



THE LODGER

**An Occasional Newsletter of
The Lodge Ski Club**

Spring 2025 – The Season in Retrospect

Greetings Fellow Lodgers,

Well – that’s it for another year. And quite a year it was! After a couple of very lean seasons we needed a decent one to restore confidence. A beautiful warm dry autumn, and forecasts of a warmish winter, didn’t look too good. But Nature fooled us all and Opening Weekend was blessed with whiteness all around. There were regular top-ups right through the Season – even up to this very last week.

There was enough snow to have Blue Ribbon running for quite a while. Then it closed. Then it snowed. Then it opened again – if only for a short time. Even the Davenport Access Track was open for a good part of the Season. There are still constant cries for snow making on the lowest section to keep it open all season long.

The Orchard took a while to get going. The Conspiracy Theorists saw this as a cost-cutting measure, while those who actually went out to have a look (like our intrepid Andy “I’ll go anywhere it’s white” Tranter), recognised that there wasn’t enough snow in the valley to sufficiently cover the creek for a few weeks.

We actually seem to have a growing number of Lodgers prepared to forsake the lifts and head Out Back.

We should remember that, even though we Hothamites had a great season, the lower resorts didn’t do so well, suffering from more rain and less snow than they would have liked. This is consistent with long term outlooks for Australian snowfields – just a one degree rise in temperature raises the snow/rain boundary by several metres.

Life in The Lodge

Once again Kerry and Jonathan did a fine job of welcoming members and guests alike. We’re proud of our tradition of being one of the friendliest lodges on the mountain. This is something we long-term members can easily take for granted – that’s the way life in The Lodge is. However, it’s great to be reminded of it by guests, who have stayed elsewhere, and who are so pleased to be made welcome by managers and members alike. One such guest was Glenn Wright, who stayed with us several times during the season and was so impressed that he’s now in the process of becoming a member – buying Vicky Roadnight’s membership.

I asked long term Lodger, Ian White, and Manager Kerry for their comments

From Ian White

The Lodge has been so busy this winter. Don’t know what the bookings show but the place has been jumping. We are one of the few lodges that are still busy and the resort has been quiet for several weeks now. DWA had its busiest season for bookings and guide days – up around 30% from previous years. Rob Broersen and I were part of a three-day DWA Trainers Seminar at Falls Creek. Was great to interact with the Falls Creek and Buller team leaders.

Steve Roadnight has blown a knee, ending his season in early September. *(Steve damaged his knee while departing from Hoff Hut - no alcohol involved, I’m sure. He stepped on his own stock and went Down, fracturing the plate at the top of a femur in the process. A borrowed compression bandage didn’t help.)*

(Editor’s note: We hope that Steve’s knee mends well and quickly: he has the large project of re-stumping the Locker Room ahead of him over summer. Did you clean out your locker?)

I've damaged a few ribs early this week so I'll be a bit fragile for the next 4 – 6 weeks. (*Upon questioning Ian admitted that he fell over in Slalom Gully after losing a ski...*)

From Kerry

It has been especially encouraging to see the impact of our June promotion, which attracted a great number of new guests. Some enjoyed their very first visit, while others have already returned multiple times—one group for their *fifth* stay, even bringing friends and family along. A number of these repeat visitors have even expressed interest in becoming lodge members, which is a great sign for the future.

This year we also welcomed back some familiar faces — always a joy to see our founding members visit and share their stories. Sadly, September brought the tragic news of the passing of one of our instrumental founding members, Drew Lean – arguably the club's patriarch. His legacy is woven into the very fabric of the lodge, and he will be deeply missed.

As Spring rolled in, our annual Lodge Race once again brought out the best of our competitive spirit. With a couple of borrowed passengers, we were once again victorious. The race was followed by the spectacular Members' Weekend Dinner. This year's theme, "*Beach Vibes*", did not disappoint—bright colours, plenty of laughs, and a fantastic atmosphere that captured the season's energy.

Off the slopes, the fun continued inside the lodge. Ros Jensen, our resident *sourdough queen*, ran hands-on breadmaking masterclasses that had the kitchen smelling like heaven. Bob Rudge served up his much-anticipated annual feast of corned beef and delicacies, while Kerry kept the sweet tooth happy by refining her dessert-making skills — to the great joy of every taster.

Our resident musicians, with some help from visitors from other clubs, entertained us all on several evenings. There's nothing like a hunt through the kitchen drawers to find some improvised percussion instruments.

And, of course, Grand Final Day was celebrated with a buzzing lodge BBQ, where the Brisbane Lions cheer squad (with Bonnie leading the charge) were loud, proud, and impossible to miss.

We also want to give a big shout-out to our valued member Garrick Atkin, who this season became a qualified ski instructor *and* volunteer with the mountain CFA — a fantastic achievement and a great example of Lodge Spirit both on and off the slopes.

On the competition front, we couldn't be prouder of Cody Maverick! Cody stormed the snowboarding circuit this year, winning back-to-back State Championship titles with an impressive haul of 2 silvers and 2 golds. He then went on to Nationals, securing 3 golds and 1 silver. In addition, there were more podium finishes and medals at the local Hotham competitions. With achievements like these, and so many Lodge champions past and present (Gus Broersen, and Tom Heffernan have represented Australia internationally and of course Greta Small has taken part in a number of Olympics and International competitions), we're beginning to wonder what's in The Lodge water supply — it seems to be producing a steady stream of sporting greats!

And, to end, a bit of self-indulgence

2025 marks 60 years since my first attempt at skiing – my first trip to Hotham.

I was in Teachers College at the time, and one of the (many) young women there had a boyfriend who was helping build the White Crystal Chalet. (This overlooked the Basin, roughly where the Chill Bar is now. It later burnt down.) When they were going up for weekends, there was sometimes room for a couple of extras. So, with a good friend of mine (Barry White, who later edited Fall Line – the skiing magazine, and went on to be the Media Liaison Manager for the Australian Winter Olympic Team for a number of years – amassing a large wardrobe of Opening Ceremony Official Outfits.) we piled into the little Toyota Corona and headed off. This was the second weekend in September and there had been a mid-week dump.

When we reached Harrierville at around 8pm we discovered that the road was closed, so the four of us settled into the little Corona – luckily with a bench front seat. I think we topped and tailed – with my

head under the dash. Before dawn Barry and I went for a walk to give the driver an hour so of less-interrupted sleep.

They were setting up convoys to go Up The Hill – several cars at a time following a grader for visibility – the road being only gravel, and much narrower than today's highway. We didn't have proper chains, just sort of rubber blocks on webbing straps. To get started on the icy sections someone would have to push, and then jump in as we chonka-chonka'd our way Up The Hill.

By the time we reached the summit the sky had cleared, with the most magnificent views and snow everywhere - like wedding cake frosting on logs and roofs – blanketing everything. All under a perfect blue sky. I'd forgotten sunglasses so I spent the weekend squinting and the week after seeing anything blue as pink.

We rented our primitive gear (leather lace-up boots and cable bindings) and set off to ski – heading for The Summit. We didn't dare try the Poma Lift – which preceded the current Chair – but plodded up the hill towards The Pimples. (More history – they were a couple of bumps and the Poma line bent around them. They were later dynamited.) Our first few runs were brief, but then we plodded higher. There was no grooming in those days and I remember being terrified by a set of dozer tracks in the snow. But we negotiated the seeming crevasses and snowploughed to the bottom.

The next morning we felt much braver so headed down the road to Jack's Tow. This ran from the road up the side of Higgi, near where The Spiral Stairs are now. (If anyone had any sense there'd be a bridge across the road and Blue Ribbon would now run all the way to the top of Higgi). As we skied along we were constantly frustrated by our skis disappearing into the incredibly soft snow, which I now realise was the Fabled Powder. Jack's Tow was a rope tow - the sort that needs a nut-cracker, such as is hanging on the wall near The Lodge fireplace. If you didn't get a good grip on the rope you'd be half-way up the hill and start sliding backwards down the tracks. Lots of fun! We stooged around there for several hours before reluctantly heading back to Melbourne – thankfully uninjured, but squinting.

The skiing bug bit me there and then, so the next year, when I knew I would be sent to teach in the Country I applied for the North East. I was sent to Corryong, which is about as North East as you can get. The men in College all put in two bob for a sweep – the furthest posting from the GPO winning. I won the 36 bob, which more than paid for the petrol for my 125cc Vespa motor scooter that I rode up the Hume, for an overnight stop in Wodonga and then on to Corryong – falling off in Benalla.

From Corryong I pored over the Myer mail order catalogue and ordered my first set of boots – again leather lace-ups, inner and outer, and skis – 210 cm wood, with screwed on sectional steel edges that easily ripped out on a rock. (How to choose the right sized ski – stand with one hand stretched above your head. The ski tip should reach just above your wrist.) On Sundays we (the skiers on the Corryong Consolidated School staff) would drive into NSW, picnic by the road and walk up and slide down a suitably gentle slope.

And the rest is history...

Stay well and keep fit. Cheers - Stu.

P.S. While staying at The Lodge this year I kept having a strange feeling that something was missing. And now I know what it was. Fote Stambanis has had a knee replacement and didn't get up there. Next year???