

1980

Alpine Winter Crossing

*John Kerby, Robin Gibb & Bill Woods
(Wangaratta Ski Club members)*

We started out around 4.30 to 5 am, running to stay upright up the Staircase Spur towards the summit of Mt Bogong. (We were all pretty fit at the time!)

We reached the summit in a little over 1 hr 20 mins, having struggled on the ice below the summit, spindrift was our saving grace. Robin handled the boiler plate ice much better than Bill and me, and in fact he was on *Lendenfield Point* while we were still struggling to reach *Hells Gap* without sliding down *Cairn Gully*.

Incidentally, I think I was the only one on waxed skis, 210cm, the others were on pattern-based skis, probably 210cm as well. By the time we reached the summit, the sun was rising, the view was magnificent and in some directions the peaks were protruding through the clouds. The whole scene was magnificent but the boiler plate ice was somewhat of a detractor from the beautiful day that was developing.

We briefly stopped at *Cleve Cole Hut*, probably to sign the book. I am not sure if there were skiers camped there or not, however the ski down was fast and furious. We skied some distance down the *T-Spur* until the snow ran out, then we ran to *Big River*. The *Big River* crossing was invigorating and the chain offered a little support. Up the *Duane Spur* finally donning our skis some distance before *Ropers Hut*. We were all together at this point though Bill and I were stronger runners than Robin. I had very poor grip passing *Ropers Hut* so I stopped and re-waxed with Red Klistar, and even that was not so great, but my technique could have been better. By then Bill and Robin were approaching *Warby Corner* near *Mt Nelse North* while I was still heading west away from the *Ropers Hut Track*. It was probably mid-morning by then and the snow was still firm.

We were wearing fairly light gear, a jacket to start with, probably a shower proof top, hat, sunglasses and of course light ski boots of the time which were not much good for running.

Speaking of which, our driver met us where the *Nelse Track* meets the Bogong High Plains Road (*Watchbed Creek*) with our lunch. Thinking about it, we were not in a rush nor trying to break any records so we found a rock to sit on, then enjoyed lunch and a cuppa. I can't remember much of the trip until we were near *Mt Jim*. We were still together until Robin decided to cut across the top of the gully to the south of *Mt Jim*. We decided to follow the contour. It was an error. By the time we sidled around the top of the gully Robin was nearly out of sight and about to descend from *Basalt Temple*. Well down *Basalt Temple*, we ran out of snow, so we ran the rest of the way down and part way up *Swindlers Spur*. There was no-one at *Dibbins Hut*.

There was no sign of Robin. In fact we didn't see him again until we were about a kilometre from the Loch Spur car park where we all eventually met up.

Yes, we were tiring, the legs were starting to call out on the ascent of *Swindlers Spur*. It was a great relief to reach the top and be able to enjoy a bit of glide till just past *Charlie's Hut*. I think from that point on we were just going through the motions of diagonal stride or kick double pole or just grunting up to *Mt Loch*. From there it seemed a long way to the finish. None of us was going to display any signs of weakness at that point, just pushing each other till we finished.

Robin appeared to have a ho hum attitude to the event. Bill and I were pretty pleased with ourselves realising we had achieved a significant milestone. We all promised we would do it again in the future. We never did!

Finished around 5.00 pm. We didn't ski to the *Hotham Pub*.

John Kerby
24 December 2019