

The Bulletin

RUAPEHU SKI CLUB

Volume 88, No. 3

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NZ's first chairlift was built by RAL on the Rockgarden 70 years ago. RAL has gone into liquidation but skiing and snowboarding on Ruapehu are continuing in 2023. Photo: RSC Collection.

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Our 110th AGM was held again at the Royal New Zealand Yacht Squadron, in a smaller setting in the Commodore's room upstairs.

It was good to catch up with many members who I hadn't seen over the last year.

Besides the usual business, a discussion was held in general business about RAL, the coming watershed meeting and how it was best to vote for Life Pass holders regarding the future of RAL, and the future for all parties involved with the skifields at Mt Ruapehu.

PwC held the RAL watershed meeting on June 20th,

The resulting vote was that neither of the options A – the DOCA proposal from RSSA (Ruapehu Skifield Stake Holders Association), Or option B - liquidation with prepackaged purchasers Whakapapa Holdings and Pure Turoa, was accepted.

So, on June 21st RAL went into liquidation. It was quite an uncertain time for everyone. Whakapapa lost 20-30 staff the week after the watershed meeting.

Fortunately, the government stepped in with a loan of \$5 million to ensure the Mt Ruapehu ski season went ahead.

While this gave some certainty that we would be skiing, all the planning we would normally do ahead of a ski season, now had to be done as the season started.

New plans were made to open the Chalet, Turoa and the Lodge, as self-catered buildings. We advertised for a cook for the Lodge, but decided to keep the Chalet and Turoa self-catered with custodians and the Hut closed for the season.

The self-catering seemed to work out well and is something to be considered for future years.

Staffing was and is a major issue for RAL. They are slowly getting more staff, but it has impacted on what events are able to be run this year.

NIPS (North Island Primary School) Champs at Whakapapa, and NISSC (North Island Secondary School Champs) at Turoa were cancelled due to lack of staff and time to organise the races.

Our Interclub race series has also been impacted, and is being run as a combined race on September 2nd. It is a combined organisational effort by Rangatira, Christiania and RSC to keep the interclub race spirit alive.

By the end of July, we had found a cook/custodian for the Lodge. Thanks to the work of house committee, Marion Quinn and Sam Hood.

On Monday August 7th Sam did the induction at the Lodge with Mandeep Singh and his wife Jaspreet Kaur, who had traveled up from Balcutha to work for us.

Sam later found out that while doing the induction, he had a broken wrist, (from a skiing accident earlier in the day) and he was in hospital by Tuesday night. Ever loyal though, he managed to attend the Tuesday committee meeting via Zoom, while in hospital waiting to have surgery on his wrist.

And the snow has finally come! Lots of it! More than I've seen for quite a few years. All lifts at Whakapapa were open, including for the first time this season the Far West T-bar on Saturday August 12th.

Today (August 17th) we even had RAL ski patrol put out an avalanche warning for Iwikau village, and all those staying at the club huts to "be cautious and avoid avalanche terrain when departing huts".

It looks like we are going to have a very good snow season this year.

Catherine Gafa
RSC President



RSC member Peter Otway on the summit of Mt Ruapehu. Photo: Otway collection.

THROUGH THE LODGE WINDOW

RAL (in liquidation) has not been able to employ staff for an events team that is able to run and do timing of races this winter.

This means that this year there will be no NIPS (North Island Primary School) races.

RSC'S event the **Haensli Cup** is cancelled for 2023.

However, for 2023, Rangatira, Christie and RSC are joining together to do one big event instead, the **Combined Clubs Race** on September 2nd. We will host the prizegiving at the Lodge.

RSC member Chris Woudenberg has rated Saturday July 29th as one of his top five days of skiing Whakapapa in over 50 years.

Skiing from top to car. Fresh tracks to be found all day. Short queues all day.

He had 24 runs for a distance of 40.6km and a vertical drop of 6599m. His maximum speed was 64.9 km/h.

Veteran RSC member and retired volcanologist Peter Otway has published a 28-page book with lots of pictures entitled Skiing the Volcano.

It contains shots of his favourite Whakapapa ski slopes and ski touring the glaciers and peaks around the upper mountain, plus a little bit about chasing eruptions.

Winter Party days at RSC Hut are in there too.

Contact Peter at otway1@xtra.co.nz.

RAL is trialling a de-icing tactic on the High Noon Express chairlift at Turoa, smashing the ice using a hardwood pole slung underneath a helicopter.

"We use this system with our regular helicopter company which knows our lift structures and layout intimately and has experience using a similar process to knock down dead trees (spars) in forestry settings," said chief executive Jono Dean.

"Our goal with this system is to trigger ice fall from high on the tower, which will then trigger icefall further down the tower."

The Chateau Tongariro hotel looks unlikely to reopen its doors any time soon while its earthquake resilience is assessed.

Now in the hands of the Department of Conservation (DOC), it is being treated as a seismic hazard.

The hotel's long-term leaseholder Kah

**THE
RUAPEHU SKI CLUB**

(inc) Founded 1913

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President: Catherine Gafa.

Vice-Presidents: Carl Burling,
Damon Forsyth, Marion Quinn.

Immediate Past President:
Phill Thomass.

Secretary: Michael Webb-Speight.

Treasurer: Sonia Quinn.

Captain: vacant.

Committee: Drew Blair,
Adrian Adriaansen,
Ron Bonfrer, Sam Hood,
Simon Hunt, Fiona Lovelock,
Donald Webster.

Patron: Peter Brady.

Patroness: Barbara Scelly.

Auditors: Hart and Co.

Heritage Fund Guardians:
Robin Dallas, Phill Thomass,
Bernard Smith, Catherine Gafa.

Fund Treasurer: Mike Wardle.

Glacier Hut Custodian:
Bernard Smith.

NZ withdrew from The Chateau in February and the building was passed to DOC.

Kah said the most recent seismic assessment found that underground shifts over time have meant some of the hotel infrastructure no longer meets current safety standards.

Social media says Google Maps seems to have a funny idea about where the Sky Waka gondola is situated.

Several motorists have advised that they have been sent up the Tukino skifield access road on the eastern side of Ruapehu when looking for the gondola.

Another motorist arrived at Tukino, looking for Happy Valley.

Visitors to the central North Island's protected conservation forests are urged to report suspicious activity after a spate of illegal tree felling incidents.

DOC officer Matt Davis said dozens of trees and shrubs at sites in the Pureora Forest Park and Tongariro Forest Conservation Area were removed or hacked down.

"It's a breach of the Conservation Act to fell native trees on public conservation land, or remove native plants from those areas," he said.

GeoNet recently completed the installation of a network of continuous gas emission detectors, tuned to detect SO₂ (sulphur dioxide) gas around Ruapehu volcano, which allows it to monitor the amount of SO₂ the volcano produces.

Volcanologists have now deployed three sensors around Ruapehu with support from the Department of Conservation, Ruapehu Alpine Lifts and local Iwi.

The deadline for the December Bulletin will be **Friday November 17th.**

All items should be with the Editor in Wellington by then.

THE BULLETIN

Founded in 1936 by Jock and Fizzie Graham.

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RSC LODGE COOK

At **RSC Lodge** the Cook/Custodian for this season is Mandeep Singh, and his wife Jaspreet Kaur is accompanying.

RSC Turoa is self catering. Mike Anderson is the custodian.

RSC Chalet is self catering. Donna O'Hanlon is the custodian.

RSC Hut is closed.

*** **Big snowfall.** NZ skifields have received very good snow this winter. Aussie skifields have not.

NO FOOD LIFT

As we did not have a truck weekend this year, there will be more stores duties needed to get food supplies and cleaning materials up to the Lodge.

WINTER PARTY

Winter Party (aka Club Week). This will be held on the week of September 11-15. More details will be provided closer to the time.

This is a week for our 18+ members and is an adult only week. There will be a theme and a midweek party night. It is a great time to get in some midweek skiing with friends.

ADMIN HELP

We welcome **Mandy Burling** to the Admin team. She will be dealing with bookings and email enquiries.

Paula Cooper is continuing to do our accounts and helping with the mail outs. We are trying to keep the administration hours down this year to save costs in this area. There are no

set office hours.

Bookings for the weekend will not be processed after 3pm on Friday as Mandy herself likes to ski, and will have no time to answer the Club phone or emails on the weekend, while she is out skiing.

BOOKING RULES

We get a lot of queries about membership and bookings rules. This information is on our website and is readily available for you to read.

Membership and joining details can be accessed without logging into the members area, just click on "membership" across the top of the website.

Once logged in (if you can't do this or haven't done this before, please contact Admin).

YOUR CORRECT BUNK

Please make sure you sleep in the bunk you have been allocated!

A few days prior to your visit you should receive a BUNK AUTHORITY with your bunk number on it, along with the door code for the building you are staying in.

If you are in the wrong bunk you may be woken by a late night arrival trying to get into their allocated bunk! It can create a chain of grumpy people if you get in a bunk not assigned to you, so please take care to use the right bunk.

HOORAY. WE HAVE A RUAPEHU SKI SEASON

After 10 months of uncertainty, negotiations and controversy, it was announced on June 26th that the 2023 ski season at Whakapapa and Turoa would go ahead.

Both skifields opened on July 1st, operated by RAL (in liquidation) with former manager Jono Dean still at the helm.

Subject to snowfall all lifts were scheduled to be opened, apart from Nga Wai Heke at Turoa which needs some renovations.

Life passes could be used and season passes were sold up to July 17th.

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts (RAL) went into voluntary administration in October 2022, with debts of \$45 million and no chance of trading its way to solvency.

The administrators PwC came up with a plan for 2023 skiing, but it was rejected by RAL creditors, mainly life pass holders.

PwC then entered negotiations with three bidders, Pure Turoa, Whakapapa Holdings and Tūwharetoa. The government announced a \$5 million loan to get things started.

Ngāti Tūwharetoa confirmed in August that it is bidding to buy RAL. Paramount chief Sir Tumu Te Heuheu told members of his iwi that due diligence was now under way on the iwi bid and would take four to six weeks

GOVERNMENT LOAN

Regional Development Minister Kiri Allan said the loan of \$5 million would give time for the liquidators to decide on the purchaser or purchasers.

“Ruapehu is a very significant part of the economy in the central North Island, accounting for around a tenth of regional GDP, or \$100 million per year.

“The season going ahead will save hundreds of jobs and support local tourism, the regional economy and the community, while a long-term solution is found.”

CREDITORS MEETING

RAL creditors including the government, ANZ Bank and RAL life pass holders, met for more than four hours on June 20th.

Dozens of life pass holders, many armed with proxies, attended the “watershed” meeting which was held jointly at Auckland, Ohakune and Wellington. Many more voted by online by proxy.

The meeting voted to end the administration and hand RAL back to its directors.

RAL IS LIQUIDATED

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts was placed in liquidation on June 21st, one day after a meeting of creditors failed to salvage it.

The matter was heard before Justice Christine Grice in the High Court at Auckland.

RAL’s lawyer David Friar told the court that the company had no other option but to file an urgent application for liquidation, as RAL was “hopelessly insolvent and unable to pay its debts”.

John Fisk and Richard Nacey of PwC were appointed as liquidators.

NEW CREDITORS MEETING

Another meeting of creditors was held

on July 31st, online and by post.

The meeting voted to confirm John Fisk and Richard Nacey as liquidators of RAL.

It also elected seven members of a liquidation committee to act with the liquidators.

They are

- Sam Clarkson
- Robert Krebs
- Jason Platt
- Roger Boyd
- James Fisher
- Peter Bayne

- Romay Rundgren

The liquidators said the best outcome for creditors is likely to be the sale of the business and assets of RAL as a going concern.

“As such, the liquidators are continuing to trade the business through the 2023 winter ski season, while a sale of the business and assets is sought.”

No information was given about the ongoing talks by the liquidators with the three bidders.



RAL's second lift was a popular T-bar on the Staircase. It was often operated by a feisty liftie known as "T-bar Tony". Photo: Government publicity photographer E P Christensen.



Skiing and snowboarding at Ruapehu in August 2023. Upper: On the High Noon Express at Turoa. Lower: In Te Heuheu Valley at Whakapapa. Photos: RAL.

CRATER LAKE UPDATE

Te Wai ā-moe (Crater Lake) has stopped cooling. Volcanic activity remains low and the volcanic alert level remains at Level 1.

Since late December 2022 the temperature of Te Wai ā-moe had shown a declining trend, falling from 32 °C to 11 °C.

It then rose 4 °C during the last two weeks of July, reaching 15 °C.

SIX PLEAD GUILTY

Six companies charged in the wake of the deadly Whakaari/White Island eruption in 2019 have pleaded guilty.

Inflite Charters, White Island Tours and GNS Science earlier pleaded guilty to charges filed by WorkSafe.

Volcanic Air Safaris, Aerius Ltd and Kahu NZ Ltd then pleaded guilty in July. The charges said the companies failed to comply with a duty to ensure the health and safety of workers and tourists.

The remaining defendants are facing a judge-alone trial.

Inflite Charters was the first to plead guilty last year and was fined \$227,500 plus court costs of \$40,000. Others who pleaded guilty will be sentenced after the trial.

NEMA had its charges dismissed in May last year and was awarded costs of \$40,000.

VOLCANO TRIAL OPENS

The trial for the remaining White Island/Whakaari defendants opened

in the Auckland District Court on July 10th and is set down for 16 weeks.

The hearing is before Judge Evengelos Thomas, acting as judge-alone.

Defendants in the trial are Whakaari Management Ltd and its directors Andrew, James and Peter Buttle, as well as ID Tours New Zealand Ltd and Tauranga Tourism Services Ltd.

Whakaari/White Island is an active volcano and uninhabited island situated 50km off the Bay of Plenty coast.

It has been popular with visitors arriving by boat and helicopter.

The volcano erupted without notice in December 2019 when there were 47 people on the island. Of them 22 died and 27 survived but were badly injured.

CORONET PEAK GUILTY

Queenstown skifield operator NZSki has been found guilty and convicted over the death of skier Anita Graf-Russell at Coronet Peak in 2019.

The company denied a WorkSafe charge that it had not taken “reasonably practicable” steps to ensure the mountain was without risks to the health and safety of any person, leading to her death.

Judge Geoff Rea found the company had not identified the risk of a deer fence and post, which Graf-Russell, aged 60, a former ski instructor, skied into causing extensive injuries.

She was on Sugar’s Run, a slope designated for advanced skiers, with a fenced reservoir at the bottom. Some of the deer fence posts at the base of the run were padded as a safety precaution, but others were not padded.

AGM TOPICS

The 111th AGM of RSC was held on June 14th at the RNZYS clubrooms at Westhaven Marina (Auckland).

President Catherine Gafa welcomed members and said she wished to thank Alan Graham for his work as Editor of the RSC Bulletin.

She noted that RSC did not yet have a Secretary or Club Captain, and nominations for these two positions would be welcome.

Michael Webb-Speight was then nominated, from the floor, as Secretary.

Members stood for a minute in memory of those who had passed on during the year.

A letter from Patron Peter Brady was read in which he said RSC in 110 years had dealt with all the many issues that were thrust upon members, and he was sure the Club could rally to cope with the current uncertainty about skiing on Ruapehu.

Hart and Co were re-elected as Auditors.

Treasurer Sonia Quinn said subscriptions would need to be raised.

It was a clear rule that subs should pay for fixed costs and bunk fees should cover running costs, but at present the subs did not meet costs.

It was agreed that subs should be:

Senior \$310 incl GST.

All others \$130 incl GST.

Barbara Scelly was re-elected as Patroness and Peter Brady was re-elected as Patron.

The following who were retiring from the Committee were thanked for

their work: Louise Blair, Paula Cooper, Nichola Couch, Denise Ditchburn, Liza Fitzsimmons and Kevin Schluter.

The retiring Admin Officer Ceana Priest was thanked for her work, especially in the increase in the summer use of our buildings.

The new Committee is:

President Catherine Gafa.

Vice-Presidents Carl Burling, Damon Forsyth, Marion Quinn.

Immediate Past President Phill Thomass.

Secretary Michael Webb-Speight.

Treasurer Sonia Quinn.

Captain vacant.

Committee Drew Blair, Adrian Adriaansen, Ron Bonfrer, Sam Hood, Simon Hunt, Fiona Lovelock, Donald Webster.

The Committee has been reduced, by a constitution amendment at last year's AGM, from 21 members to 15.

Heritage Fund Guardians Robin Dallas, Phill Thomass, Bernard Smith, Catherine Gafa. Fund Treasurer Mike Wardle.

Catherine Gafa then addressed "the elephant in the room", the decision of RAL to call in PwC as voluntary administrators.

While RSC was not itself a creditor of RAL, many members were life pass holders and were thus kept informed of developments.

There was then a wide ranging half hour discussion on RAL's plight and what structure might replace it.

Alan Graham



RSC Committee members at the AGM: Sonia Quinn, Adrian Adriaansen, Marion Quinn, Catherine Gafa (President), Fiona Lovelock, Damon Forsyth, Ron Bonfrer, Michael Webb-Speight. Photo: Deane Tetley.



Members at the RSC AGM. Photo: Deane Tetley.



Matt Lamb controls the live streaming of the AGM. Photo: Deane Tetley.



President Catherine Gafa and her husband Vice-President Damon Forsyth. Photo: Deane Tetley.



Upper: John and Trish Gribben. **Centre:** Richard Nelson and his sister Kate. **Lower:** Bev Frankham, Robin Dallas, Jim Frankham. Photos: Deane Tetley.



Upper: *The Staircase at Whakapapa in August 2023. Photo: RSC. Lower:* *Riding the six-seater High Noon Express at Turoa in August 2023. Photo: RAL.*



*Scenes from the Tukino skifield on the eastern slopes of Mt Ruapehu. at Ruapehu.
Photos: Tukino clubs.*



RSC skiers ready for action in 1925. This building is still in use today, 98 years later, as part of Fergusson's Café. Photo: RSC Collection.



A busy scene on Hut Flat in the 1990s. How many people can you fit on a rope tow? Photo Hanni Spörl.

RSC CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Sept 2023	2	Combined Clubs Race
	11-15	Winter Party (Club Week)
	22- Oct 8	School holidays
	23	RSC Club champs
Oct 2023	??	Turoa and Whakapapa close.
Nov 2023		
Dec 2023		
Jan 2024	??	DOC and RSC summer activities
	??	Working parties
Feb 2024	??	Working parties

BUILDING LEADERS

As a Club we require all members to participate, for the smooth running of the buildings when members are staying. If you are asked to be a building leader, please accept the request. We expect anyone who has been a member for 4+ years to be able to do this job.

There is information on our website in the members area, as to what is required and the Administration Officer will email you the documents you require. In the past it has taken the Admin Officer several hours of phone calling to find a leader, which is a waste of their time.

PLEASE PAY YOUR SUBS

If you make a last-minute booking, please make sure you have paid your subscription and have enough funds in your account to cover it, otherwise the booking can't be processed and you can't stay in the buildings.

PLEASE REMEMBER IF YOU HAVE NOT PAID YOUR 2023 SUBSCRIPTION YOU ARE NOT ENTITLED TO THE USE OF ANY OF THE CLUB FACILITIES.

RSC RAFFLE

Thank you to those who have supported our 2023 raffle.

We are selling tickets all season, and it will be drawn at our Club champs at the end of the season.

The prize is a 65 inch Sony TV with sound bar.

\$10.00 a ticket or \$25.00 for 3.

You can purchase tickets by emailing the office at admin@rsc.org.nz, just deposit the funds into RSC bank account with your name, member details and the reference of raffle. Paula will allocate your tickets and email them to you.

LINDA DANEN

It was sad that RMCA (Ruapehu Mountain Clubs Association) President Linda Danen has passed away.

Linda was a long-time skier and RMCA councillor. She served the Ruapehu mountain clubs with dedication and passion.

GOODBYE TO RAL

Ruapehu Alpine Lifts Ltd went into liquidation on June 21st, 70 years after it built NZ's first chairlift on the Rockgarden.

RAL was the idea of visiting Swiss ski instructor Walter Haensli who obtained an option from the Tongariro National Park Board to run lifts at Whakapapa.

He initially asked the Government to pay for the first chairlift, and when that was turned down, he asked skiers to contribute.

Skiers could buy a share in RAL for \$2 provided that they also gave the company a debenture (loan) of \$20.

The formation of RAL brought a major boost to skiing at Whakapapa.

RAL in short order built three chairlifts and a T-bar, and four Pomalifts, making skiing so much more enjoyable for many.

The first chairlift was opened by Sir Ed Hillary on a wet day in 1954.

The Staircase T-bar followed a year later and one year after that the second single chairlift was built, running from the foot of the Staircase to the top of the Knoll.

This lift was soon cut into two halves due to the top section on the Knoll being hopelessly iced up on many occasions.

The Swiss engineers who built the second chairlift had never before encountered the high water content of Ruapehu snow and they were amazed at how much ice built up on the towers.

Scores of RSC members were founder shareholders in RAL. The company only once paid a dividend and otherwise any profits were ploughed back into new lifts.

A feature of the early days was that RAL shareholders could wait in a special "members queue". Lift operators ensured that the wait in this queue was half that of the "general queue".

Many RSC members gave or sold one share to each of their children so that the offspring could use the privilege queue. RAL thus had thousands of members, many holding just one share.

RAL for a while had opposition in the form of Ski Enterprises which ran a long rope tow and then a T-bar on the National Downhill.

It was run by Roy Turner who was involved in a series of legal fights with RAL, the Park Board, the local electricity supplier, the local district council and others.

At one stage he unsuccessfully petitioned Parliament, asking it to take away RAL's skifield rights.

Our ski Club declined to endorse his petition. Ski Enterprises was sold to RAL in 1975.

RAL gradually expanded, replacing its one-skier Pomalifts with two-person T-bars, in the Valley, on the Knoll, at Delta Corner and the Far West.

RAL took over The Chateau's ski school, ski hire, cafeterias and car parking, as well as a private rope tow enterprise for beginners which was run in Happy Valley by John Willems.

Turoa was formed by private enterprise in 1977 with two triple chairlifts and went through several owners before being liquidated in 2000 and purchased by RAL.

Turoa had not adequately insured itself against damage to snow caused by eruptions, whereas RAL won a landmark court case against an insurance company in the wake of the 1996 eruption.

A major feature in recent years was the erection by RAL of the Sky Waka gondola that carries skiers, snowboarders and tourists up to the Knoll.

However, in 2022 a mixture of the Covid-pandemic and a poor snowfall led to RAL's liquidation.

Alan Graham



Upper: Ollie and Zac with Paddy the Snowman in front of RSC Chalet. Photo: Sam Mayston. **Lower:** Lots of snow around Glacier Hut in August 2023. Photo: Paula Cooper.



The Warren Newland cat at the crater in 1974. RSC members in the photo are Jock Graham, Jim Mutch and Mike Quinn. Photo: Alan Graham.

WHAKAPAPA OVERSNOW

Whakapapa in past years had three “cat” machines which carried skiers up the glacier to the crater.

The first was operated in 1961 by RSC member Tom Bates who built his cat from parts of machines used to create Wellington airport. He was helped by his brother Jim Bates who had accompanied Ed Hillary to the South Pole.

It had seats for 20 passengers and operated from either the top (\$1.50) or the bottom (\$2) of the Knoll.

Tom was assisted by ski instructor Ray Manning and their aim was to have a fleet of cats, but that was never to be.

Sadly their cat burned down when someone left the parking brake off. The cat rolled into a ski tow hut and tipped

over a heater, which burned down the hut and the cat.

The second was a bigger version of Tom’s cat which was built by Happy Valley operator John Willems. It worked fine on the flat but did not much like going up hills, so was never successful.

The third vehicle was operated in 1974 by Taranaki ski champ Warren Newland, using a modified form of snowcat.

It was successful but unfortunately a lahar placed a large pile of debris in its way and its route to the crater was blocked, so it had just the one season.

After that the Park Board banned all such vehicles on cultural and safety grounds, and we have never seen one again.

*** I once had three trips in one day on Tom’s cat. Wonderful skiing on the glacier.



Upper: The first ever run of the Whakapapa Cat to the crater in 1961. Two RSC Bulletin editors were on board. Tom Bates was not sure he could make the crater, but he did. **Lower:** The cat pauses for a photo opportunity on a downhill run. Photos: RSC collection.



Learner ski slopes at Ruapehu in 2023. Alpine Meadow at Turoa (upper) and Happy Valley at Whakapapa (lower). Photos: RAL.



Skiing at Whakapapa in July 2023. Great snow and no queue in the Valley. Photo: Paula Cooper.

CRATER LAKE SWIMMING

Can you swim in Crater Lake? The water in the lake may seem warm and inviting, but it is really acidic and is definitely not safe for swimming.

Currently folk are advised not to go anywhere near the lake due to volcanic danger.

Your Editor went swimming in the lake in the 1950s as part of a school summer party and again in the 1960s during RSC Winter Party.

The water was cold near the shore due to snow melt. It was nice for swimming for 10-20 metres. After that it was too hot for comfort.

Believe it or not the lake froze over in the 1920s and people could walk on it.

***** Acid bath**

Swimming in Crater Lake was popular during the 1950s and 1960s.

The water was usually warm due to volcanic gases streaming up from the magma chamber below, and a gentle ramp of snow allowed easy access.

However, volcanic gases bubbling up from below slowly began to acidify the water.

Swimming was discouraged once scientists discovered the increasing acidity, and also because eruptions in the lake could occur without warning.



Upper: NZ freeride skier Ben Richards, 23, of Wanaka, is a former ski racer who is now making his name in international extreme skiing. Ben is the boyfriend of NZ snowboard star Zoi Sadowski-Synnott. **Lower:** This is a rare photo of RAL's third chair running up the Knoll. Usually it was hopelessly iced up. Photo: Alan Graham.



RAL's first National chairlift had an intermediate station outside a cafeteria. The chair rider is Jo Graham. Photo: Alan Graham.

NZ'S TOP SKI TOWN

Stuff News ran an online vote to find New Zealand's best ski town.

It asked: Do you prefer a busy resort town, brimming with people and après-ski opportunities?

Or do you prefer the quieter, off-the-beaten-track villages to unwind after a day on the slopes?

For a start Stuff ran seven head-to-head regional contests. Here is what readers voted:

Tūrangi 61 percent beat Raetihi 39 percent.

Ohakune 79 percent beat National Park Village 21 percent.

Hanmer Springs 71 percent beat St Arnaud 29 percent.

Methven 68 percent beat Tekapo 32 percent.

Lake Ohau 81 percent beat Springfield 19 percent.

Arrowtown 74 percent beat Albert Town 26 percent.

Wanaka 66 percent beat Queenstown 34 percent.

Readers were then asked to choose between the head-to-head winners and the overall champion is: **WANAKA.**

Final voting:

Wanaka 31 percent.

Ohakune 18 percent, and Methven 18 percent.

Arrowtown 13 percent.

Lake Ohau 9 percent, and Hanmer Springs 9 percent.

Turangi 2 percent.

Stuff said Wanaka, with its mountain-hugged, glacier-carved lake, has all the visual appeal of nearby Queenstown with smaller crowds.

It's far from a sleepy hollow, however, with adventure activities galore, and plenty of top spots to eat and drink.



Upper: A working party under way at RSC Turoa last summer. Photo: Bobbie Co.
Lower: A working party at the Chalet. Photo: Ron Bonfrer.



The Swiss village of Brienz where a massive landslide in June stopped at the edge of the town.

VILLAGE IS SPARED

A Swiss village was spared by a hair's breadth in June after a mountain peak collapsed and sent a huge rockslide hurtling towards it.

There have been fears for centuries that Brienz, with a population of 84, could be crushed by the collapse of the nearby mountain peak Insel, and this year geologists warned it was imminent.

In June the village was evacuated amid fears the peak had become too unstable. The rockslide finally came crashing down shortly before midnight, stopping at the village gates.

Rubble from the fallen rocks stood at 12 metres high and a road was completely buried.

A metre-high wall of mud and rock came to a stop just in front of the village school.

Estimates suggest that three-quarters of the portion of mountain that geologists said was at risk had fallen toward Brienz.

This could be good news for the villagers, as the slide may not be repeated.

When they were evacuated, most villagers feared that the mountainside's collapse would obliterate their homes.

Brienz is a village on the northeast shore of Lake Brienz, in the Bernese Oberland.

The village's 18th-century wooden chalets and the sculptures dotted throughout the village are testimonials to a woodcarving tradition.

Nearby a tourist steam train runs up Brienz Rothorn Mountain, with stunning views of the lake and surrounding alps.

PS: I visited Brienz in 2011. From its wharf I caught a lake steamer for a scenic 90 minute cruise to Interlaken. Sadly the steam train was not running that day. AG

WORLD SNOW NEWS

The FIS Games: The International Ski Federation (FIS) is planning to hold a quadrennial, 16-day competition for Olympic and Paralympic snow sports with around 100 medal events starting in 2028.

The games will be held in the one year in every four-year cycle that does not include an Olympics, Paralympics or world championships for snow sports. The next year for that is 2028.

Events will be held in alpine skiing, cross-country skiing, freestyle skiing, ski jumping and snowboarding as well as disciplines that aren't on the Olympic programme such as speed skiing, freeriding and telemark.

Lego is to launch a new Holiday Ski Slope and Café set. It is aimed at children aged eight or older and is priced at \$US150.

Three mini figures, Liann, Zac and Aaron, can be kitted out with snowboards, skis and helmets. Kids can propel the characters down the ski slope before treating them to a hot chocolate at the ski café.

Accessories include three pairs of skis, two snowboards, hot chocolate cups, three helmets, soda cans, bubble gum, a croissant and a camera.

Billy Dagg, 92, has spent most of his life farming Coronet Peak Station, yet he has never put on a pair of skis. And nor does he plan on it.

“I spent enough time in the snow. I had too much to do with it, I hated snow.”

Dagg owned Coronet Peak Station (26,709ha) for 48 years. Then his son Brian Dagg took over. Today he lives at Arrowtown and can see the tip of Coronet Peak from his living room.

Asked what made farming Coronet Peak so special, he says it was the merino. “They are a beautiful animal with beautiful wool.”

French skier Solan Dejouy posted a wonderful video of him crossing a 59 metre wide river on snow skis.

The video shows him picking up speed as he skis on snow through trees. Then he skims across the river to reach the far shore.

Queenstown Stampede ice hockey stalwart Braden Lee aged 39 has retired, after 18 years, 187 games, 90 goals and 57 assists.

Lee first played in 2005 when the NZ Ice Hockey League (NZIHL) was formed. His teams have won the league five times.

He's also got the dubious honour of having 500 minutes in the penalty box, believed to be the second highest in the league.

Selwyn Snow Resort (NSW) opened for skiing and snowboarding for the first time in three years after being burned to the ground in the bush fires of January 2020.

Selwyn, formerly known as Selwyn Snowfields, is located in the most northern part of the Snowy Mountains in the Kosciuszko National Park.

It is small skifield with a vertical drop of 122 metres. There are 11 lifts and the resort is well suited to families and first timers.

King Charles entertained Sue Leyden, daughter of expedition leader Lord Hunt, Peter Hillary, son of Sir Edmund Hillary, and Jamling Norgay, son of Tenzing Norgay at Buckingham palace to celebrate 70 years since Mt Everest was climbed.



Upper: *Ruapehu as seen from RSC Turoa. Lower:* *Our Club's Ohakune building RSC Turoa after some old trees were cut down. Photos: Catherine Gafa.*

ACROSS THE SKIING WORLD

ChatGPT was asked to select the best places in the world to go skiing.

Here are its seven answers:

- 1 Whistler, Canada.
- 2 Chamonix, France
- 3 St Anton, Austria
- 4 Aspen, USA
- 5 Niseko, Japan
- 6 Zermatt, Switzerland
- 7 Queenstown, New Zealand

ChatGPT was asked to name the worst ski resorts in the world.

Here are its selections:

- Mount Gariwang, South Korea
- Sierra Blanca, Spain
- Changbai Mountain, China
- Poiana Brasov, Romania
- Shymbulak, Kazakhstan

After almost four years the Southern Hemisphere's only funicular ski tram is back in operation.

The Tyndall Tramway at Broken River skifield in Canterbury is New Zealand's shortest and steepest public railway.

The two cabs capable of lifting up to six skiers at a time are operated by the press of a button. The self-service approach adds further novelty to the experience.

Ōhau Lodge and Ohau Snow Fields, one of New Zealand's most idyllic boutique ski locations, has been listed for sale by local family owners after 33 years of ownership.

The property comprises two operations, Lake Ōhau Lodge, a 72-room lodge that sits on a 10ha lakeside location and Ōhau Snow Fields, a 145ha skifield with access to over 250ha of skiable terrain.

Lake Ōhau is in the Mackenzie Country, a region famous for New Zealand's highest mountains, longest glaciers and vivid turquoise lakes.

Junior world champion biathlete Campbell Wright has left NZ and will now compete for the US.

Wright, who competed under the NZ flag at the Winter Olympics in Beijing last year, holds dual citizenship through his parents.

Born and raised in Wanaka, the 21-year-old has decided to switch his allegiances to the US, stating the superior resources available through its programme.

Biathlon is a mixture of cross-country skiing and rifle shooting.

Did you see stage 17 of the recent Tour de France cycle race which finished on the runway of the airport at Courchevel ski town?

This runway is one of the craziest landing spots in the world and often features in lists of tricky places to land an aircraft.

What is the southernmost skifield in the world? No. it is not in NZ.

This title goes to Cerro Castor in Argentina which opened this season on June 28th.

Cerro Castor is a ski resort on the southern slope of Mount Krund, 26 km from the city of Ushuaia, in the province of Tierra del Fuego.

It has a top elevation of 1100 metres. There are five chairlifts, three T-bars and four magic carpets.

Shenzhen in China is building what could be the world's largest indoor ski resort.

Spread over 8 hectares, an area equal to 11 football pitches, the arena will beat the Wanda Snow Park in China which covers an area equal to nine football pitches.

State-owned Zhuhai Huafa Group has invested over 30 billion yuan (US\$4.2 billion) in the Shenzhen project, which is expected to be ready by November 2025.

There were massive queues when Australia's largest ski resort Perisher (NSW) opened for the season.

Some estimates said 1000 skiers and snowboarders were lined up at the main access run, Front Valley, many having paid the Sunday day pass cost of \$A234.

Perisher Ski Resort operations director Michael Fearnside said “We saw wind speeds of around 100km/h at the top of the mountain which limited the number of lifts we could safely open.”

Unlike NZ, the Australian skifields had poor snowfalls this winter.

Polish skier and mountaineer Andrzej Bargiel has completed his mission to ski from the summit to the base of the world's 13th tallest peak, Gasherbrum II.

Also known as K4, the 8035 metre peak is situated on the border between Pakistan and China

Bargiel made history in 2018 when he became the first person to ski from the summit of K2, the world's second-tallest peak. He has also made two attempts to summit and ski Mt. Everest, but both were unsuccessful.

A new initiative is encouraging NZ farmers to trade the paddocks for the skifield and enjoy a day or two on the slopes.

The Otago and Southland Rural Support Trusts decided to launch **Skiiing for Farmers** at Coronet peak, after seeing the success of Surfing for Farmers all over the country.

The event is open to beginner, intermediate or advanced skiers and organisers are keen for farmers to bring along their families and neighbours as well.

The special ticket price includes an all-day lift pass to ski or snowboard and a lesson tailored to everyone's skill level. There is also a barbeque lunch.

US skifields enjoyed such good snow this year that three of them were still open for Independence Day skiing and snowboarding on July 4th.

They were Mammoth Mountain

(California), Palisades Tahoe (California) and Timberline Lodge (Oregon).

Cardrona Alpine Resort has opened its new Willows Basin quad chairlift.

It is the first new major lift-accessed terrain to open in New Zealand since 2012 and provides access to 65 hectares of intermediate to advanced level terrain.

The **Willows Basin** is in the Soho Ski Area, on the southern face of Mt Cardrona, overlooking Queenstown.

The new chair is the first stage in the Soho expansion. Until now access to 260 hectares has been by snowcat or helicopter.

US ski areas have reported a record visitation of 65.4 million skiers and riders during the 2022-23 season.

The figure includes a handful of resorts that stayed open into July and August. It was a 6.6 percent increase over the previous season.

Capital investment by ski areas totalled \$812 million in the 2022-23 season, a record high for the industry. The majority of capital was invested into lifts with 63 new and 86 upgraded lifts installed.

For the fourth season in a row, season passes surpassed day tickets in the share of skier visits.

Park City Mountain Resort (Utah) in May was warning guests that red snow, also known as watermelon snow, is not safe to eat.

This snow occurs when a type of algae that thrives in cold temperatures moves to the surface of the snowpack to bloom and divide. This typically happens in snowfields at high elevations during the summer.

Eating a large quantity of watermelon snow is known to cause digestive problems in humans, but it's a viable food source for some creatures such as **ice worms, roundworms and snow fleas.**



CLUB ITEMS & SERVICES FOR SALE

RSC Administration Office, P.O. Box 8064, Newmarket, Auckland 1149

Website: www.rsc.org.nz

email: admin@rsc.org.nz

Lockers

Ski and gear lockers are available in the Hut, Lodge and Turoa buildings.

Please email admin@rsc.org.nz for current availability.

Annual Locker Rental Rates:

Charged at the date of allocation.

Ski Locker \$63.25

Gear Locker \$32.62

Club Items

(Add \$3 for each order to be posted)

Name Badge (free to new members) \$12

PHONE NUMBERS

RSC Office 09-377-3856

Lodge 07-892-3824

Hut 07-892-3822

Chalet 07-892-3823

Turoa 06-385-8767

NEW MEMBERS COSTS

Attend two working parties.

Joining fee senior and young adult \$99

Junior \$49

Annual senior subscription \$310

Annual sub young adult, junior, associate, veteran \$130

ACCOMMODATION FEES

Buildings	Lodge Catered	Turoa & Chalet Self Cater
Senior	\$63.00	\$45.00
Young Adult 18-21	\$63.00	\$45.00
Teen Member	\$54.00	\$39.00
Junior Member	\$41.00	\$30.00
Members Child	\$32.00	\$24.00
Non-member rates		
Senior Non-Member	\$114.00	\$80.00
Junior Non-member	\$76.00	\$54.00