugang News became confused. The 1967 issues were Volume 8 but were labelled Volume 9. This numbering error persisted through Volumes 9–11. In my transcripts, I have copied this, but put the correct identification in the footer.

Safety release bindings had been developed and had become standard for downhill skis. The release function was the same as on modern skis. The heel piece released upward at a set

force, while the toe pieces released sideways at a set twisting force. Ski brakes had not been invented. Ankle straps were used to prevent runaway skis. The skis were still wooden and long. A pair I bought in 1969 were 210cm long. Boots were still leather, but were becoming more rigid. Some used buckles instead of laces.

Don Barnes June 2010