

PRESIDENT'S UPDATE

Following our March 14 Committee meeting where we discussed and planned our regular winter activities including social events – it took only 72 hours and the release of the Government's 2nd tranche of regulations and social distancing measures – to see our activities brought to a halt. The Museum has been closed on advice from Museums and Galleries NSW and we have been forced to cancel our 3 annual social functions. (The Sydney Cocktails, The Thredbo Exhibition launch & Cocktails and the Mid Winter Dinner) Whilst the 2020 Faces of Thredbo have been selected – it is now likely their announcements and presentations will take place at the 2021 Mid Winter Dinner.

An event that still may take place later this year is one already planned to recognise the Czech connection and their influence on Thredbo from the very beginning. The Czech Embassy in Canberra had two representatives address our March Committee meeting with their plans and the fact that 2020 marks some important anniversaries of prominent Czechs in Thredbo's development and history. This would take the form of a cocktail event in Thredbo with a display of appropriate memorabilia and presentations with which we would assist. Jerry Krejzar is liaising with them and we will keep you informed.



Frank Prihoda (centre of picture) with members from the Embassy of the Czech Republic in Canberra - Jeremy Whiteside and the Deputy Head of Mission Ondre Bohac

OUR PRECIOUS MEMBERS: With the event cancellations etc we are determined to keep our members informed and interested in the history we have in our collection. Accordingly we will be producing a newsletter approximately every 2 months with interesting articles that may help you survive the home isolation affecting so many. Some of us have also been working tirelessly on updating and refreshing our website including adding the honour boards for the Faces of Thredbo plus our honour board of donors to our Museum Foundation Fund in addition to a brief history of the society and its formation and together with a guide to the collection in the museum. We would be delighted to hear your feedback to any of those listed below on the upgraded www.thredboalpinemuseum.org.au website after you have checked it out

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PRESIDENT'S UPDATE continued

Our thanks to webmaster, Andrew Koczanowski, assisted by Randy Wieman, Chrissi Webb, Jerry Krejzar and Graeme Holloway – the latter two managing our Facebook Page.

MEMBERS BOOK SPECIAL OFFER– THREDBO PIONEERS, LEGENDS, COMMUNITY: At the end of February we had sold some 850 copies of our anniversary book, resulting in an income of \$34,000. This has seen our printing and publishing costs covered before we add the RAHS grant income of \$3,800. However we still have about 650 books remaining in stock and as a not for profit society it is our intention to endeavour to “move them out”. Accordingly for our members we are reducing the price to **\$20 each – with no restrictions on numbers**. This coffee table quality book can be used as a thank you gift

instead of a bottle of wine, a bunch of flowers or other appreciation gift when you know your subject. Each purchase comes with a **FREE Geoffrey Hughes “Starting Thredbo”** book.

Books can be purchased through our website shop or as follows from Committee members:
Sydney(Pymble) – Alan Fredericks Ph 9449 7610

E: alanf@bigpond.net.au

Jindabyne Chrissi Webb Ph 6456 2279

E: chrissi.wikner@outlook.com

On line orders through our website:

Graeme Holloway 0447 648 478 E:

gholloway@sdbge.com

They can be picked up or posted (add \$13.50)

Alan Fredericks

ORAL HISTORY - APRIL 2020

I am pleased to report that Michelle Reichinger will take on my role, the challenge of managing our Oral History Program over time. Unfortunately easing Michelle into her new role is on hold for now, as are the various interviews we planned to conduct over the coming months. The invitations for new interviews are also being held back. Once we know when one on one, face to face meetings are once again condoned, we will be in a better position to decide whether they may take place later in the year. Alternatively they may need to be postponed until 2021.

Recently Sharonne Briggs kindly forwarded her family photos to complete the Ludwig Rabina oral history manuscript, but unfortunately there is no photo of Ludwig sporting his red ski-patrol jacket. Should any of our members be in possession of such a photo please let me know.

Ludwig was formerly a President of TSPA and such a photo would help tremendously to round-out his story.

Web-master Andrew Koczanowski is to be highly commended, in lending his expertise in digital IT in the recent update of our www.thredboalpinemuseum.org.au - website.

I implore you to take a peek! You can readily access all 30 Oral Histories as well as the ‘Faces of Thredbo’ bio’s, with their accompanying photos. Also our recently completed Honor Auchinleck (Elyne Mitchell) Oral History is now available on the site, and makes for interesting reading. Especially so should you be interested in the Alpine history of the Snowy Mountains preceding the Thredbo years.

Jerry Krejzar

THS MEMBERSHIP FEES 2020/21

Individuals: \$45/1-yr; \$225/5-yrs;
\$450/10-yr

Family: \$60/1-yr; \$300/5-yrs

Group: Club\$220/year

Corporate Gold: \$1500/yr Silver: \$1000/yr

Bronze: \$500/yr

PROFILE: MICHELLE REICHINGER

The Society is delighted that Michelle Reichinger has come on board to the Committee. Her role will be to continue capturing the stories of women and men who carried out the dreams of Tony Sponar and Charles Anton, Thyne Read and Geoffrey Hughes. Many members know Michelle Reichinger who owned Michelle's fashion boutique in the Thredbo Alpine Hotel Concourse. For those who do not know Michelle, following is her bio:

Michelle first came to Thredbo in 1964 as a schoolgirl. In 1962 her father Alexander Slutzkin opened the first pharmacy in the newly developed Alpine Hotel. By 1971, armed with a degree in Arts and Drama and a stint in swinging London, Michelle holidayed in Thredbo and stayed on to work for Chris & Rudi Schatzle in their mountain restaurants. One evening in the Bistro, a kind, empathetic ski instructor called Heinz introduced himself and the end of the winter they became an item.

When Heinz returned to work in Sun Valley, Michelle went with him. They married in Sun Valley in 1972. At this time Alexander Slutzkin's partners wished to sell their shares in the business to Alexander who then in turn offered it to Michelle and Heinz. The young "green horns" took over the lease of the 3 shops in May 1972 registered under the name "Snowfields Enterprises", living at the back of the shop amongst the bread boxes and milk crates. Before long the business was turned into a continental delicatessen.

Enthusiasm for selling milk and bread had waned by 1982 – during this time they had also operated a grocery shop in Perisher Valley - and they launched the ski fashion boutique

"Michelle's of Thredbo." The boutique became famous for the unique ski wear brands from America, Italy, Austria and Germany. By 1985, Heinz opened "Heinz Ski Tech" which later became the "Good Board Store" operated by their second son Luke.

Due to increased competition in ski wear around about 2005, Michelle made the decision to move into resort fashions featuring Australian designers, imports, cashmere, fur, leather and introduced quirky, rare and unique labels. When Michelle's of Thredbo ceased trading on Sunday May 2, 2015, the Reichinger family had held shop leases in the Thredbo for 44 years.

Today Michelle enjoys just hanging out, enjoying family, friends, travel and her new found freedom. She and Heinz live in Thredbo with frequent escapes to their property on the Alpine Way.

Chrissi Webb



Michelle Reichinger

Photo: Chrissi Webb

THS OFFICE BEARERS: 2020/2021

Patron: Alan Rydge
 President: Alan Fredericks alanf@bigpond.net.au
 02 9449 7610 / 0417401403
 Vice President: Ed Denny 6457 6222
 Vice President: Wayne Kirkpatrick 0418 766 484
 Secretary: Maureen Roberts 6456 1289
 Treasurer: Raylene Jarvis 0414 679 409
Committee:
 Public Officer: Christina Webb 6456 2279
 Membership: Anne Collet 5100 3823
 Oral History: Jerry Krejzar 0411 224 356
 Michelle Reichinger,
 Randy Wieman, Kerri Koczanowski, Errol Hanlon
 Web Master" Andrew Koczanowski.

THREDBO ALPINE MUSEUM

Opening Hours: 1 – 5 pm After COVID 19)
 Peak: July – September 2018
 December 26 – January 27
 (closed Mondays)
 Other: Weekends only
 Spring: October, November
 Autumn: Feb March April, June
 Plus public holidays and special events

STRZELECKI – THE ASCENT 1840

PART 1 - STRZELECKI'S JOURNEY TO KOSCIUSKO AND BEYOND

by Lt Col H P G Clews (1890-1980)

On Monday 2nd March 1840, Paul Strzelecki and James Macarthur left Ellerslie Station, near the present day town of Adelong, with 4 others, six in all, on a trip to Corner Inlet on the western coast of what is now known as Gippsland. It was intended to make a detour trip to the highest point in the Australian Alps, then believed to be unvisited by previous explorers.

The party consisted of "Count" Paul Strzelecki, a Pole who was making a study of the physical aspects of NSW. (At that time Victoria was portion of NSW) and James Macarthur who was with the party to investigate the possibility of using, for pastoral purposes, the country south of the Great Dividing Range now known as Gippsland. Macarthur had financed the trip stating that it had cost him 500 hundred pounds, quite a large sum in those days. James Riley, an Englishman, was a protégé of Macarthur and would correspond to what we now call a Jackeroo. Also there were two convict servants and an aboriginal, Charlie Tarra, who originally came from the Goulburn plains. The number of horses they had both pack and riding, is uncertain.

They arrived at Welaregang Station – Messrs Hay and Chalmers Station on the Hume probably on 7th March. They spent the Sunday there reorganising for the mountain trip and the mountain party left on 9th. They left the 2 servants at Welaregang but added another aboriginal to the party, so that the party leaving the station consisted of Strzelecki, Macarthur, Riley and two aboriginals. It is possible that MacArthur's aboriginal, being from the Goulburn country, was not acquainted with the topography of the mountains, whereas the local man had accompanied other aboriginals on their trips up the mountains to feast on the Bogong moths. Macarthur mentions that they saw remains of aboriginal camps, above the timber line, on the way up.

To follow the climbers on their ascent of the mountain, it is necessary to depend entirely on MacArthur's diary. The only help given by Strzelecki is a reference to "The steepness of the numberless ridges, intersected by gullies and

torrents. This is not very helpful. It is worth noting that Strzelecki calls the river the "Murray", while Macarthur always refers to it as the "Hume". To both gentlemen the present day Swampy Plains River with its upper reaches of the Geehi River is the Murray or Hume. The real upper Murray or Indi River is noted as a minor creek, mapped as the India Creek. Evidently the original native pronunciation was "Indy", which Strzelecki corrupted to "India".

The party on leaving Welaregang, crossed immediately to the south side of the Murray River. As Macarthur states they passed Guises Station. Guise occupied the property now known as Towong Hill and owned by T. Mitchell, MLA. They camped there on the first night. Next morning they crossed the river. They followed the northern bank of the river and reached a small plain known as "Gobollin". No present local people know where this was.

When the hills closed on the flats the party made their second camp. They intended to leave their horses there and proceed on foot. Riley had evidently volunteered to remain in charge of the horses, while the two white men and the 2 aboriginals made the climb.

Next morning the climbing party – Strzelecki, Macarthur and two aboriginals Charlie Tarra – MacArthur's man and Jacky – an aboriginal probably borrowed from Welaregang station as a local guide, started at 7.00am in high spirits. As Macarthur observes "the weather intensely hot, we marched on with our blankets and provisions 'au militaire'. The Count carried in addition a heavy case of instruments for scientific observations". Macarthur also carried a gun.

They followed up the river at first; the river known nowadays as the Swampy Plains River. They would cross the Black (or Back) Creek in less than a mile and then moving away from the river slightly up the easy slopes to the top of the Geehi Walls. This top of the Geehi Walls is important, because from there the whole of the way up to Townsend is visible.

Continued on page 8

JANUARY 2020 FIRES AND TOWONG HILL

The fires struck the small Victorian town of Cudgewa on Elyne Mitchell's 116th birthday on 30th December 2019, the night before New Year's Eve. The wind-driven blaze rapidly threatened the west side of Corryong burning livestock, some houses and threatening others on its path. In Cudgewa 14 houses were lost.

The fire resulted some days earlier from a lightning strike in mountainous terrain near Talmalmo in south eastern New South Wales, west of Jingellic and close to the Victorian border. Gusting wind soon carried the fire over the border to the Walwa district and the slopes of the volcanic plug of Mt Mittamatite overlooking Cudgewa, Corryong and Towong. The fire was coming our way; it was just a question of when?

At dawn on New Year's Day, all we could see were clouds of smoke billowing over the hill behind our house near Towong Hill. The landline, our mobile and our internet connections had gone down during the night so we were unable to get any information. Information about the whereabouts of the fires was only by word of mouth from incoming fire fighters as nobody had any telephone connections. Thankfully mobile connections were restored by the time the fire hit Towong. There was no power. In Corryong it was difficult to get fuel, as everyone needed it to run pumps, generators and vehicles. With ATMs and EFTPOS machines down, cash was king – cash

was needed for fuel and food. Some people had neither and had lost their livelihoods into the bargain.

By early morning of 3rd January the emergency services were advising people in Towong to 'leave now before it is too late'. Later while we were moving our cattle into the paddocks by the Murray River, I received a text from an old family friend suggesting we went to them. Reluctantly, I accepted.

The fire hit our property late on the afternoon of the 4th January, spotting on either side of our house before taking off on the wind, engulfing our hay shed and the Towong Hill homestead as it went. Two days later we saw the homestead's charred homemade brick walls, empty window frames and the chimneys standing out like fingers from the ruins. Thank goodness my parents are no longer alive to know what has happened to their beloved home. The house was the iconic context to their story.

On our adjoining property our stock losses have been minimal. A green garden, roof sprinklers and sprinklers around the garden perimeter supported by a plentiful water supply saved our house. We lost about 85% of our pasture and fencing. Compared to many we have been so lucky.

Honor Auchinleck



Towong Hill in all its glory before the January 2020 Bush Fires



The devastation of Towong Hill following the Bush Fires of January 2020

THE CELESTIAL TRANSIT COMPANY

“Although there was very little mining able to be done by anyone in the harsh winter conditions at Kiandra, some Chinese found other steady employment. As it turned out this alternative employment proved to be of great benefit not only to the Chinese, but also to most of the European residents of the snow-bound Kiandra...

Anxious to have Thomas Garrett's newspaper, *The Alpine Pioneer and Kiandra Advertiser*, start spreading good tidings about Kiandra, some local and highly respected business men decided to help it get established in the town – and make money at the same time. The machinery for the newspaper could not be brought in to the town because of the snow, it had been 'twice locked in by the snow in endeavouring to get from *Russell's to Kiandra, and had been sixteen days in getting six miles' (*The Braidwood Observer and Miners' Advocate*, 11 August 1860)... A group of local businessmen established The Celestial Transit Company to initially move into Kiandra the newspaper machinery which become snowbound .

Fifty Chinamen were engaged for this job, the drays were got at with considerable difficulty, and the entire loading, weighing 4,400 lbs, were carried a distance of fourteen miles through snow, and over very broken country in about ten hours.

The purpose of the consortium was to extend the line to Merimbula and Eden, having convenient stations on the line of the road for halting places (*The Braidwood Observer and Miners' Advocate*, 11 August 1860). Other reports of the 'Carrying Company' and the benefits to residents of Kiandra during the long winter months show the important contribution of the Chinese to the community during that period by which these businessmen have concocted a novel mode of conveyance for heavy goods between Kiandra and Russell's. They have chartered some 200 Chinese, at two pounds a week each, made a station half-way, now engage in bringing all kinds of good into Kiandra at *so much* a ton.

The poor Chinamen were nearly starving, and although we cannot give the company any praise on philanthropic grounds, it will certainly be of great benefit to these poor Celestials. A long string of

them started this morning, and there is little doubt but they will perform all they profess; viz., to bring in 60 lbs weight each daily (*Sydney Morning Herald* 27 July 1860).

This much abused race (the Chinese) has lately proved itself invaluable to storekeepers, and other by bringing in all kinds of good from Russell's slung on their poles. Many are now carrying in shingles and weatherboard. In the beginning of the week they brought in most of the *Alpine Pioneer's* type, so that it will be able to issue its first number on the 3rd of August. The loads these fellows will carry are tremendous. One brought in 140 lbs weight by himself in one day over a distance of more than twelve miles...

...We are almost entirely depending on pack horses for goods, but there are a number of packers and no mistake in the number of Chinamen, I should think that there are upwards one hundred of them on the road, and the loads they carry are almost incredible. I am informed on good authority that one Chinaman brought in from Russell's 160 lbs and the lowest carried by them is seldom under 80 lbs a load; 25s per load is about the general prices, but they also bring in shingles, palings and timber, at the same price charged by the teams, and they are to be depended on ... (*Sydney Morning Herald*, 2 August 1860).

Unfortunately, it appears that some of the Chinese were not paid, or at least, not paid the contracted amount for carrying goods into the town. Among the several wages cases that came before Kiandra court on 23 August 1860 was one in which 59 Chinamen wished to sue the promoters of the Celestial Transit Company. It seems that they had been engaged under a boss or headman, at 35 shillings per week, with rations, and sued for a week's pay. The defence consisted of non-performance of work, and a very long bill of rations supplies over and above the contract allowance. This brought the amount due to the Chinamen down 6 pounds 10 shillings. After a very patient investigation, the Bench found a verdict for the plaintiffs in the amount of 78 pounds and five pounds for the boss."

Footnote: "William Russell's station was on the Eucumbene River near the present junction of the old Snowy Mountains Highway and the road to Eucumbene Portal-Junction Shaft and was certainly the closest settlement to Kiandra before the rush. During the rush all routes from the Monaro side converged on Russell's which was close to the eastern edge of the main mountains, easily reached, and below the main winter snowline."

Historic Kiandra" Cooma Monaro Historical Society, 1959 p.12.

Reference: "The Chinese at Kiandra " by Lindsay Smith (<http://www.kiandra.net/chinese.html> 10/10/2010)

CZECH FOOTPRINTS IN THE SNOWY MOUNTAINS AND THREDBO

The birth of the modern federation of Czechoslovakia in 1918, led to the worldwide opening of embassies and consulates soon thereafter in 1920. To celebrate this milestone the stars have fortuitously aligned, as the Tony Sponar centenary happens to fall in line in 2020 as well. One of these premier events '*Czech Footprints in Thredbo*' was scheduled to be held in the Kosciuszko Room on the 17th April.

Sadly our doors are closed for now, and the fantastic milestone event mentioned above is temporarily postponed. However despite this setback we remain committed in keeping our membership and the wider skier audience informed and entertained via the internet, and as such the *#thredboalpinemuseum* has stepped up its social media presence. The activity is aimed not just to promote the TAM brand but to gravitate our audience to the updated www.thredboalpinemuseum.org.au – website as well.

You may have noticed one or two of our previous posts. On the 8th April your administrators posted a photo collage to celebrate the Tony Sponar Centenary to our Facebook page. The series of photos we posted depicted Tony setting out on his trail of adventures from Prague to St Anton to the Snowy Mountains and Thredbo. Shortly thereafter, to coincide to the very day the Czech Legends packed up the mechanized ski-lift in St Christoph on 19th April some 71 years ago, we posted a similar series of photos of Frank Prihoda, Karel Nekvapil and Tony Sponar taken in St Christoph in 1949.

'*The Embassy of the Czech Republic*' in Canberra will be holding a series of events in Australia.

Czechia in Australia 2020

Tony Sponar's nephew living in Prague kindly donated these originals to the *Thredbo Alpine Museum*, to help promote the story. The photos clearly demonstrate that the ski-lift-line as laid out by Frank, Karel and Tony many, many years ago approximates the same ski-lift-line that is still in use to this day.



St Christoph am Arlberg 2019

To promulgate and help establish this memorable alpine history within the St Anton community at large, I wrote an article whilst in St Anton. My ski-mates and two local identities residing in St Anton kindly contributed with their local knowledge to the article - '*St Anton and the Thredbo AussieCzech Connection*' - which you can access on our website. *Jerry Krejzar*

NPWS Feral Pest Control – January 2020

Brindabella/Bimberi – 6 sambar deer & 7 pigs (4.2 hours)

Burrinjuck/Black Andrew – 84 goats (4.7 hours)

Northern KNP (Murrumbidgee Area) – 6 sambar deer & 16 pigs (8.7 hours)

Jagungal/Yellow Bog/Greg Greg (Riverina Highlands) – 32 sambar deer, 16 fallow deer & 1 pig (10.3 hours)

Ramshead Range/Main Range – 12 sambar deer, 51 fallow deer, 30 pigs & 1 dog (10.4 hours)

Big Boggy/Cascades – 42 sambar deer, 29 fallow deer, 1 pig & 14 red deer (10.7 hours)

Jagungal (AQA) – 13 sambar deer, 1 fallow deer & 9 pigs (6.3 hours)

Lower Snowy/Byadbo – 38 sambar deer, 95 fallow deer, 32 pigs, 8 goats & 3 dogs (15.2 hours)

Kybeyan/Dangalong – 13 goats & 1 fox (2.1 hours)

Total – 149 sambar deer, 192 fallow deer, 96 pigs, 105 goats, 14 red deer, 4 dogs and 1 fox (72.6 hours)

Thredbo Historical Society Inc., PO Box 6, Thredbo 2625. Inc # Y226902-3 ABN # 39 677 273 05

OUTSIDE THE MUSEUM

The Alpine Museum closure on Monday, March 16 2020 due to the COVID 19 virus has resulted in some changes in operations. The digital on line world has become increasingly important and we are lucky that Andrew Koczanowski is upgrading the Museum's page.

The development of the hard copy information continues with the use of "team leader" where by data in the Mosaic program used for the Society's collection of memorabilia, can be accessed from my home in Jindabyne.

Another challenge being undertaken is the accessioning and copying of donated photographs in the archival folders. This could require a year or more of social distancing to complete the project. However



Jimmy Larkin handing over the mail at Sawyer's Hill to Tom Bolton who would then ski the mail to Kiandra 1896

Photo Charles Kerry

STRZELECKI – THE ASCENT 1840 PART 1 *continued*

They descended the Geehi Walls, a drop of some 1000 feet, finding it "so steep that we only accomplished it safely by clinging to the shrubs and small saplings". At the foot of the drop they crossed the Bogong Creek, probably very close to the junction of Walls Creek and climbed the ridge on the other side which Macarthur thinks was equally as steep as the Geehi Walls.

They then proceeded up the left bank of the river for about three miles, crossing over the present lucerne paddock of Mr Nankervis and the present day Alpine Way just south of the Bailey Bridge, and finally

Final Part 2 - to appear in Next Newsletter "Are we there yet? NEARLY!"

Sub Editor Alan Fredericks

whilst doing so, I am re-discovering rare items whilst examining the folders, such as pencil written notes on the history of Kiandra's Alpine Hotel in 1861.

Preparation for the next feature exhibition on "Transport" continues. The picture below of the "Chalet-Kosciusko Bus is a circa 1930s postcard. It is interesting to note that a photo published by Good Times Photography depicts the bus converted into a truck.

Images of transport to and in the snowfields are needed for the period 1940 to 1950s are in short supply. If you have a photo that might be suitable, please could you email to me at

chrissi.wikner@outlook.com

Chrissi Webb



The vehicle on the right is "The Chalet – Hotel Kosciusko Bus" c. 1930s.