Extracts from-
ISBN 9780646588421 (pbk.)

WORLD’S FIRST ALPINE SKI CLUB

Second Edition

By

Norman W Clarke
W. Cross, strongly challenges the claim made last year by Sydney writer Norman W Clarke that the Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club, originally known as the Kiandra Snow Shoe Club, is the world’s oldest ski club.

The claim was heavily promoted by Snow Australia, the internet marketing face of Australian ski resort operators, during celebrations last year to mark the 150th anniversary of the first recorded skiing in this country, at Kiandra, NSW, in 1861. However, Wendy Cross’s new book casts serious doubt on Clarke’s assertion that the Kiandra Snow Shoe Club was also formed in 1861, by Norwegian-born gold-miners.

**IN REPLY TO STATEMENTS FROM “THE FIRST 100 YEARS”**

On the 20th September 1928, the Kosciusko Alpine Club, together with the younger Ski Club of Australia, formed what was to be known as the Ski Council of NSW. The University Ski Club, the Millions Ski Club and Kiandra Ski Club were later invited to join. Kiandra was offered one seat on the board at no cost. However, Kiandra did not respond until after a club meeting the following year. To correctly and permanently identify its true position in the history of skiing, the club moved to change its name, at which time George Doran was the club Secretary. The word "Pioneer" and the year "1870" were adopted into the club’s name in 1929 - "Pioneer" was added due to its being the original ski club in this country. Whilst the club was known to have been in existence since 1861, at the time it could not be proven. The year "1870" was selected as it was within living memory of members who competed and won trophies in under 10yrs Snow Shoe Club events. “1861” replaced “1870” after acceptance of being formed in that year.

W. Cross; “However, since snow did not lie on the ground in Kiandra for prolonged periods during the 1860 winter, there would have been little incentive for the Kiandran Norwegians to make skis that year. Nevertheless, Sydney based writer Norman W Clarke, who published- Gold Fields to Ski Fields in 2006, followed in 2010 by a 28 page booklet entitled Lapland Snow Shoes in Australia, asserts that three Norwegians made more than 40 pairs of skis prior to the winter of 1861 and then taught the locals how to use them. He does not provide any
evidence for this but also states that the Yass Courier’s mention of the Goldfields Commissioner watching young men slide down hills on their Lapland shoes is evidence of a skiing carnival attended by not only the commissioner but also “three independent news reporters” invited to Kiandra for this purpose. This is drawing a very long bow indeed.”

Reply:      Facts of the 1860 winter in Kiandra.

3 May 1860. Sydney Morning Herald- “There had been some heavy snow at Kiandra, some to the depth of four feet”.

10 July 1860. The Argus- “Miners felt that there was some little difficulty in working under ten or twenty feet of snow”.

30 July 1860. Sydney Morning Herald- “seeing so many different reports about the Snowy River ... where the snow was very deep, but it was nothing to compare with this alpine region”.

7 August 1860. Sydney Morning Herald- “I hear it is at least four to six feet on Kiandra in places”.

29 Sept 1860. “The Cooma correspondent of the Yass Courier reports – Twelve bodies found in the snow at Kiandra. The correspondent reports that as some parties were clearing some of the snow which had drifted about their claim, they came upon the bodies of four men in one party, and seven in another, smothered in the last snow storm. These bodies were found at the head of the Tumut; many others are missed. Another party, whilst breaking up the frozen snow with picks, struck upon the remains of an unfortunate digger”.

29 November 1860. Bendigo Advertiser- “Reports from Kiandra, state that the weather is still very severe there, there being frequent and heavy falls of snow”.

30 November 1860. Bendigo Advertiser- “Terrific storm at Kiandra on Friday morning commenced the most severe storm that has swept over Kiandra during the last six months. Snow fell without intermission from daylight up to sunset”.


Obviously, there was a great incentive to make skis that winter. However, it was not possible. There was no timber with which to make skis within miles of the tent city, not even fence posts. It would have been almost impossible to muster the labour required to fell trees, make skis and teach locals how to use them at a time when the snow was heavy, and a disastrous influenza epidemic hit the town.

As reported when the cold was intense:-

“Twenty six deaths from influenza took place in one day. The supplies of food and medicine are very scanty. The privation and misery are very great.”

W. Cross;

“Nevertheless, Sydney based writer Norman W Clarke, who published- Gold Fields to Ski Fields in 2006, followed in 2010 by a 28 page booklet entitled Lapland Snow Shoes in Australia, asserts that three Norwegians made more than 40 pairs of skis prior to the winter of 1861 and then taught the locals how to use them.”

Reply;

I most certainly claimed the above in my books. There could have been sixty, even eighty pairs of snow shoes being used with great skill in the August of 1861. (One score equals twenty).

“Scores of young people are frequently engaged climbing the lofty summits with snow shoes and then sliding down with a volancy (sic) that would do credit to some of our railway trains.”

I have always claimed that the snow shoes were made during the spring of 1860 and summer of 1861. The lesson had been learned, this project was not possible in winter.

These snow shoe riders did not achieve this outstanding result, in a matter of months without being organised and trained.
The reference to the Gold Commissioner, together with three separate journalistic reports illustrate the first documented occasion when many trained snow shoe riders participated together in Australia. No better description of a carnival could be made than:-

“Commissioner Cloete was over seeing them the other evening and laughed heartily at some of them when they got a good capsize.”

“~but yet the people are not without their amusements.” and “some have come down the hill in grand style.”

“The heaven pointing snow-clad mountains afford them some pleasure.”

(Carnival: Occasion of merrymaking, fair or amusement show, series of sporting events).

The local newspaper had closed down in January 1861, as it claimed it had nothing to report. Then three independent correspondents filed completely different stories of this historic carnival week. One was a trained Lapland snow shoe rider.

“The Sydney Morning Herald reported their correspondent fitted on a pair of snow shoes and took refuge in the Alpine Metropolis.” The roads are impassable except with snow shoes or the more novel mode of travelling in skates.”

W. Cross;

“Very little is known of Soren (sic) Gregoriusen Torp”

Reply; On the contrary, a lot is known about Søren and his family dating back to 1771.

In 1970 the curator of the Ski Museum in a letter to the then President of the Kiandra Ski Club states;

“A man Gregoriussen was from the little city of Mandal on the Norwegian South Coast. He was a gold miner in Australia in the 1850 and 1860 years. He came home to Norway about 1875.”
In 2007 Hege Torp, Director, Social Sciences, Research council of Norway, confirmed that the man Søren Gregoriusen Torp referred to in “Kiandra Gold Fields to Ski Fields” as being in Kiandra in 1861 was his Great, Great, Grandfather.

“You already know a lot about him. He was a sailor, whaler, cross country skier and gold miner in Kiandra. He returned to his home city, Mandal, where he died in 1882.” 11

W. Cross on Carl Bjerknes;

“Jakob Vaage, Norway’s acknowledged expert on skiing history during the latter part of the twentieth century, always contended that it was Carl Bjerknes who introduced skiing to Australia and declared he had evidence to prove it. No such evidence appears in any of Vaage’s books but it is worth considering the information available from Norway’s famed Holmenkollen Ski Museum, about Bjerknes. Born in 1819, Carl Christian Torstensen Bjerknes was brought up in the cobalt mining centre of Modum, west of Oslo. He immigrated to the USA in 1849, where he prospected for gold in California. His luck was poor so when news broke of rich new finds in Australia, he left America, arriving in Australia in 1853. He is reported to have skied somewhere here in 1853 and 1854 but, in 1855 went to New Zealand, where he is also said to have skied. He returned to Norway in 1877.”

Reply: The above story is more than a little strange.

In a letter dated 1st May 1970.Jakob Vaage, Curator of the Norwegian Ski Museum, wrote:-

“We know that a man with the name Carl Christian Torsten Bjerknes from the county Modum in Norway used skis in Australia in the 1860’s (perhaps in the 1850 years).” 12

Jakob Vaage wrote three letters signed as the Museum Curator, to the president of the Kiandra pioneer ski club. Why did Wendy Cross fail to mention Vaage was the museum’s curator?

To describe Jakob as an acknowledged expert on skiing history on one hand and disregard his knowledge on the other is preposterous. The story ignores the possibility that, if Bjerknes did travel to New Zealand in 1855, he may well have returned in 1859.
Long after Jakob had retired, I requested copies of all the material the museum held on Australian skiing history. All I could be given were three photographs and informed, incorrectly, that Søren Gregoriusen (without Torp) was in Kiandra in 1860-1893, together with the following statement;

“Ski Museum’s archives were destroyed during the big fire in January 16, 1968 when the old ski museum burnt down to the ground.”¹³

It would appear that in the three 1970 letters, the Museum’s curator knew more than that given to me in 2005.

W. Cross; “Kiandra - Mr. Bumpstone sets a trend.”

Referring to Bill Hughes: “~~ he wrote an article for the Australian Ski Year Book in which he claimed that the first skiing Kiandrans saw was ‘when one Bumpstone, a Swede, on a hastily constructed pair of skis, ran from his home down the street in 1857.’ ”

“Hughes had learned to live with his famous gaffe but, for the rest of his life, he found himself trying to explain the error.”

Reply; It is quite reasonable to believe Hughes meant 1859. (Today we would call it a typo). Bill Hughes made only one provable error, a mistake of two years.

It must be considered that in all probability any Norwegian passing through Tumut, Cooma or Beechworth on his way up to the alpine district, of the not yet named Kiandra, would seek out the conditions in the mountains. If he was told it is snowing, I find it very likely that he would make and take with him a pair of hastily made snow shoes. Was “Bumpstone” a true Aussie nickname given to Bjerknes as his name was too difficult to pronounce?

Barcroft Boake the author of many Australian Bush poems made famous for his accurate but colourful descriptions of the Nation’s places, animals, birds and people, wrote a twenty- one verse poem entitled the “Demon Snow Shoes”. Being just over twenty years after the event, the details were still clear in the minds of the locals. Barcroft tells the story of a one- on- one race between Davy
Eccleston and Carl the Dane. David Eccleston was a twenty-four year old gold miner in Kiandra, who later married Sarah Dunn, the daughter of another Kiandra local. David and Sarah remained in the district.

As Bjerknes is difficult to pronounce, Barcroft most probably elected to use Carl the Dane to rhyme with plain.

The FIS timeline on the history of skiing has claimed for years that skiing was probably first introduced into Australia by Norwegian Gold miners. This was probably Carl Bjerknes *(Bumpstone in 1859)*. With the help of many others, he then formed the club during the spring/summer 1860/1861.

No book on Australian skiing history, published after 2006 can have any credibility if it completely ignores international recognition directed toward an Australian Alpine ski club. History cannot be made to disappear by pretending it did not happen.

In order to attempt restoration of Australian Skiing History and my credibility, I believe this publication should be recalled and an apology made to all skiing enthusiasts.

KPSC committee members reveal Wendy Cross had requested that she write the club history, the offer was declined. Some years later I was given the assignment.

*Norman W Clarke.*
CLAIMS MADE REGARDING FIRST SKI CLUBS

The Norwegian Holmenkollen Ski Museum was founded in 1923 and is generally regarded as the foremost authority on the history of snow skiing.

After the opening of the Museum, it was accepted and published in numerous editorials that the first recreational ski club in the world was the “Christiana Ski Club of Norway” formed in 1885.

That was then considered as marking the commencement of organised competitive and recreational club skiing.

By 1925 the city of Christiana was renamed Oslo.

This 1885, Norwegian "first ski club" claim held solid for almost seven decades, no earlier skiing groups could be identified as being a club.

Dr Herbert Schlink wrote that “A club in Australia was nine years older than the Christiana Ski Club”.  

Given the above facts, in 1955 the Kiandra Ski Club challenged the Norwegians, claiming a club in or before 1870.

Being the first ski club in the world was accepted by the “Guinness Book of Records”; they then published the results annually from 1962 through to 1971.

In 1972, America claimed an alpine club starting in 1867, and that an American club had been reported as commencing in January 1861.

This soon drew a response from the Holmenkollen Museum, declaring the existence of an earlier ski club. A Norwegian club, described as the “Trysil Skytte og Skiloberforning” was said to have been founded with 52 named members, in May of 1861.

The American club was furious, it would still be the first ski club in the world had the museum not effectively blocked the claim. This was achieved by proclaiming that it would only recognise a club providing it could fulfil the three requirements described by leading encyclopaedias and dictionaries.
(a) It could name a group of members (a group being more than a pair).

(b) The named group could demonstrate organisation over a continuing period.

(c) The named group could demonstrate participation for a singular common purpose. Example - Skiing.\textsuperscript{15}

This proviso effectively quashed the American January 1861 disclosure in favour of Norway’s May 1861 assertion.

The Australian and American clubs were therefore obliged to drop their claims, as they could not meet the set criteria.

For the next thirty years the world believed organised recreational skiing, as a sport, commenced in Northern Europe.

The Kiandra club was up and running a full thirty years before any ski club existed in Europe. Beginning with Munich, Germany 1891,\textsuperscript{16} Switzerland’s first club was founded in Glarus in 1893.

“The town of Glarus founded the first ski club in Switzerland in 1893. Five years later at the same location, the first ski race of the Alps took place on two primitive wooden skis and just one long pole.”\textsuperscript{17}

Next was Arlberg, Austria in 1901, followed by France and Italy, Sir Arnold Lunn founded the Kandahar Ski Club of Great Britain in 1924.

It was not until 2005, that the Kiandra club was able to re-establish its ranking, by meeting all of the requirements, illustrating it was also formed in the summer of 1860/1861. In view of the above, the museum for the first time \textbf{recognised beyond reasonable doubt}, that Australia also had a club formed in 1861.

\textbf{Kiandra 1859 - 1861}

The background to Kiandra has been well documented in other places, but it must be repeated that - Few Europeans had visited the area, later to be known as Kiandra and little was known of the weather conditions. Gold mining commenced in 1859; by 1860 it was reported that the town’s population had grown to 15,000.
Playing of sport has always been of prime importance, especially for isolated people largely unknown to each other. On New Year’s Day 1861 a carnival was held with a full band playing all day. Events included, horse racing, wrestling, foot races, jumping in sacks, climbing a greasy pole, cricket and lots more. The carnival loving, Commissioner Cloete was the judge for the day.

The rush was over, as in March of 1861, it was reported;

“Kiandra is presenting a deserted appearance half the shops and stores are already closed. It is said that there are no more than 200 diggers on the field”. 18

The following month the population dropped even further.

“At the present time, the mining population of Kiandra is reduced to less than two hundred.” 19

Two factors contributed to the decline in numbers, firstly it was the low gold returns, the other was the fear of living through another disastrous winter like the one they had experienced only months earlier. This fear of spending a winter in the snow was not shared by the remaining less than two hundred. Those few who elected to stay had watched as ten thousand of their friends, workmates, and business partners deserted the town. It is understandable that a few overstocked store-holders might stay. Others may have felt that the winter may be bad enough to stop mining. Others could have left for winter, and then returned in the spring if they wished.

For another section of the town’s community it was not a matter of leaving because of the snow, this group stayed because of the snow. This small band had no idea whether the winters of 1859 and 1860 were mild or extreme. From their point of view, they would have hoped that the snow in 1861 could even be deeper.

The small group of Norwegians including Elias Gottaas knew what the last winter was like and they wanted more of it. You would have to believe that “the cow jumped over the moon” if you thought that they would not have organised themselves in readiness for some winter sport, knowing they intended to stay. They, with the help of many others, provided a great deal of entertainment, while showing many locals how to survive in snow storms. Snow sport was the reason to
stay. Much more profitable gold mining options had just started at Young and Forbes NSW.

Six people can be identified as having been involved in the formation of the club by having the first known Australian snow shoes. Three of these persons included Carl Bjerknes, Søren Torp and Elias Gottaas. Elias Gottaas has many times been claimed as Australia’s first ski-maker. However, this honour was possibly shared by all concerned. Three of the helpers and snow shoe owners include David Eccleston from Adaminaby, the postman Mr. Roberts and the herald journalist. There were more than 40 people involved in this enterprise.

The testament to the very existence of this club is that many original 1860 families built their homes in the town and raised several generations of children to be educated in the town or in the surrounding district. Several went on to be internationally recognised in snow sports. Due to diminishing snow levels the club moved to Perisher Valley in 1966.
Section of Jakob Vaage’s second letter.

Another Norwegian mentioned in the Vaage letters as being in Kiandra during the early years, was Martin Admundsen. Martin had not arrived until sometime after 1861 but described the Norwegian method of ski making.

“A mountain ash had been felled. 25ft. was cut off the butt end and 8ft. off the prime trunk then left for several years.

Four baulks of the ash were split on the quarter and an even grained piece of timber roughly six inches in depth by six inches in width was left. This billet was then split down the centre of the grain and it became parts A and B. The soles of a pair of skis were born out of the rough - left and right similar in grain, texture, density, indeed similar in every respect. Both skis were fashioned from the soles up. Surplus edge material was discarded with a four tooth to the inch rip saw
and the top and bottom surfaces of the ski dressed to size, approximately seven feet six inches in length, four inches in width and a thickness of one inch. The two pieces of timber were placed sole to sole as in the original split position, a camber block placed in the middle and both ends tied tightly together. The timber was then allowed to air season for at least 12 months".  

The straight and knotless eight foot brake poles were a necessary by-product.

Naturally the snow shoes made in the spring/summer of 1860-1861 would not have had this seasoning period, but the workload would not have been diminished. Considering that the only suitable timber was many miles away, then the felling and sawing the cut down trees would have taken a large and organised group. The dedicated group then produced snow shoes for almost a quarter of the town’s population and taught every person how they were to be used. Had they only manufactured one score of shoes, the result would be the same. A club would have been founded.

The results of this summer effort to give the town a winter sport were witnessed by many people including the commissioner. Kiandra now had a winter sports club which conforms completely to the definition of a club. After the stories of many miners being buried alive and understanding the Norwegian pride in ski and snow safety. It would not be a surprise, if in fact they attempted to make sufficient snow shoes for every person in the town.

With the continuing digitisation of old newspapers, new material is consistently being discovered. Sometimes this is helpful other times devastating. Another ski club older than Kiandra could be found at any time. For example, in 2005 I wrote:

“The postman did not take to skis for deliveries around the town for some years”.  

We now know that the postman Mr. Roberts had a pair of snow shoes and knew how to use them before the first ski carnival as described by the following report -

“It was impossible to get the horse post in, the letters were carried by men in snow shoes, and the papers are left.”
“The first intimation that any difficulty was in the way in the shape of snow was from Mr. Roberts, who left with the mail on last Sunday week.”

American or Canadian snow shoes

American or Canadian snow shoes were never reported to be used in Kiandra between the years 1860-1861. To illustrate the difference between an American snow shoe and a Norwegian snow shoe, an American tourist, whilst in Kiandra, describes American snow shoes –

“on his feet are strapped a pair of snow shoes, resembling in shape and construction battledores, only the centre is lace work, made of the sinews of the deer”

Norwegian or Lapland Snow Shoes and snow skates

1857, California – “The skate is about six feet long and six inches wide. The only fastening is a single strap over the toe of the boot admitting of the freest possible motion to the feet and ankles.”

1883, New York Times – “The Norwegian snow-skates are made entirely of wood, about 4 inches wide, the forepart being a little pointed and curved upward, and fastened to the forepart of the foot with a strap.”

At Kiandra in 1861, both Norwegian long snow shoes and short snow skates were used in the town as described in the following report –

“The roads were impassable except with the snowshoes or the more novel mode of travelling on skates. The skates are constructed of two palings turned up at the front end and about four feet long, with straps to put the feet in.”
Within a matter of months the town of Kiandra moved from a position of having no known winter sport, to having near or probably more than a quarter of the town’s population enjoying skiing on Township Hill. The participants probably never considered they were actually forming a club, a club does not have to hold races, and it does not have to document its activities. Many clubs such as Chess Clubs, Fishing Clubs for example, run for years with members meeting, organising and participating for a common singular purpose, without keeping records. In the case of the Kiandra Snow Shoe Club this was alpine skiing.

The Alturas Snowshoe Club of America, Trysil Skytte-og Skiloberforeningen of Norway and the Kiandra Snow Shoe Club of Australia all made claims based on newspaper reports as evidence of commencement.
In 2005 the Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club again wrote to the Holmenkollen Ski Museum claiming to have the world’s first ski club. After seeking expert advice and months of deliberation, the museum sent the following letter:

THE FIRST SKI CLUBS

On behalf of the Ski Museum in Holmenkollen I hereby accept that the following sentence will be published on the cover of the book of the Kiandra Ski club:

"The Holmenkollen Ski Museum confirms that the first two ski clubs in the world were formed by Norwegians in 1861, both in Norway and Australia."

Good luck with the book!

Your Sincerity
FORENINGEN TIL SKI-IDRETTENS FREMME

Karin Berg
THE CHALLENGE FOR FIRST CLUB STATUS

It is quite understandable that making this challenge to the Holmenkollen Ski Museum would not be easy, I knew that I would be on my own and could not expect a great deal of help, if any.

In 2006, I requested that the museum send all documentation regarding the formation of their first ski club. After a considerable delay, I was told that the only evidence that existed was from an 1861 newspaper report. It was conveyed to me that the written language of Norway had changed considerably in the last one hundred and fifty years and that I would not be able to read it. I replied, “Thank you but send it anyhow”. I gave a copy of the clipping to several people, including a university; the museum was right the translations were good but not good enough to be certain of the facts. Next I sent a copy to the Norwegian National Library; weeks later the translation was returned, with a letter of thanks for giving the staff an interesting exercise and a change from the normal routine. Photo images of the translations:

The 20th of May, a rifle and skiing association was established at Trysil. 52 participants/members had enrolled. County physician Backer, Clerk Nyhuus, Clerk Ørbech and Farmer Johan Landqraf was elected for management.
It was decided that shooting exercises were to be held every other Sunday afternoon, and that there should be one prize (or award) shooting competition the Monday following Michaelmas (Sept. 29th) and, if possible, a prize skiing competition the 2nd Winterthing day. The Association will join the Central Association for propagation of physical exercise and use of weapons. Translated: National Library 2006

The library was contacted for a translation of “Winterthing Day”

The Swedes conducted Winterthings in January and February between 1600 and 1700. Trysil, being located on the border to Sweden may have adapted this custom.
Next Winterthings described 1862: National Library 2006

Even though the Norwegian newspaper report dated the 30th May, 1861 did not substantiate the formation of the "Trysil Skytte-og Skiloberforening" as a recreational ski club, it was accepted as such.
The association referred to in the Elverum Military Establishment, May, 1861 newspaper report translated by the National Library of Norway, was one of several local civil defence groups known as "Military Patrols" this particular group first skied on Winterthing day January 1862.

The "Trysil Skytte-og Skiloberforening" Military Patrol Association later referred to as the "Trysil Ski and Shooting Club" changed its name to the "Trysilgutten (Trysilboy's) Ski Club" the year of a 1940 battle.28 Reported as follows:-

"The Battle of Midtskogen was the battle fought on the night between 9 and 10 April 1940 during the Second World War between a German raiding party and an improvised Norwegian force. The site of the battle was Midtskogen farm, situated approximately five kilometres west of the town Elverum." 29

Extract from original letter held in KPSC archives

Dear Mr. R.A.Hamison
2A Charlton Avenue
Turramurra
Sydney, New South Wales
Australia.

Dear Sir,

We have one from 1861 (Trysil Ski og Skytterklub). This is the oldest ski club in the world as we know. The name was changed to Trysilgutten in 1940. We also have ski clubs organized in 1865, 1866 and 1867. (In USA they have organized a club in 1867 (La Porte snowshoe club).

Very sincerely yours
Jakob Yaage
Curator of the SKIMUSEUM
“Military Patrol” had been accepted with this unusual name into the 1924 Winter Olympics. At the 1928, ‘36 and ‘48 games, it was declared to be only an exhibition trial. The results were considered to be unofficial.

The name was changed to Biathlon before the 1958 World Championships in Austria, where it was first recognised as a sport.

THE ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY
2011

Federation International Skiing, 29/06/2011
NEWSFLASH.

2011 is an historic year for Australian skiing, and the 150-year milestone is being celebrated across the nation's ski fields by many organisations. These include Ski Resort Operators, Historical Societies, Museums, Snow Australia videos, snow sport groups, national and local newspapers and ski clubs.

In 1961, very successful and colourful centenary celebrations were conducted but clouded by doubt and scepticism by much of the population. This year's anniversary is free of any previous negativity.

2006 saw the Holmenkollen Ski Museum of Norway confirming that in 1861 the world's first ski clubs were formed in both Norway and Australia.

In 2011 FIS joins the congratulations for this important Australian anniversary, together for Kiandra's inaugural position in alpine skiing in the world.
Dear Australian Ski Friends,

The year 2011 is a special year for the International Ski Federation, its Member National Ski Associations and their ski clubs around the world. It is special because we held unforgettable FIS World Ski Championships in Oslo, Garmisch-Partenkirchen, La Molina and Deer Valley. But it is also special because it marks an important anniversary for the founding of some of the world’s first ski clubs.

In 1861, the Trysil Skytte and Skiloberforening was founded in Norway. The same year, 150 years ago, the Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club came into being in your country. In these early days, skiing in Kiandra meant support for the local mining work and source of recreational moments of relaxation – connecting these two crucial parts of life to each other. Early skiing in Kiandra also featured competition, in fact a type of competition that was far ahead of its time. The competition format involved skiing straight down the mountain two competitors at a time. The winner went to the next round, the loser went home.

However, I don’t want to tell you your story – you know it far better than I ever could!

Instead, I would like to commend you for having organised the first Alpine ski races in the history of our sport. One and a half centuries later, Alpine Skiing is one of the most popular and prestigious disciplines within FIS, and the duel of man against man can be found at the highest levels of Alpine and Freestyle Skiing as well as in Snowboarding.

I would also like to show my appreciation for the major efforts by the Australian ski pioneers. The sport of skiing, both at recreational and racing levels, is a reality on a global scale today thanks to the commitment and dedication of these individuals who will remain in our hearts forever.

Thank you for commemorating one of the key moments for the international ski community and I am sure that our sport will continue to grow with your support in Australia and around the world!

Sincerely yours,

INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION

Gian Franco Kasper
President
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