

LEX LOCI'S TRAVELS

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An irregular one-pager from The Public Land Consultancy

Lex Checks Out the Perks At Various Corporate Hideaways

Lex has some nostalgia for the Good Old Days, before the Departmental restructures of the 1980s, and the reforms to Alpine Resorts in the 1990s.

Back then each Public Land Manager had its own corporate hideaway: swimming pools, tennis courts, cane armchairs on the veranda, and of course a well-stocked cellar.



The Victorian Railways had the Mount Buffalo Chalet, where the porters and waitresses wore smart railway uniforms. The Commissioners could take the train (first class, of course) to Porepunkah, then a motor coach up the mountain. The dining room offered Brown Windsor Soup and starched tablecloths.

The Lands Department had Mount Hotham, where the top brass could count on the hospitality of lodge proprietors and ski-tow operators. Not exactly a written condition of their leases, but a nod's as good as a wink.

Closer to Head Office, there was the restaurant at the Royal Botanic Gardens – operated not by some tenant under a lease, but by actual Departmental employees. The best table with the view of the lake could always be made available.

Thinking of the Lands Department – Erskine House at Lorne sits on Crown land managed (back in the day) by a committee controlled by (you guessed it) the Lands Department. Yes, a great place for 'conferences.' Croquet lawn, tennis court, pool, bar...

The State Electricity Commission had Falls Creek – a bonus left over from the Kiewa Hydro scheme. By the time construction was

complete, several SEC ski lodges were well established on the mountain. Lex has no doubt that the SEC Commissioners could always find a cosy spot there.

The Forests Commission took on a specialised recreational function in the 1970s, and fostered development at Mt Buller, Lake Mountain, Mt Baw Baw, and Mt Donna Buang. Plenty of scope for year-round relaxation, although only Buller still offers ski-lodge accommodation.



HMQ and the Duke. Not shown in the photo – the poor koala which had, against its vigorous objections, been stuck up a nearby tree for their benefit.

Next we come to the O'Shannassy Chalet, run by the Melbourne Metropolitan Board of Works. It's the only retreat with actual Royal patronage.

The Queen and the Duke stayed there in 1954 to recuperate from the rigours of their Royal Tour. Built in 1910, in association with the O'Shannassy Weir, the Chalet had been retained by the MMBW – but for what purpose, exactly?

Lex is reassured by one commentator who tells him that *"the Chalet was not built (as some unkindly believe), as a sort of rest home for weary Commissioners of the MMBW, but for the use of the Board, distinguished visitors and suburban councillors wishing to study Melbourne's water supply."* **Yes, sure. ♦**

See you there! Lex Loci



All these places are in the country of First Nations peoples