

# THE STORY OF THREDBO YHA



The evocatively named Snowy Mountains gave early YHA enthusiasts twin challenges of diversity and adversity, as they improved ski huts in summer and ploughed through snow in winter so others could share their passion for hostelling.



Kiandra YHA, 1950 - 1967

## 1940 - Kiandra

Scandinavian prospectors had used fence palings to make skis during the 19th century Gold Rush days helping to establish the Snowy Mountains town of Kiandra as the birthplace of Australian skiing. Sydney YHA volunteers Paddy Pallin and Fred King put Kiandra on the map for another reason, gaining approval in 1949 to buy a ski hostel there.

By 1950 the two men had bought Wynnstay Guest House on behalf of YHA, being reimbursed once funds were available. Some volunteers spent months improving the hostel and others made stocks and skis, fashioning ski boots from Army Disposal Store supplies. The new YHA opened in the winter of 1950. The hostel began to have sell-out seasons. A new ski room and wood shed were added in 1952 but the cost of upkeep was too much and the lure of other ski fields led to the hostel being closed in the mid 1960s.

## 1950 - Geehi

Construction workers from the famous water and electricity authority of the Snowy Mountains Scheme had formerly used a basic building at Geehi in the Kosciuszko National Park. This went on to become a YHA hostel. Ironically people could not always reach the hostel in winter because of heavy snow falls. The hostel was built of stones from the nearby Swampy Plains River. The building opened as a YHA towards the end of the 1950s, and took a year to bring up to standard. The hostel closed in 1977.

## 1950 - Thredbo

A semi-trailer transported two former site offices from Sydney's Kurnell oil refinery in 1958 to become the skeleton for the first Thredbo hostel, a coup for YHA as it was difficult at the time to secure land in the Alpine Village. Revenue from Kiandra YHA helped finance the cost of the Thredbo hostel. A paid builder and work parties toiled on the hostel to ready it for the first ski season. The hostel was extended in 1963. In 1981 the original building was demolished and a new purpose-built hostel was constructed on the same site.



Geehi YHA, 1950s - 1977

*"We had to make our skis as such things were not made in Australia in those days... we purchased mountain ash timber and had it cut roughly to shape, then steamed and bent it to turn up the tip."*

- Ted Stephens, YHA volunteer, 1950s



Original Thredbo YHA, 1958 -1981



This YHA is part of the world's largest budget accommodation network, Hostelling International, which provides more than 4,000 YHA/HI hostels in over 60 countries. YHA is a not-for-profit membership organisation providing travellers with quality accommodation and services.