

## **The Briars Ski Club Story.**

The Briars Ski Club is located in Bobuck Lane Thredbo Village. It started life in 1962 as a “Hut Styled” lodge providing accommodation for 13 members and their friends in four bunk styled bedrooms and a bunkroom sleeping four on a lower level.

A member of The Briars Sporting Club Doug Vanderfield had, in the late 1950’s, secured a fifty year lease over a block of land at Thredbo Village and intended to build a small lodge for his family’s personal use. He later decided to ask members of “The Briars” if any would be interested in forming a ski club as an offshoot of the Sporting Club. About fifty people put up their hands and the ski club was born. Many of those members were young and just recently out of school and couldn’t provide the 220 pounds (\$440) to help fund the construction, so typical of Doug’s generous nature he guaranteed a bank loan for them from the ANZ bank and together with funds from those older Briars members the ski club became a reality.

Construction of the Thredbo Village Hotel and the Crackenback chair lift commenced in 1955 and the chairlift was officially opened in 1958 the year Doug secured the lease making Briars Ski Club one of the oldest ski clubs in the country. Construction of “the hut” commenced in 1961 and accommodation was ready for members to enjoy for the 1962 season.

### **The Original Briars Ski Lodge, built in 1961**



Most of the years that followed were happy ones interrupted once in the late 1980’s when a large tree fell and crashed through the northern end of the lodge taking with it the kitchen but thankfully just missing the very attractive, popular and much used stone fire place.

Then on the 30th July 1997 the tragic Thredbo landslide happened when two lodges, one filled with 19 Thredbo staff members and the other, fortunately with only one occupant slipped down the hill in a sea of mud and concrete causing 18 deaths. The Briars lodge was only two buildings away and fully occupied at the time.

As the lease over the land approached its termination date in 2007 a group of members led by Richard Vanderfield Doug’s son, floated the idea of taking up the option that the lease provided, for a further 50 years and build a new lodge. A new lodge that provided all the modern comforts the old hut didn’t. Most of the original members were by this time either too old or lacked interest and of the 50 original members only 7 were interested in keeping the club going. Those seven members convinced eight of their friends including two sporting club members to join the ski club.

The new lodge was completed and ready for the 2007 ski season. It contains three apartments each having its own kitchen and each bedroom its own bathroom and in all sleeps twelve people. The configuration allows any combination of 2,4,6,8,10 or 12 people to book at any one time. The upstairs apartment sleeps six and has a large kitchen and lounge area. The dining table seats 12 so when one group takes the whole lodge all can dine together. Downstairs there are two apartments one a studio sleeping two in a queen bed and the other a two-bedroom unit that sleeps four. Two of the apartments have fireplaces and balconies with gas BBQ's. There is on site parking for six vehicles (a scarcity in Thredbo) and an inclinator from the car park to the lower level of the lodge.

### **The New Briars lodge. built 2007**



Members of the newly named Briars Sports are welcome to book the Briars Ski Club and are offered attractive rates throughout the whole year. Summertime is now very popular with mountain bikers and Thredbo is Australia's premier mountain biking location. Many new trails have opened over the last couple of years and are serviced by the many lifts Thredbo offers.

*Andy Clifford - 4 January 2018.*