

# WORLD'S FIRST ALPINE SKI CLUB

*By*

**Norman W Clarke**



The commercial operation known as "The Kiandra Snowshoe Club Inc."  
with "Snow Shoe" spelt as one word and Registered in NSW 1992  
number Y16053-39, has no affiliation with the original  
"Kiandra Snow Shoe Club" / "Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club (1861)"

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# **Kiandra Snow Shoe Club Kiandra Pioneer Ski Club (1861)**

There is no doubt skiing and ski races were being staged hundreds if not thousands of years before the discovery of Australia.

The opening of the Hollenkollen Ski Museum in 1923 recorded the Christiana Ski Club of Norway formed in 1887, as the commencement of recreational skiing as a sport.

The world's two leading authorities on the history of snow sports,

**The Hollenkollen Ski Museum of Norway**  
and  
**The Federation of International Skiing**

Confirm that :-

1. The Kiandra Snow Shoe Club was formed in the year 1861.
2. The K. S. S. C. is the world's inaugural ski club.
3. The K. S. S. C. held the first alpine races in the history of the sport.

The full club history is published in

“Kiandra Gold Fields to Ski Fields” ISBN 0-646-46337-3

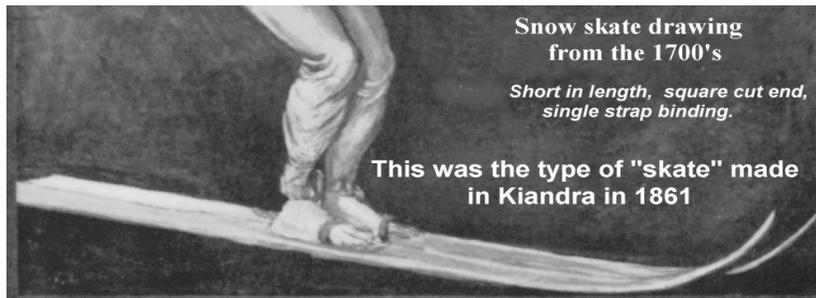
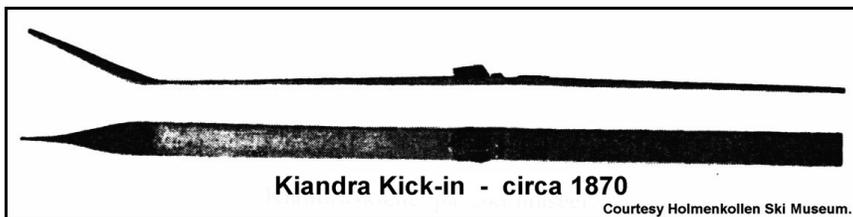
“Lapland Snow Shoes in Australia” ISBN 978-0-646-50080-5

# Snow Shoes and Snow Skates through the years.

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.”*<sup>1</sup>

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.”*<sup>2</sup>

1932 - The novel ' amusements that enlivened the monotony of winter ~~~ in the course of time snow-skates were known as skis. SMH.<sup>3</sup>



Even before the first alpine ski carnival was held at Kiandra in 1861, both long snow shoes and short snow skates had been manufactured in the town.

*“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.”*<sup>4</sup>

The Australian alpine version of a snow skate was the forerunner to what we know today as an alpine downhill ski, it soon became longer and known as a "Kiandra Kick-In", then followed by the "Butter-Pat".

The Kiandra club first claimed to have the world's oldest ski club in 1928 then again in 1955. From the early 1960's through to the 1970's the Guinness Book of Records published the claim until America alleged to have an earlier club. At this time the Norwegian authorities introduced the 1861 "Trysil Skytte-og Skiloberforening" Association.

### **Elverum Military Establishment, May 30th. 1861**

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 Landgraff 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.

Even though the Norwegian newspaper report dated the 30<sup>th</sup> May, 1861 did not substantiate the formation of the "Trysil Skytte-og Skiloberforening" as a recreational ski club, it was accepted as such.

As requested the American and Australian clubs could not conform with the recognised definition of a club, (a) name more than a pair of members, (b) could not demonstrate that this particular group were organised on a regular basis, (c) could not demonstrate that the named group were organised for a singular common purpose. They were therefore obligated to withdraw all claims.

In 2005, the Kiandra Ski Club demonstrated that in 1861 a group of people were united and organised for a common purpose. This was shown by the manufacture of over forty pairs of snow shoes and snow skates, the training in use of the shoes and skates, then organising a carnival.

Credit for the formation of this Australian alpine ski club is due to the knowledge and experience of at least three named Norwegian gold miners, together with other identified people.

The conclusion was that the Kiandra Snow Shoe Club complied with major dictionary definitions of the word "club".

## Museum confirmation of acceptance, 2006.



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### 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 Sincerely

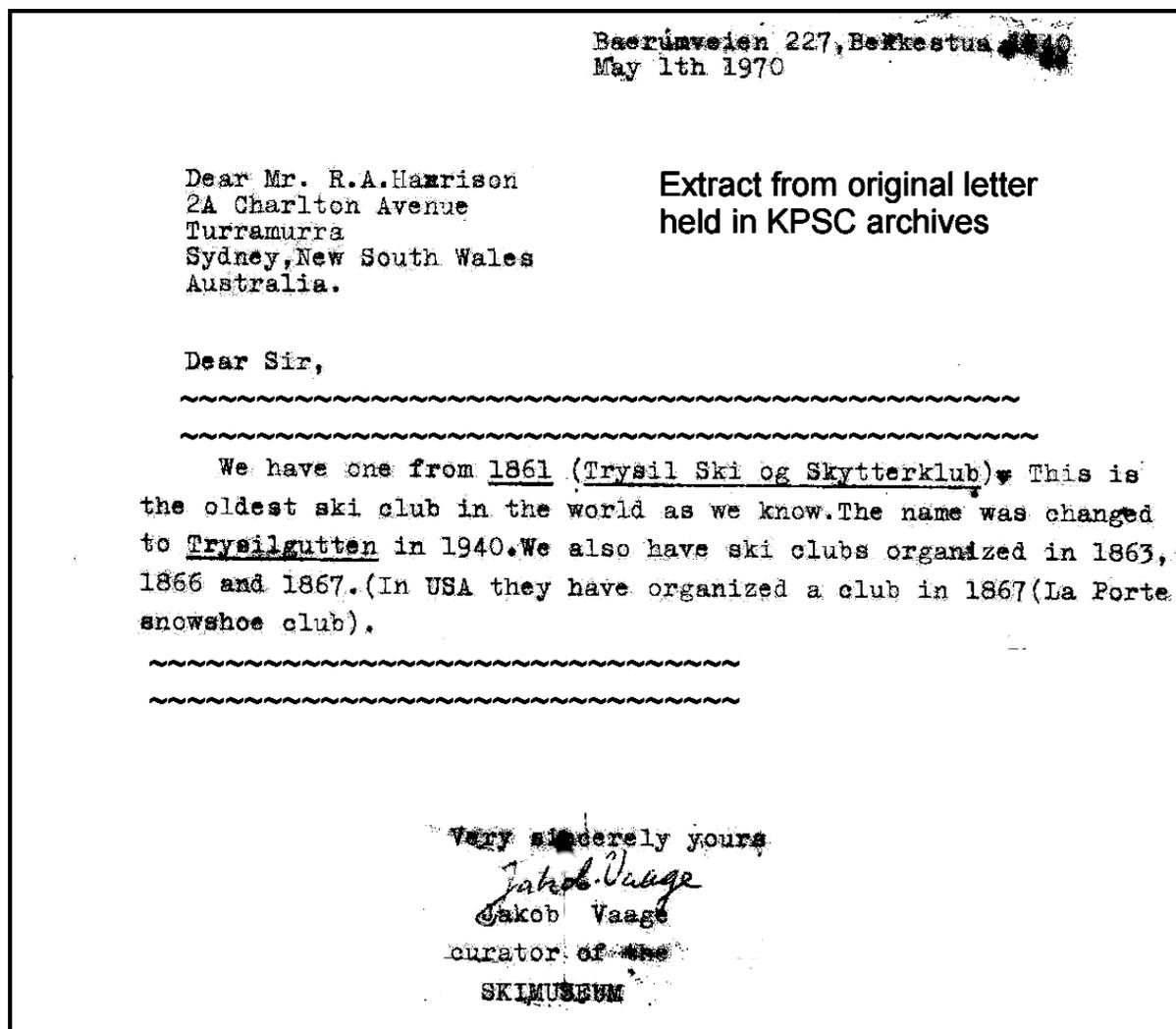
FORENINGEN TIL SKI-IDRETTENS FREMME

Karin Berg

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 in January 1862.

*"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."*<sup>15</sup>

The "Trysil Skytte-og Skiloberforening" Military Patrol Association later referred to as the "Trysil Ski and Shooting Club" changed its name to the "Trysil Boy's Ski Club" in 1940.<sup>6</sup>



"Military Patrol" had been accepted with this unusual name into the 1924 Winter Olympics, at the 28, 36 and 1948 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.

## **Federation International Skiing, 29/06/2011 NEWSFLASH.<sup>7</sup>**

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.

# International Ski Federation. Confirmation May 2011

FIS, President's letter, page 1 <sup>8</sup>



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Oberhofen, 10<sup>th</sup> May 2011

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.

A decorative horizontal bar at the bottom left of the page, consisting of an orange top half and a blue bottom half.

**FÉDÉRATION INTERNATIONALE DE SKI  
INTERNATIONAL SKI FEDERATION  
INTERNATIONALER SKI VERBAND**

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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## Source references

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<sup>1</sup> **Hutching's Illustrated California Magazine, February 1857**

<sup>2</sup> **The New York Times Published: January 7, 1883**

<sup>3</sup> **The Sydney Morning Herald Saturday 17 September 1932**

<sup>4</sup> **Braidwood Observer, 12, August 1861.**

<sup>5</sup> **Ref. "The Story of the Second World War"**

<sup>6</sup> **Vaage letter KPSC archives.**

<sup>7</sup> **[http://www.fis-ski.com/fr/actualites/1687/?actu\\_id\\_1769=4661&actu\\_page\\_1769=1](http://www.fis-ski.com/fr/actualites/1687/?actu_id_1769=4661&actu_page_1769=1)**

<sup>8</sup> **Original letter, KPSC archives.**