

**SPECIAL
POINTS OF
INTEREST:**

- **COVID-19**
Impact on the
Club
- **Worldloppet**
Report 2020

**INSIDE THIS
ISSUE:**

President's Piece, Tour & Webmasters Reports	2
COVID-19 Impact on Club	3
Huts lost during the bushfires	4
Trip Photos - Gooandra Hut	6
Trip Photos - North America	7
Dave's 2020 Worldloppet Preparations	10
Trip Report - Worldloppet Skiing 2020	12
Habitat Box Workparty	18
Vale Kathy Saw	20
Club Committee Contacts	21



Four Mile Hut, a popular ski destination near Mt Selwyn. The hut was sadly burnt down in the recent bushfires. Photo: Alan Levy

Next Newsletter

The next newsletter will be published once Club activities are resumed following the COVID-19 restrictions, or earlier and more frequently if enough contributions are received from members.

Please send any articles or photos to

President's Piece

As I write this piece in early May, it is a cold, wet day in Canberra — and it's *snowing* in the mountains. And I see that the Bureau of Meteorology is predicting higher-than-average winter precipitation in southern Australia this year, perhaps giving prospects for some good snowfalls.

There might, however, be some cruel irony in this. If current Covid-19 restrictions continue we may not be able to take advantage of such conditions. **All club activities are currently suspended**, in line with government restrictions.

There are currently no social meetings scheduled, no ski tours are planned and the lodge weekends are not proceeding. And, as with other races on the cross-country skiing race calendar, plans for the club's Kosciuszko Tour ski race are similarly suspended.

Given that, almost literally, the club's activities have gone into a state of winter hibernation, the committee has agreed that **2019 membership will be automatically carried over until July 2020**. The carry-over of membership from 2019 may be further extended beyond that date, subject to further review by the committee.

The club's committee will continue to

monitor the situation more generally. If restrictions are eased and there is scope to revive club activities, we will certainly look to do so.

Misfortunes don't end there. Among all the other tragic destruction incurred by the summer bushfires, some of our favourite skiing areas have been impacted, including severe damage to the natural environment and to built structures in the Kiandra-Mt Selwyn area, including the loss of the Selwyn Snow Resort and Four Mile Hut. These are sad losses (see article on page 4). On a happier note, we certainly appreciate the efforts of fire fighters in successfully reducing the damage in other areas.

A major challenge facing the club last year was the inoperability of our website. Thanks to some great work by Ken Moylan over the summer period, we now have a revived website. Please visit the site at cccsc.asn.au. We welcome input/comments from members as we refine the site further.

Here's hoping that the fight against Covid-19 progresses well and that, among the other benefits, we still get a chance to do some skiing this season and re-acquaint ourselves with our old ski buddies!

President

Tour Co-ordinator's Report

Back in March, at the start of the COVID-19 lockdown that we are all enduring, we all thought that there would be no skiing this season.

As I write, in late May, the restrictions are easing and we might get a ski season after all, even a Winter season as well as Spring.

Please contact me if there are any tours you would like to put onto the program or if you are interested in generally leading a tour.

Hopefully, we will have a touring program this year.

Tour Co-ordinator

Web Master's Report

Hi everyone. I'm the web master for our Club's website, cccsc.asn.au.

After a disastrous 2019 for the website, it is back up and useful for 2020.

It is a work that is never finished, so if there are improvements you would like to see made to it, please flick me an e-mail and I'll see what we can do.

CCCSC Webmaster



Photos taken around Perisher on 1 & 2 May 2020, after about 60cm of snowfall.

COVID-19 Impact on the CCCSC

It is not known how long the current COVID-19 restrictions will be in place but they will likely impact most, if not all, of the Club's activities this year. The Committee has made the following decisions regarding the Club activities for 2020:

Social Meetings

Social Meetings cannot not be held under the current COVID-19 health restrictions due to the need to stop people congregating, and the closure of the Hughes Community Centre. We will try and resume social meetings during the 2020 ski season if a lifting of restrictions allows this to be done.

Kosciuszko Tour

Planning for the Kosciuszko Tour ski race has been put on hold. It is too early to know if any races will be run at Perisher this year. If it looks like the race could go ahead then it will likely be a low key race, with entries on the day only, and no presentation.

Lodge Weekends

The July Lodge Weekends have been cancelled. The Club was planning to hold a few lodge weekends at Kalkite in July to coincide with the Come and Try Days, but we understand these would not proceed under the current restrictions. Hopefully an October Lodge Weekend can go ahead.

Ski Tours

There will be no Club Ski tours until the current restrictions are lifted. We will monitor the situation to determine whether any tours can proceed during the season, and any such tours will be advertised at the time.

Membership

Everyone on the 2019 membership list will continue as members until July 2020. Depending on what happens with the restrictions, this date may be extended further or membership subscriptions will then be sought, but at a reduced rate. Further details to follow.

Newsletter

Regular newsletters will still be published if there is enough content available, but this will require members to provide articles, photos or other material of interest to include in the newsletters. If there is not enough to report on this season, there will likely be less editions of the newsletter.

Club News

The Club will provide emails to members as required with any news or items of interest throughout the season. The Club's Facebook site is another source of information.

In summary, the Club is effectively in hibernation under the current COVID-19 restrictions, but will attempt to run some activities before the end of the 2020 snow season if the easing of restrictions permit this.

Huts Lost in the Summer Bushfires

16 huts and buildings were lost in the recent bushfires in Kosciuszko National Park and Namadgi National Park, as follows:

Kosciuszko National Park:

- Linesmans No3 (1950) - Fifteen Mile Spur
- Linesmans No3 (1980) - Fifteen Mile Spur
- Vickerys Hut
- Delaneys Hut
- Happys Hut
- Brooks Hut (still standing but badly burnt)
- Bradley & O'Briens Hut
- Four Mile Hut
- Kiandra Courthouse
- Matthews Cottage
- Pattinsons Hut
- Round Mountain Hut
- Sawyers Hill Hut
- Wolgal Lodge



Four Mile Hut



Round Mountain Hut

Namadgi National Park

- Max & Berts Hut
- Demandering Hut

Other major losses, in or close to Kosciuszko National Park

- Mt. Selwyn Resort
- Cabramurra housing (half)
- Towong Hill homestead, Upper Murray, Victoria, former home of Elyne and Tom Mitchell.



Kiandra Courthouse



Matthews Cottage, Kiandra



Linesmans Huts, Fifteen Mile Spur



Vickerys Hut



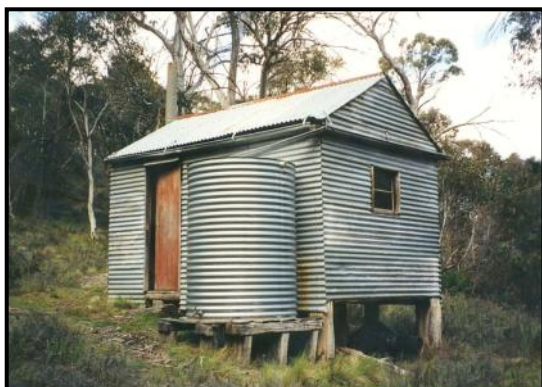
Pattinsons Hut, Kiandra



Delaneys Hut



Bradleys & O'Briens Hut



Demandering Hut

Trip Photos - Gooandra Homestead - 3 May 20



*Photos taken by Mike Hinchey of Gooandra Homestead and Wild Horse plain, on a ski tour on Sun 3 May 20. Mike said there was at least a 20cm wind-packed base at Kiandra.
Photos: Mike Hinchey*



Racing and Kosciuszko Tour update

The club's Kosciuszko Tour is scheduled for Saturday 15 August at Perisher. As with other ski club activities, there is a very high degree of uncertainty regarding the ability to run the Kosciuszko Tour in 2020. Mandated restrictions on gatherings combined with significant uncertainty surrounding trail grooming and Nordic shelter access makes it difficult to plan with any confidence.

Entries will not be accepted until we have confirmation that it is safe to run the event. It is possible that we will have a low-key race at Perisher with entries accepted on the day. We'll update as we get closer to the day

Key XC ski events such as the [Kangaroo Hoppet](#) are also taking a similar approach. For more information on xc skiing and COVID-19, please check [Snow Australia](#), [NPWS](#), and the [NSW Government](#).

We apologise for the uncertainty and we look forward to ski racing again at some point in the future.

Jo-Anne

Trip Photos - North America - Jan-Feb 20

Victoria and I decided, as it happened only a little before the virus broke out, to visit relatives in San Francisco, and of course we took our skis and took the opportunity to have 4 days skiing at Mt Bachelor, near Bend in Oregon, and then 5 days at Sun Peaks in the Rockies in Canada. On one of those days we did a 7 kilometre cross country ski descent on a crisp groomed trail through a frozen forest on a sunny day, and I remember thinking 'I never want to go back to a city again!'

We got home in the second week of February quite oblivious to the possibility that the virus could have wrecked our plans, had we left just a few weeks later.

Lachlan Kennedy

(Continued on page 8)

**The frozen forest at Sun Peaks.
Photo: Lachlan Kennedy**



(Continued from page 7)



View from the lower Mt Bachelor slopes. Photo: Lachlan Kennedy



The frozen forest at Sun Peaks. Photo: Lachlan Kennedy

(Continued on page 9)



*Mt Shasta in Northern California.
Photo: Lachlan Kennedy*

*Cross-country ski trail at Sun Peaks through the frozen forest.
Photo: Lachlan Kennedy*



*The frozen forest at Sun Peaks.
Photo: Lachlan Kennedy*



Dave's 2020 World Loppet preparations and outcomes

by Dave Drohan

Most of my articles I have written for the club magazine have been of my exploits of ski touring in Norway, as my background is mainly touring. However, I have been in a few races here over the years, such as the Paddy Pallin classic and the Kosciusko tour. The club also have a number of members who have already have their World Loppet medal (or are working towards it).

Therefore, a new goal for me is completing 10 marathon races in order to become a Gold level World Loppet Master. I had already completed the Australian and New Zealand races, but what about the European circuit? I had initially tried to organise this myself, but when I heard Alan Levy was planning to head over to Europe again to compete his races, I asked if I could join the group.

Our group was organised by Marg Hayes, a veteran of 7 Gold world masters campaigns. (She has written a summary of our races in this newsletter). Therefore, I was more than happy to just fit in with Marg's European race itinerary. My aim was to complete the European races with a respectable finish time in the middle of the field.

To prepare for this, I undertook a similar training program to what I did for my Norway trips. That is, I start more serious training three months before departure. My main form of staying fit (apart from skiing) is road cycling. My goal was to work up to about 200km a week on the bike. For example one of my rides was from Fadden up to the Tidbinbilla nature reserve and back. I have also built a weight machine that replicates the double pole motion (the photos show how it works). My aim was to get up to 50 reps four times a day on this machine.

Unfortunately we had the serious smoke issue in Canberra during December and January. We were flying out on the 7th of Jan and so I had about two months of training

under my belt (was up to 120km a week) before the smoke got bad. The smoke forced me to only ride inside on a bike trainer and there was even smoke inside the house on bad days. Riding with a smoke mask on is no fun.

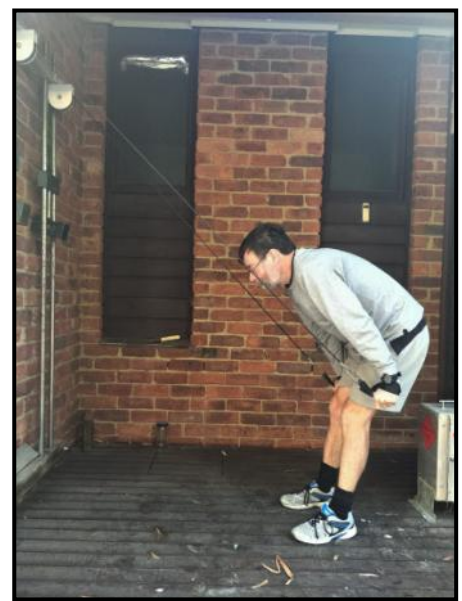
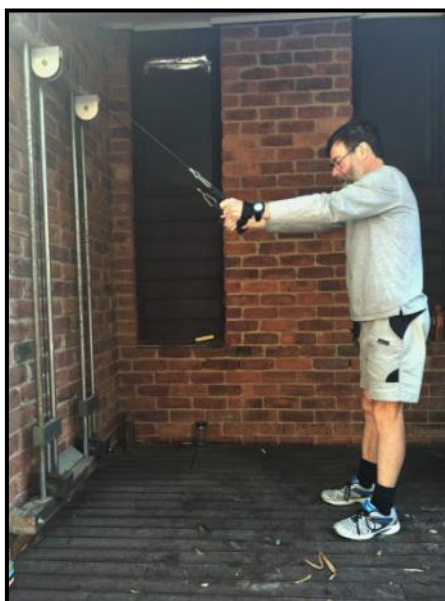
I flew into Austria with Alan not knowing if my training would be adequate. The two weeks of training that Marg had planned in Dobbiaco in Italy before our races was superb. A number of 30 to 40 km ski days with excellent weather on good snow tracks certainly helped with my preparations. My first race was the classic 42km Dolomitenlauf in Austria. This year it had the traditional finish in the middle of the large town of Lienz. The course was mainly a gentle downhill, so lots of double poling gave fast results to the majority of racers. My time was 2 hours 52 minutes for the 42 km (average speed 14.6 kph), but my place was only 468th out of 621 skiers.

My next marathon race was the Marcialonga in Italy. Back in Australia 6 months before, I was worried about a 70km race, so only entered the 45 km event. Based on how I was skiing now, I decided to upgrade to the 70km classic race. Luckily I had a good start position (the same as Marg) which is vital in a race with 8000 starters. I skied well for the first 50km, but started to lag after that. I knew about the infamous final climb of

200m gain over 5km and the well positioned food station at the base of this climb. Luckily the five Italian coffee shots I grabbed gave me the energy burst I needed and was able to puff up that hill like a steam train finishing in a time of 6 hours 40 minutes (average speed 10.5 kph). I was also surprised that my place was 3256th out of a field of around 8000 races. I heard about 2500 people had withdrawn due the bad track conditions. I guess my touring ability helped me to deal with those poor track conditions. The elite skiers (at the start of the field) had good tracks, but hoards of skiers had turned the groomed tracks to mush during the day.

The poor ski season in other sections of Europe was now becoming a problem. The German and later, the Estonia races were cancelled due to lack of snow. Alan and I headed home after the Estonia race (that didn't happen). You can read in Marg's story that others stayed on, but further races were cancelled due to lack of snow and then the Covid-19 virus outbreak. My final classic marathon race was the 50km Jizerska Padesatka in the Czech Republic. Unfortunately I received a poor start position. My race plan therefore was to be more assertive

(Continued on page 11)



(Continued from page 10)

than I was in the Marcialonga. In that race there were many bottle necks where I just waited my turn along with the others. I expect I lost over 15 minutes in waiting over the course on that day. The Czech race had about 5000 starters and there is a long up hill for the first 12 kms to gain the plateau. The course through the pine forest only had two to three set tracks, so passing was tricky. I often had to ski out of track between the skiers in track (think of limited room due to everyone's stocks). I was constantly jumping between tracks to pass slower skiers. The track in the latter half of the course was very glazed, I found I could pass many skiers who were slipping with diagonal stride by using a modified double pole with kick technique that seems to work well in that environment. I finished in a time of 4 hours 26 minutes (average speed 11.3 kph) with a place of 2500th out of 5000. I later found out I had passed 730 skiers. The importance of a good start position based on your ability can't be overstated, as I certainly lost a lot of time being delayed by slower skiers in that race.

Overall I thank Marg for her enthusiasm and brilliant trip planning in taking me on with her team. To Alan for being a good travelling buddy, and yes, I was satisfied that I completed my races in respectable times even though I missed out on two races. Our consolation prize was that we were able to fit in some lovely sightseeing in Estonia and Finland.

Unfortunately with Alan missing the German race, he was unable to complete his Silver world Loppet master goal. I still have 5 races to complete for my Gold medal, so the both of us will be over there again when international travel restrictions ease due to this damned virus.



Dave in the Jizerska Padesatka race in the Czech Republic.



*Towers and city wall surrounding the Old Town in Tallinn, Estonia.
Photo: Dave Drohan*

*Dave skiing through an old railway tunnel between
Fimmes and Dobbiaco, Italy.
Photo: Alan Levy*



Worldloppet Skiing - Jan-Mar 2020

by Marg Hayes

On Boxing Day in 40 degree heat, before coronavirus was a problem, Bruce Wharrie, Jim Finnie and myself (Marg Hayes) flew out of Australia for Changchun, northern China to participate in Worldloppet's China Vasaloppet.

Worldloppet is a series of 20 marathon cross country ski races in 20 different countries around the world. Only one cross country ski event per country can be registered as a "Worldloppet" ski race. Australia's Worldloppet race is Falls Creek's Kangaroo Hoppet. If a skier completes 10 long distance races in 10 different countries in two different continents they are identified and certified as a Gold Worldloppet Master. Completing 10 short races in 10 different countries entitles a skier to be a Silver Worldloppet Master.

Our goal was to each complete another Worldloppet Master if we completed all the races we had entered in 10 different countries.

China

Arriving in China, the temperature was -20 deg so it took a few days to become acclimatised to the extremely cold conditions let alone think about skiing a 50km race. As there's no accessible groomed trails leading up to China's race we skied on a frozen river, a frozen lake and finally in the last few days, parts of the race course even though the course doesn't officially open till the day before the race. With such cold temperatures there wasn't a lot of glide, it was like skiing on sandpaper.

The start of the Chinese race has an amazing atmosphere as it is part of a snow festival; there



Snow sculpture at the China Vasaloppet in Changchun.
Photo: Marg Hayes

are hundreds of snow carvings plus a display of traditional Chinese dancing and singing right up to the start gun when hundreds of young enthusiastic, fit Chinese skiers with little skiing skill surge forward over the start line. The first few kilometres it's necessary to ski defensively or else you will get knocked over or your equipment broken. After a few kilometres everyone settles into a rhythm and you have time to enjoy the 25km course. The 50km race does two loops. As I was finishing my first loop, Victorian elite skier Phillip Bellingham flew past me headed for the finish line.

China was a superb experience and very possible to do independently rather than paying for the expensive package offered that doesn't allow any ski time before the race. Jim, recovering from a broken collarbone during the Australian Winter and I successfully completed the 50km course and Bruce finished the 25km course.

Italy

From China we flew to Vienna, Austria and met two other Aussie skiers, Alan Levy and David Drohan. We spent a wonderful week skiing in Dobbiaco in northern Italy. Five hours of train travel south through Austria brought us to the famous Dolomites, sheer rocky mountains rising sharply above the surrounding narrow valleys. We crossed the border to Dobbiaco where we stayed for a wonderful week at an apartment within walking distance to the ski trails. Every day we explored a different direction from Dobbiaco and were rewarded with magnificent scenery, superb snow, sunny weather and perfectly groomed ski tracks. It was absolutely stunning.

(Continued on page 13)



Skiing along the old railway route from Fiemmes to Dobbiaco, Italy, 11 Jan 20. Photo: Alan Levy

"There are hundreds of snow carvings plus a display of traditional Chinese dancing and singing"

(Continued from page 12)

One day we skied the old train route from near Cortina to Dobbiaco (about 27km) where the Austrians/Hungarians and Italians fought many battles during the First World War and the remnant forts remain. Along the route we skied through two old railway tunnels complete with stalactites and stalagmites. Another day we skied to a massive frozen lake, another day to an enormous cirque of mountains. It was great being in an area where cross country skiing was the main sport.

Austria

From Dobbiaco we headed to Obertilliach for Austria's Worldloppet race called the Dolomitenlauf because you are high in the Dolomites. Lots of biathletes train at Obertilliach as there's a purpose built biathlon range and adjoining XC ski centre. The snow is dry and reliable because of the higher altitude to neighbouring valleys. Obertilliach is a lovely small village full of traditional family houses with big barns underneath for housing the cows.

As the Dolomitenlauf was celebrating their 50th anniversary the usual race venue was changed. Saturday was the 42 / 21 km freestyle race at Obertilliach, starting and finishing at the XC ski centre. Conditions were perfect for a relatively fast enjoyable circular course with a few hills near the end. On Sunday the 42/30km classic race started down in the valley near a tiny village called Heinfels. From there the route was mostly downhill with the longer race having extra loops in paddocks. The course then followed the river for 20kms on a narrow track right beside a bubbling river. It was absolutely beautiful, plus finishing in the main square of the larger town of Lienz was a highlight. Jim and I completed both 42km races, Alan and Bruce completed both shorter races and David completed the long classic race - his first overseas World-



Dolomites scenery in the Val de Fassa near Moena, on the Marcialonga route, 22 Jan 20. Photo: Marg Hayes

loppet race. We met Chris Wall and his son Timothy and Lachlan Ingram skiing the Dolomitenlauf as well.

Italy

Our next race was the iconic Marcialonga in Italy. From Obertilliach we travelled south crossing the border back into Italy and further into the magnificent Dolomites. 5 bus rides and 3 trains later we arrived at Cavalese. Our apartment was perfectly located, 5 minutes walk to the bus station, 5 minutes walk to the supermarket/main street and best of all just 1 minute walk to the finish line of the Marcialonga, Italy's Worldloppet race.

Cavalese (population 4,500) is perched on the side of a hill with no nearby skiing (except on race day) so we caught a bus 20

minutes to Passo Lavaze, a high mountain pass where the cross country trails were perfectly manicured with stunning 360 degree mountain views. On the Thursday there was a 22km Silver Worldloppet race at Passo Lavaze which we all participated in. It was very low key (about 300 participants) but very enjoyable with gifts for all participants - a hat, ski bag or bumbag, each gift probably worth more than the €35 race entry fee. A couple of other days we caught buses further up the valley to ski on some of the Marcialonga course.

The Marcialonga race is huge, being 70kms long with 7,500 competitors and a further 1,500 competitors in the "shorter" 45km simultaneous race. It's a

(Continued on page 14)

"We skied through two old railway tunnels complete with stalactites and stalagmites"



The crowds during the Marcialonga race in Italy, 26 Jan 20. Photo: Alan Levy

"The roads are all closed and snow is trucked in to cover the streets"

(Continued from page 13)

real tour through the Italian countryside of two valleys, Val de Fiemme and Val de Fassa as well as passing right through the main street of many tiny villages with the gap between buildings in a few places being only 2 metres, with the local people cheering you on. The atmosphere is absolutely incredible.

The night before the race the roads are all closed and snow is trucked in to cover the streets. Leading up to the race, snow is made in the cold valley forests and stockpiled so if it's a poor snow year artificial snow is trucked onto the course so the race can still go ahead. Probably half of the course was artificial snow. With over 9,000 skiers on a narrow track it's also fairly congested and the downhill/corners ice up.

The race follows a river valley up for 20km to the turn around point at Canazei then down gradually for 40km, then a couple of kms back up the valley before heading up a steep 2.5km hill to finish in the main street of Cavalese to throngs of cheering Italians. Temperatures on the morning of the race were unusually warm being around zero-1 degrees which meant that the classic tracks totally fell apart, and for the later skiers non-existent. At the final drink station at the bottom of the hill, Dave had 5 strong macchiatos to get him up the last 2.5km. When the last person arrives after 10 hours they are crowned with a winner's wreath and fireworks are set off. An amazing celebration for all skiers not just the elite.

Despite the appalling classic tracks which were often non-existent or so wide your legs shook and were jolted, Jim, David, Chris Wall, Timothy Wall and I completed the 70km event and Alan finished the 45km light. Over 2,200 skiers were cut-off after missing the strict time restrictions.



At Seefeld in Austria, 30 Jan 20. Photo: Alan Levy

Definitely a race worth considering as there's no other like it, but make sure you are very fit and ready for the "leg wobbles".

Austria

The next day we struggled out of bed to catch the 9am bus, then train to reach Seefeld-in-Tirol in Austria, our 3 day stopover enroute to the German race. Seefeld is a very pretty ski resort town, the host of the 1964 & 1976 Winter Olympics. It has some 200kms of groomed XC ski trails as well as hundreds of kilometres of cleared winter walking trails. It was superb to see so many people out XC skiing and walking in the beautiful winter wonderland.

In town there were 'nouveau rich' non-skiers strutting around in matching fur jackets and outfits. It snowed and snowed, our first snowfall since leaving Australia on

26th December. It was so pretty seeing the snow float straight down rather than be blown around as in Aussie blizzards. On our last morning the sun shone and we thoroughly enjoyed the stunning views with fresh snow clinging to the trees, buildings, and mountains; a delightful winter paradise.

Germany

Just 30kms direct line from Seefeld is Oberammergau, the site of Germany's Konig Ludwig Lauf Worldloppet race. It took 2 hours to travel by train and bus through the mountains to Oberammergau. Unfortunately, mountain weather is so fickle that Seefeld was blessed with snow but Oberammergau at a lower altitude wasn't. Until the

(Continued on page 15)



Dave, Alan, Jim & Bruce skiing in the Leutasch valley near Seefeld, 29 Jan 20. Photo: Marg Hayes

(Continued from page 14)

last few days there was no snow at Oberammergau and race organisers made the unfortunate decision to cancel the race. Whilst disappointing for all of us, it was Alan who I felt for as the König Ludwig Lauf would have been his 10th Worldloppet race in 10 different countries; completing it would have qualified him to become a Silver Worldloppet Master. He'll have to return to Europe another year to finish his Masters.

Arriving in Oberammergau, there was snow everywhere from the recent weather event however by the next morning it was melting fast. We went for a ski on the Friday but the snow was literally melting under our skis. We had an enjoyable 20km ski in rain then sunshine, but conditions were unsuitable for a race with hundreds of entered skiers. So instead of ski racing we spent the weekend exploring the local area, including visiting the Linderhof Palace built by King Ludwig.

Czech Republic

We then spent a day catching trains across eastern Germany to reach Bedrichov, Czech Republic for the Jiserka 50, Czech's Worldloppet race. The Jiserska 50 race is a memorial race for a group of 15 local men from Bedrichov village who whilst on a 1970 mountaineering expedition

to Peru, died in a devastating earthquake that in total killed 70,000 people. It was the 50th anniversary of these events so race organisers were keen for the Jiserska 50 race to go ahead in whatever form possible to remember these locals.

When we arrived, recent rain had washed away much of the snow at lower altitudes but our hosts declared it would start snowing that night, which it did. The race organisers had a back-up plan if it didn't snow enough to run the normal course, we would do loops on a shortened course spread over a few days and nights. Skiers all had to choose a time and the only time left for Jim and I was 7.30pm on Friday night with a headtorch. We prayed for lots of snow and fortunately by the Friday there was heaps of snow for the full races to be run as per the original course.

I participated in the 30km free-style race on the Friday with 1200 other skiers on a narrow hilly course. With the narrow track it was very difficult to overtake anyone on the uphill sections (the first 10kms) so one had to be patient skiing in queues until either tired skiers stepped aside or the track widened. By the Saturday the sun shone and the tracks were perfect for Bruce, Jim and Alan's 25km classic race. Sunday's 50km was the main race with over 6,000

skiers. The start was mayhem. It was uphill for a couple of kilometres until crowds thinned and the skiing became easier for Jim, David and I.

Estonia

The next day we caught the 5.30am bus to Prague, negotiated the subway system to the airport then flew to Helsinki, Finland and on to Tallinn, Estonia. Arriving in Tallinn, not only did none of our luggage arrive but we also learnt that Estonia's Worldloppet race, the Tartu Maraton was cancelled as apparently there hadn't been a decent snowfall in Estonia all winter and it had been too warm to make snow, apparently the worst winter in 50 years. At the same time we also received an email from Finland's Worldloppet race that the Finlandia was also cancelled due to insufficient snow.

We were very disappointed now with 3 venues cancelling their races. We pondered what to do. Alan and Dave were flying home the next week so decided to be tourists in Tallinn and Helsinki, but Bruce, Jim and I wanted to stay fit for the rest of the European season as we had more races to participate in. After much searching on the internet and tossing around lots of possibilities, we decided to go to Lapland in northern Finland and what a brilliant decision it was.

Finland

Lapland was a cross country skiers paradise. We flew to Kittali, then caught a bus 8km to Levi a winter destination for every conceivable winter sport; downhill skiing, reindeer/husky mushing, snowmobiling and of course seeing the Aurora Borealis. From Levi there are 250km of impeccably groomed XC trails visiting interesting destinations like reindeer farms, elf and husky farms plus there's lots of tiny trailside cafes or tepees, many just lean-tos with an open fire selling freshly



Racers in the Jiserska 25km race at Bedrichov, Czech Republic, 8 Feb 20. Photo: Alan Levy

(Continued on page 16)

"Apparently the worst winter in 50 years"

"The temperature got to -25 degrees one day"



Reindeer in Lapland. Photo: Marg Hayes

(Continued from page 15)

cooked pancakes and hot chocolate for reasonable prices.

The temperature was very cold, even got to -25 degrees one day and there were no Finns out skiing that day, just a few silly Aussies, but usually the temperature was around -10 degrees. Lapland is definitely a place we'll return to; there's also a 50 / 70km race in early April if you are interested in racing.

Poland

Flying south we met up with Bethan McDonald in Prague for the next month of our Worldloppet trip. Our next destination was Poland for their Worldloppet race, the Bieg Piastow. Recent rain had damaged the snowpack but the Polish organisers were determined to run an event.

It snowed lightly for a couple of days and Bruce classiced Friday's 30km freestyle race. Entries were full otherwise I would have had a go too. Jim, Bethan and I skied Saturday's 50km classic race, reduced to 42km because of snow conditions, but it felt like a 50km race as the tracks fell apart and were quite wobbly. Bruce, Jim and I classiced Sunday's 25km event. Jim and I had late entries so started down the back of 2,000

skiers. I was very happy to pass over 1,000 skiers most who were just everyday Polish out for a ski.

Switzerland

Unfortunately in Poland we learnt that because of the Coronavirus the Swiss Government had banned any gathering of over 1,000 people. Because of this ban Switzerland's famous Engadin race with 14,000 skiers was cancelled. This was to be our next Worldloppet race. We pondered whether to even go to Switzerland even though we had overnight train tickets booked, accommodation booked and not able to be

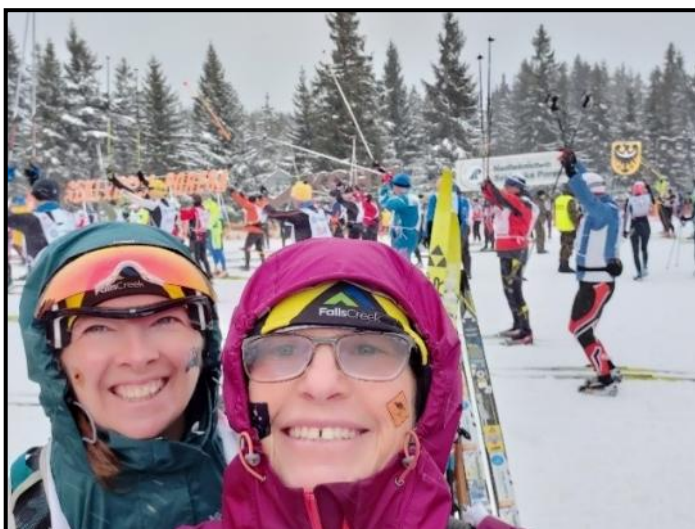
cancelled without losing our money, plus onward flights from Milan, Italy to Oslo, Norway.

In the end we came to the Engadin Valley and thoroughly enjoyed the spectacular mountain scenery and beautifully groomed cross country ski trails around St Moritz. Like many others, Bethan and I skated the 42km Engadin course. It was a huge achievement for Bethan as previously her longest skate was 10km. One day we skied right to the toe of the Morteratsch Glacier which has signs with dates, to show where the glacier used to extend too. It was fascinating seeing how quickly it has receded in recent years and should be a message to us all about the effects of global warming. Most importantly we made the most of the unpredictable situation whilst hoping the subsequent Norwegian race would go ahead.

Norway

2 days before we were intending travelling to Milan for our flight to Norway for the final Worldloppet race the Italian prime minister announced that Italy's borders would be closing immediately. So we decided to bypass Milan and travelled to Zurich instead and after some

(Continued on page 17)



Bethan and Marg at the Bieg Piastow ski race in Poland. Photo: Marg Hayes



Bruce and Marg on the trails near St Moritz, Switzerland.
Photo: Marg Hayes

difficulties were eventually able to arrange a new flight to Oslo.

Our joy was short-lived as we learnt that the Norwegian Birkebeiner Worldloppet race was also cancelled due to the coronavirus ban on gatherings of more than 500 people. We debated whether to go to Norway or not but felt it would be safer to be further away from Italy so decided to go and make the most of our week's skiing, staying at the typical Norwegian cabin we had booked and paid for at Sjusjøen in the mountains above Lillehammer, exploring the 240km of groomed cross country ski trails in the area. Most of the terrain in this area is above the tree-line, like Australia's Bogong High Plains with huge rolling hills and beautiful snowy views in all directions.

After a few days staying at the mountain cabin and skiing the trails we received an email from the owners of our cabin telling us that the Norwegian Government had instructed all foreigners to leave the country as soon possible. And to persuade Norwegians to go home all grooming was also stopped. All hotels were instructed to not accept any new bookings, all shops except supermarkets were shut. No cash was accepted anywhere, pay by card only. Buses and train services were reduced. The cabin owners informed the Health Dept of our

presence who told us to stay at the cabin until we could depart, so we filled in the time skiing on the ungroomed trails, practising social distancing and not speaking or going near any of the few other skiers.

We left the Sjusjøen cabin to begin our long journey home, by bus to Lillehammer, train to Oslo, flight to Frankfurt airport transit, flight to Bangkok for another airport transit and finally flight to Sydney. Even though we had plane tickets things were changing so quickly we broke our journey into stages and rejoiced each time we successfully completed each stage as services were rapidly shutting down and

we didn't know if buses and trains to get us to the airport were still running, let alone whether we could actually transit Germany which was in lockdown or if Thailand would allow us to transit.

Fortunately, it all worked and thoroughly exhausted we arrived in Australia in late March and went into 14 days mandatory isolation, which gave us plenty of time to reflect on our recent Worldloppet trip.

Our Worldloppet trip certainly didn't turn out as we had planned. Even though we know travel is unpredictable we learnt it's important to make the most of the situation and change your plans as needed. We wouldn't have gone to Lapland except that 2 races were cancelled and we had a brilliant time there exploring a totally new destination.

Overall, we travelled to 10 countries for the Worldloppet races. We successfully skied 9 races in 5 countries with the races ranging in distance from 22km to 70km. Races were cancelled in 3 countries (Germany, Estonia & Finland) due to lack of snow and 2 countries (Switzerland & Norway) due to coronavirus. Because of all the race cancellations, our hopes of completing another Worldloppet Master will have to wait to a future trip but we had a brilliant time regardless.

If you are interested in skiing overseas at any of the Worldloppet races and would like any information, feel free to contact us as we are keen to increase the number of Australian Worldloppet Masters. If we can do it you can do it!

Marg Hayes & Bruce Wharrie



Marg at the finish of the Bieg Piastow race in Poland.
Photo: Marg Hayes

*"The Government
had instructed
all foreigners to
leave the country"*

A place to call home

Habitat boxes for fire affected pygmy possums

Part I Building

The CCCSC found a way to contribute to the native animals after the heavy blow of the summer bush fires. After the fires it was not easy to volunteer for bush projects. Many of the areas were closed due to hazards while the animals were in need of food and shelter. Inspired by community movements it was becoming apparent that the club needed to develop its own initiative and the habitat box building working bee was organised.

The call went out to club members and friends and we got to work with a push to have them ready to deliver before Easter. Our destination for the boxes was Potoroo Palace, near Merimbula, and Cowsnest, near Candelero.

The first job, of turning large sheets of marine pine into cut out pieces of boxes, seemed a bit daunting. The 'NSW Western Sydney Build your own wildlife nest box guide' and the NSW Nordic Ski Club variation with a cutting pattern were firmly in our



Greg Lawrence, Sonja Weinberg & Paul Davies assembling microbat boxes. 8 March 2020. Photo: © Ken Moylan.

hands. The patterns were puzzled over and rotated a number of times around the board to make the right cut. Some of the pieces were quite small and it was hard to believe that they were the right size. With skilled sawmanship and a little guess work the boxes were shaping up, stage one was finished.

Now for the main event – putting all these pieces together. Over a

sunny Canberra long weekend, Club members and a few friends provided the much needed help. Another round of planning was needed on how to put them together. Work benches were collected and templates were made to space the inside pieces of wood (baffles) which proved very handy in the assembly. Yet again we were perplexed at how an animal could fit over the baffles, definitely not accustomed to just how small the pygmy possums and microbats are. Along the way we also found out how important they are to the environment.

There was a hive of activity as people were arriving and leaving. The production line was in full swing: gluing, drilling and oiling. Then a small glitch in the pattern (the absence of slots in some of the wood) put a spanner in the works requiring the circular saws to re-emerge. A big thank you to the guys who drew up the lines on the pieces of boxes.



Some of the gang preparing pieces for the boxes. 9 March 2020. Photo: © Ken Moylan

(Continued on page 19)

"There was a hive of activity"

(Continued from page 18)

By the end of the working bees there were 20 pygmy possum boxes and 17 microbat boxes. Feeling pleased with ourselves we were set to complete the last stage, deliver and install. Like all good plans of mice and men the unexpected happened and all travel ceased.

As the weeks went on and winter approached action was needed. In a true mountain style, Paul Room found a way and got the approval to travel to Potoroo Palace and Cowsnest to install the boxes. While they were down there, Paul and Ken spent the week at Potoroo Palace volunteering with maintenance.

Part 2: Installing

After the intense activity of building the boxes and the enforced idleness and waiting of the corona virus lockdown, it was a relief to get out of Canberra and drive down to Merimbula, future home of the habitat boxes. Paul Room took down half the boxes and Ken Moylan took down the other half on the Sunday.

On Tuesday, everything was arranged and we drove out to Cowsnest, a farm on the edge of the South East Forests National Park. Part of the farm is under a conservation covenant and reachable only by going through the national park along a



The fruits of our labours. Fully assembled pygmy possum boxes (the narrower looking ones) and microbat boxes (the flatter looking ones). 16 March 2020. Photo: © Ken Moylan.

road that was too rugged for Paul and Ken's toy 4WDs. Everywhere here was burnt in the bushfires, with some crowning and the rest scorched. The ferns and seedlings were thrusting up as fast as they could, although less than knee high in most places.

We screwed the boxes into suitable trees, ones which were reachable, not too burnt and tall. We climbed as high as we felt safe on the wobbly ladders and soft soil would allow. After a good morning's work, they were installed, boxes for pygmy possums or microbats, scattered over a wide area near Candelo Creek. We allowed ourselves some time to appreciate the regrowth springing back, wonder at the many ant nests, and lament the soil burnt down to sand.

A big thank you to everyone who supported, volunteered, and donated funds. We raised around \$300, a great contribution towards the initial funds from the sponsors.

Gale Funston



Up a ladder, installing a microbat box. 12 May 2020. Photo: © Ken Moylan.



Paul Room halfway up a ladder, about to install a microbat box. 12 May 2020. Photo: © Ken Moylan.



Vale Kathy Saw

Long time Club member Kathy Saw passed away recently after a battle with cancer. Kathy joined the Club in the 1980's and was an enthusiastic club member throughout the years. She was involved in all aspects of the club – leading ski tours, participating in citizen ski races, assisting in work parties and trail maintenance, organising lodge weekends as well as being on the Committee, mainly in the position of Secretary. Kathy completed the first 10 Kangaroo Hoppet ski races from 1991 to 2000. She was often near the top of her age group in many of the ski races that she went in.

Apart from the CCCSC, Kathy had also been an enthusiastic rogainer, a member of the CAC and NPA, and participated in workparties on O'Keefes Hut, and on Hawkweed clearance in KNP. She also walked the Bibbulum Track in WVA a number of times and did regular annual snow camps with friends on the Bogong High Plains, mainly at Johnstons Hut.

A number of Club members attended a celebration of her life held at 'The English Garden' in Weston Park on Sat 7 March.



Kathy. with Jenny Manning, on the Bogong High Plains, 27 Aug 2004



Kathy on a CCCSC Kiandra to Kosciuszko Crossing, inside Schlink Hut, 7 Sept 2002



Kathy at Ryders Huts, Aug 2004.

Kathy with Lyndall Hatch before the start of the Kosciuszko Tour race, Sept 2000.





Canberra Cross Country Ski Club

Postal Address:

33 Brunswick Circuit, Kaleen, ACT 2617

Web: www.cccsc.asn.au

Email: cccscanberra@gmail.com

**Fun and fitness
in the snow**

Club Committee Contacts

Position	Name	Email	Phone
President			
Vice President			
Secretary			
Treasurer			
Membership Secretary			
Tour Coordinator			
Kosciusko Tour Coordinator			
Meeting Coordinator			
Newsletter Editor			
Webmaster			



Club Snow Camping Gear for hire

The following gear which is owned by the Club is available for hire to Club members. These prices are cheap. The commercial hire charge for a 2-person tent is \$45 per weekend.

Tent (Macpac 3-4 person) -\$20/weekend ; - \$30/week

Trangia stove - \$3/weekend; - \$5/week



Club Safety Gear for use by Tour Leaders

The Club has two Personal Locator Beacons (PLB), two GPS units and some first aid kits which are available free of charge to members leading Club ski tours.

PLB (GME MT410G)

Contact Alan or Ken

