



TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist
Cross Country Ski club



Newsletter
Jan/Feb 2007

Website: www.contraflow.com/loipers

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Club Events

Tues 20 th Feb	Meeting at Charlie's house for Norway trip planning.
28 March – 7 April	Norway trip (contact Alan or Charlie) – details on page 4.
Thurs 10 th May	End of Season Meet (social and slide show) – page 3.
7 th to 14 th April	SSE Training Week, Kvitavatn Norway – page 13.
30 June – 1 July	SSE Roller Ski weekend, Hetton Lyons, Durham.
TBA	Evening walks and bike rides – page 16.

Alasdair Wilson (Chairman/Race Officer)
Heather Dickinson (Secretary)
Paul Jameson (Treasurer)
Alan Mitcham (Membership/Newsletter)
Jackie Paice (committee member)
Charlie Fisher (committee member)

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Editor's Musings

If anyone is booked to ski in North America or Scandinavia, they will be grinning from ear to ear – for that is where all the snow is this year. I am doing both, so I am pretty happy!

That said I haven't had the best start to my ski season (in fact I haven't yet skied) – I spent the most part of January ill with pneumonia, including 6 days in the Freeman hospital. I am now fit again at last and looking forward to a 2 week holiday in Colorado (telemarking and snowboarding) in early March, then the usual fix of cross country and ski touring in Norway in early April.

Skiing in the Alps has been a disaster. Many classic ski race events have been cancelled and downhill resorts have been suffering with shortage of snow. A reasonable snowfall in late January and early Feb was followed by warm weather and rain! Scotland (surely due for some proper snow for a change) has not it good either, although there have been some acceptable skiing conditions in the Scottish resorts just over the last week (mid Feb). See <http://ski.visitscotland.com/centres/> for latest update.

Hurrah for Yad Moss (Carlisle Ski Club) near Alston. There was skiing on two days in late January and again 10/11th Feb. On both occasions, conditions warmed up very quickly and there was too little snow to last.

Tyneside Loipers are skiing this year in Austria, France, Switzerland, Germany, Czech Republic, Norway (all over!), Lapland, N America, and believe it or not Antarctica (and perhaps several other places I haven't yet been told about)! Do let me know where you have been and what it was like, so that I can print something in the next newsletter. Better still come along to the End of Season Get-Together to swap photos and slides (details on page xx).

Several very keen loipers have been gearing up for marathon distance ski races, though some having been frustrated with cancellations due to lack of snow. More details on page xx.

Member News

The theme of the last few months is babies...! A good thing too – we could do with some younger members for Tyneside Loipers.

Congratulations to Charlie and his partner Dorothee who had a baby girl Rosa Madlen born on 2nd December.

And congratulations too to Paul and Charlotte Gaines who had a baby girl Isabel Helen born on 17th December.

Norway 2007

Our club ski holiday to Norway this year is an introductory hut touring trip. Charlie and Alan have hatched a plan and will be taking along a group of 4 or 5 less experienced skiers. Any interested TL members are welcome to join us. We are going to the south Jotunheim area.

We are flying from Newcastle on Wed 28th March direct to Bergen, then the following day we catch a bus to Tyinkrysset and a snow weasel to the staffed 'hut' at Fondsbu. This is a super ski touring area and a wonderful hut* with good food and expensive beer (it is Norway). We will be doing about 4 days of easy day touring – hopefully getting a little bit more adventurous as the days go on. We can do some easy skiing on the lake (L Bygdin), gentle routes up the valleys to the north and west, and some non-demanding hilly routes to the east (something for everyone, to suit the standard of the group). A few tips on technique and some gentle coaching will be offered when needed.

Then we will be skiing to Yksendsalsbu, which is an unstaffed hut in a wonderful location about 21 km from Fondsbu (3km of easy ascent using climbing skins, 14km of flat gentle terrain and 4km down into the Yksendalen valley) and possibly we will be skiing to another nearby unstaffed hut Tomashelleren.

A few days later we will be skiing back to Fondsbu (via a slightly different route) and then taking the bus back to Bergen and an Easter Sunday flight home to Newcastle. Newcastle-Bergen flights are with Jet2.com and operate only on Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays. In fact Charlie and Alan are both leaving via Oslo (Alan is going on to the SSE coaching week at Kvitavatn).

Flights (current web price, ex taxes)

Ncle – Bergen, 28 March: £4.99

Bergen – Ncle, 8 March: £69 (but only £24 on 6 March).

Overnight (staffed) hut fees incl food about £44 (about half this for unstaffed huts).

Overnight in Bergen (at Marken Gjestehus) about £25.

Bus to Tyinkrysset (one way) about £29.

Snow weasel (Tyin to Fondsbu, one way) about £17.

DNT membership: about £40

Lots more information on the English translation pages of the DNT website www.turistforeningen.no/english/ *Note the latest translation of the Norwegian 'hytte' is lodge or cabin, which is certainly a better description rather than hut.

Join us at the meeting at Charlie's house on 20th February to find out more (or if you cannot come to the meeting, contact Alan or Charlie – phone and email details on front page of newsletter).

End of Season Get-Together

Well it might not be end of season for some of us (I am still wondering about skiing the midnight sun in Riksgransen on the Sweden/Norway border, north of the arctic circle, in late May – see page 14). One could go on forever, switch to the southern hemisphere and ski all year round (some people do!).

On the safe assumption that it is end of season for most of us, we are having our usual social get-together (venue to be confirmed) on Thursday 10th May – time for a good old natter and a drink or two (the club will provide the wine as usual). Food contributions would be welcome. Bring your slides and photos and see what other loiper members have been doing this year (a digital projector is available). We expect to have lots of slides of the club Norway trip too.

Put the date in your diary (10th May) and watch out for more details by e-mail.

Annual Subs still due

Lots of people have chosen to pay their subs by standing order, which is very helpful to the club (as subs come in on time and we don't have to chase for payment). But a significant number have not paid, perhaps because they don't want to commit to a standing order. You can of course still pay annually by cheque if you prefer. Please send your cheque (payable to Tyneside Loipers) to... Alan Mitcham, 5 The Rise, Ponteland, Northumberland, NE20 9LJ.

Full member	£14
Joint members (same address)	£22
Juniors	£10
Country members	£5

Let me know if you want me to send a new standing order form!

Xmas Meal 2006 (and maybe 2007 as well!)

Many thanks to Jackie for organising the Xmas meal and thanks to Charlie for suggesting such an excellent venue, the Afro-Indian restaurant Kisii at Whitley Bay Metro Station. There were only 8 of us (more would have been good) but it really was an excellent meal and a convivial evening. I suspect several of us will be voting for a return to the same venue next year!

Border to Border – Skiing across Finland

"From Border to Border" is 440 km long guided ski tour from Russian border to Swedish border, which follows a route near the Arctic Circle. In total there are 7 days of skiing and daytrip distances vary between 44 and 78 km. The event is skied in a classical cross-county style. It is very international and its popularity grows every year. There are participants coming from all over the world. Every year skiers come to Lapland especially from central Europe and North-America and sometimes from more distant and exotic countries.

Skiers' age varies a lot, from 20 to 75 years, and so does their athletic background, skiing skills and experience. There are people who keep them self fit, exercise and are very committed to skiing, and then there are also people who are skiing just for fun, or even for the very first time. Year after year the same people come to admire the beautiful, clean and quiet springtime nature and to share the unforgettable skiing week together with other skiers of different cultures.

Registration for the ski tour must be done before the end of December every year. To provide all necessary services we can take a maximum of 100 skiers per group (4 groups). The local communities of Kuusamo, Taivalkoski, Pudasjärvi, Ranua, Kemina and Tornio are responsible for the organisation.

More information – see <http://rajaltarajallehihto.ranua.fi/?depid=6740>

Thanks to Alasdair Wilson for digging out this article. It sounds like a good fun event and worth a week of anybody's time, as long as you are fit to start with. I guess arctic Finland has almost 'guaranteed' snow. I have a fancy that Alasdair will be applying next year (Ed) so look out for the article in a future newsletter!

Tyneside Loipers Hard Nuts

Whilst the rest of us were tucking into our Christmas turkey, Tyneside Loiper John Starbuck and three expedition colleagues were camping out at -30 deg C in Antarctica having just made an ascent of Mt Vinson, 660 miles from the S pole and 16,067 feet ASL (highest peak in the Antarctic). Few more details on the website. www.adventurepeaks.com/news/VinsonExpeditionNewsDec2006.htm

This follows John's trip of last year when he was part of a team to make the first winter ascent of Mt Gunnbjornsfjeld (highest in the Arctic). Full story (incl polar bear encounter) www.thesummitjournal.com/articles/news/greenland_050106.html

Tyneside Loiper Ross Mellows likes to ski in Norway but likes the challenge of camping rather than staying in the huts. See Ross's website (great story and pics) www.backpackers.spiritburner.com:80/2000/norway_mar00/norway_mar00.htm
In March 2002, he and a colleague lived and skied for a week based in a snow hole near Finse.

Norway Memories 2006

Last year's club trip to Norway was memorable – mainly for deep soft new snow which made for some difficult and strenuous skiing conditions – and memorable too for the good food (we stayed only in staffed DNT huts and privately operated 'tourist hotels' and the meals were the best that I have ever enjoyed in Norway).

Each of our Norway trips has been memorable in different ways. 2006 was my 4th hut-touring trip and circumstances meant that there were only two of us (myself and Paul Gaines). Our epic second day was eleven hours of hard skiing in soft snow (mainly uphill it seemed!) Looking back, it was an interesting experience and memorable for lots of reasons – one of them being the malt loaf that Paul produced from his rucksack when we most needed some extra sustenance (Screen malt loaf must surely be up there with Kendall mint cake in the stakes for 'most sustaining food per gram carried'. And it sure tastes a lot nicer!)

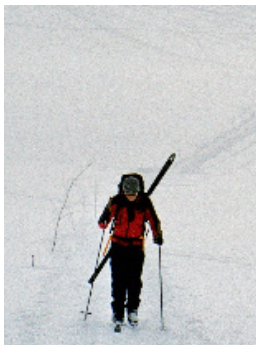
Leaving the tourist hotel at Lervassbu on Day 6, we had planned to ski up onto a high ridge dominated by the spectacular peak of Kyrkja (usually pictured on scenic postcards). Several lower peaks between 1800 and 2000 metres are joined together along the ridge and we were looking forward to skiing along the ridge and then down into a big snow bowl on the far side, and thence on to our next 'tourist hotel' at Spiterstulen... We skied about one kilometre and then stopped to put on our climbing skins (which was when Paul discovered one of his bindings was broken). It was fortunate that it happened on the flat and fortunate too that we managed to get a replacement binding back at Lervassbu – but it was very disappointing to have missed what would have been a good excursion onto the tops.

The next day was our big summit trip – a five-hour ski ascent up Galdhoppigen, Norway's highest mountain. The first 600m of ascent is steep and strenuous, the next 600m (mainly on the Styggebrean glacier) is long and tedious, and the final 200m is hard and a little tricky. The view from the top? – no doubt it is wonderful on a good day – but we were not that lucky! Neither of us got a summit photo and Charlie still doesn't believe that we did it!

Our final day was brilliant (but not for the weather, which was reminiscent of Scotland!) We joined a guided group from the hotel at Spiterstulen (a free guided excursion – one of the perks of being a hotel guest at Easter time!) Once again we ascended the steep valley side opposite the hotel and then up onto the Styggebrean glacier – the pace was very leisurely and it was much easier being part of a guided group. We came to within 200m of Galdhoppigen summit and met with a steep snow gully (there has previously been a rope fixed at the top to descend the gully, but that is now gone). Once down, we still had to ski another three major glaciers, each negotiated via a small cornice or a tricky descent (skis strapped onto rucksack). It was a great finish to the holiday – a grand circuit of Galdhoppigen

and nice to be guided for a change. -----Six hours later, we took a taxi from Spiterstulen to Lom and the overnight bus to Oslo Gardermoen airport and home!

Alan Mitcham.



On one ski – Paul with the broken binding



The top of the Snow Gully



Down the Gully
(steeper than it looks!)



Over the Cornice between 3rd and 4th Glaciers
(note the dog!)



Wild and Beautiful – Nordre Illabreen

Tyneside Loipers XC Ski Holiday – Seefeld, Austria (Jan/Feb 2007)

by Alasdair Wilson

The big issue in anticipation of the club trip to Seefeld was snow. The high temperatures of up to 18C over much of Europe had melted what early snow there had been. Luckily for us, a couple of days snowfall just before we arrived gave 15cm on top of frozen ground that was to see us out until the end of our week. Our party comprised Neil, Stuart, Peter and myself travelling by various routes with the help of Crystal Holidays. Accommodation was in Gasthaus Krinserhof to the north of the village except for Peter who was in a posher hotel in the centre. Sadly he was on his own as Judi was staying at home to look after their sick dog, happily now recovered. The Krinserhof is friendly and comfortable; many people there were regulars including the “legendary Mr Evans” whom Neil had met on his previous visit. Darryl Evans had been coming for the last 22 years to since he decided to learn downhill skiing aged 46 and we were well entertained by him at the dinner table, which we shared.

The Seefeld area has a well-deserved reputation for its extensive track network. The track machines had done a good job to make the best of the snow early on and the intrepid *vorlaufers* had opened up the narrower forest classic/touring trails by the time we got to them. Starting off on the main tracks down by the Olympia Centre and the landmark onion-domed church, we were treated to a display of excellent skating technique as local young skiers raced at high speed and tempo on a tight circuit below the ski jump and Casino Arena. We explored up towards Mosern then returned via the World Cup track. This was rather a baptism of fire for Stuart (particularly the sweeping downhill to the narrow underpass back to the meadows area) – but fortunately the snow was good and he joined us at the bottom without serious mishap.

A definite plus for Seefeld is the bus and train service for getting to other villages and ski areas like Leutasch and Scharnitz. As well as a frequent free shuttle around the town, the princely sum of 10Euros gets you a weeklong travel pass to augment the Gastkarte from your hotel, which entitles you to use all the ski tracks, amongst other perks. Unfortunately the pass doesn't apply to the special bus to Wildmoos, which has 4WD and snow chains – that saves 100m of climb for 2.20Euros, and takes you up to more excellent tracks ranging from the flat to the (more than) undulating with links to Leutasch and Mosern and via the Olympic track back down to Seefeld. The area is well served with hostelry, so you can ski for a few kms between refreshment stops or many as the fancy takes you (I found the beer good value).

Monday was for me something of a pilgrimage to Leutasch Valley. I'd last been there in 1982! Not quite the pristine valley I remembered, rather more built up, but our first 8km of the day was on excellent snow, slightly downhill, so skating was

bliss. Stuart wasn't so well off on his waxless classic skis but Neil's timely hints, which continued through the week, led to him achieving a much-improved technique, and a wish for new skis. Peter and I also benefited from Neil's coaching. As on my earlier visit, the general standard of skiing of the punters was very basic but there were now a good number of much more accomplished performers – so whether you are fast or slow, you will be in good company. As the week went on the pros and cons of skating and classic techniques came to the fore as the skating tracks tended to be better in the sunny open areas but classic was needed to negotiate those black trails leading up to the nether reaches of the area and higher up – it was actually reminiscent of touring in Scotland. The only place where both techniques were equally good was the 3km of tracks nearest to Seefeld that were floodlit at night. These were excellent all week, presumably with the help of artificial snow.

We met several people who had been to Seefeld again and again but were looking for pastures new. It is possible to ski most of the tracks in a week, especially given good snow. There are also good downhill slopes quite suitable for telemark skiing*, the nursery slopes in town (tricky on langlauf skis at least) and the Rossehutte and Gswandtopft pistes that were enjoyed by Neil and fellow nordic skiers from Edinburgh X-C ski club. Sadly our enjoyment of the more challenging routes was slightly hampered by lack of snow.

All in all it was a good trip, and we were well taken care of by Crystal (maybe it helped that my niece Catherine is the Seefeld rep!). Some extra attractions that fitted in with our week were the Winterfest, with ice sculptures through the town and a grand firework display on our first night followed by the ski school fire skiing show on the Tuesday night, with more fireworks. Tyrolean music featured with a family music night at the hotel Krinserhof (harp, guitar, recorder and ziller (or zither)) and on our last night we were privileged to listen to the “best ziller player in Tirol” – Friedrich, resident in the Lamm Keller, to round off our Tyrolean experience. Will I go again? Yes, but maybe I will leave it for a year or two.

* Note that [private] Telemark lessons are available from the chief instructor at the Langlauf centre but you'll likely need to bring your own kit as they only have one pair of telemark skis and boots (size 44!) for hire.

Editor's Note It was a big disappointment for me not to be going to Seefeld – I was one of the original five booked for the week and I was particularly looking forward to getting a few tips from the 'experts'! Unfortunately I had to drop out. I had just come out of hospital five days before our departure date, so I was well below normal strength and fitness and still trying to recover from pneumonia. (It was sad too for Judi Webb. Glad to hear your dog is now recovered Judi – I hope you can make it another year.)

Thanks to Peter, Stuart and Alasdair for the photos (see next page).

Seefeld Jan/Feb 2007



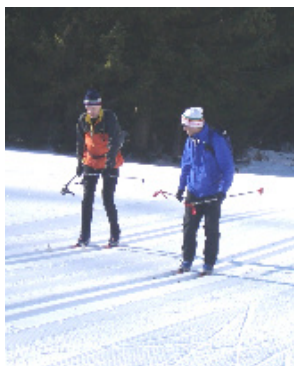
Alasdair, Stuart and Neil



Alasdair demos Classic 2-phase Kick and Glide



Time for the klister



A few tips from Neil



Plenty of Snow and Good Prepared Tracks

Global Warming – the IPCC Verdict!

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) delivered their verdict a couple of weeks ago and it is no surprise to most of us that global warming has been clearly linked to human activity. The climate change deniers (mostly funded by the big oil companies) have had their day and are mostly discredited.

We cannot help noticing the yearly snowfall getting less and less reliable in our local patch (the Pennines and the Borders) and seeing snow accumulation in Scotland becoming pitifully inadequate for viable operation of the ski centres. In the late 80s and early 90s, Tyneside Loipers used to have a regular weekend programme of local skiing in the border forests and elsewhere – the snow was that reliable! On a global scale, we are made increasingly aware of melting of the Greenland icecap and gradual disappearance of the West Antarctic ice sheets.

It is truly ironic that the best recent snow conditions are in North America (home of gas-guzzling SUVs and climate change deniers). The nation with the worst carbon footprint is causing global scale climate change but doesn't always see the effects in their own country.

What should we be doing about it? It is a serious problem for our children and grandchildren (and they will be dealing with far more serious issues than where to go skiing).

A recent report pointed the finger at the affluent Over-50s. I am not sure about the affluent bit but I think they mean me (people taking multiple long haul holidays). I admit I am guilty – I have booked my 2 weeks skiing in Colorado and I can't wait to get skiing in that deep snow. I suppose I am a ski fanatic. I admit to using cheap flights to get to Norway and the Alps too.

I would love to do my bit to save the planet. But I really feel it needs government (and more importantly intergovernmental) action to have proper effect. It will do little good my staying at home and hanging up my skis unless the rest of the planet does the same. It needs concerted action and so I would definitely support a scheme in which each of us is given a personal carbon allowance. And I would also be keen to see a full and fair tax imposed on aviation fuel (recognising too the detrimental effect of putting carbon dioxide directly into the high atmosphere) and effectively putting an end to 'cheap flights'. I would make me think more of my priorities and organise my ski season within the allowed constraints.

Forgive me for getting a bit political here!! But I am sure there will be others who feel as strongly. Do let me know your views – I will try and print them in this newsletter (space constraints permitting – not everybody at once please)!

Alan Mitcham

Racing News

Hopefully this might become a regular feature. Isn't the racing page usually at the back of the sports section? Well this is XC skiing and not horse racing – so we can make up the rules to suit!

Alasdair Wilson will be going to the Masters World Champs as usual – this year being held in Rovaniemi, Finland, from 2nd to 11th March. Just on the Arctic Circle, Rovaniemi also purports to be the home of Santa Claus (Is that where my letters to Santa go?) The area also has a very good ski jumping hill. The weather is reliably cold and should therefore give pretty good conditions for the multi-lap races (up to 45km for the younger age groups). The small British team (including Alasdair) should be well prepared, given all their roller ski training. Further details from the website www.mwc2007.com (on which results will be posted from 4th March). Good luck Alasdair!

Heather Dickinson was planning to do the Transjurassienne (76km race!) and had lined up a week of training in the Jura and then a week of rest before the race itself on 11 February. End of January... at last the first real snowfall of the winter and hence a few good days of skiing. Not all the loipe were marked as there was not really enough snow to piste some of them and that meant using buses to get from one area to another, rather than skiing the whole way.

No more snow arrived in the Jura and the race was cancelled. Heather considered another race in Switzerland (also cancelled) and then took herself off to Engadin, which (at 1700m) had a lot more snow. She admits 'in typical fashion, overdoing it on day one'! Yes, it does sound like it – skiing 60km in a single day (and then slowly grinding to a halt – 30km on day 2, and a 'glorious' 10km on day 3).

Good luck to Helen Dickinson who has entered for the 42km Engadin marathon. (Heather – now you have done the training – don't be left out, go for it!)

Ellen Ann MacKenzie went to the Czech Republic in January (the Jizerska?) but with no snow she ended up only able to walk the course and swim in the superb 50m swimming pool. Then at Oberammergau (just enough snow) she did the Medical Cross-Country Ski Race (20km skate) in 1hour 40. The snow was packed from the sides from snow cannon and the cover was just about good enough, though refrozen ice crystals and quite churned up (with temperatures up to +5°C). Ellen Ann would also have done the 40km classic race but didn't have enough leave to stay for that one. Other enthusiastic comments... 'beautiful indoor swimming pool, with sauna, plunge tubs and outdoor complex with spa jets perched so that there is a view of towering mountains on two sides... and the sticky cake shops more than made up for the difficulties with the climate!'

SnowSport England Kvitavtn Week – 7th to 14th April

The SSE coaching week at Kvitavtn in Norway is now in its seventh year. It has proved to be a very popular course, not surprisingly with a formidable line up of coaches. Mike Dixon (Britain's most successful Olympic biathlete) and Patrick Winterton are chief coaches for the XC discipline and Andy Stewart is leading the telemark and Nordic downhill course. They are joined by others from within the SSE coaching scheme.

Kvitavtn has a good reputation for good snow right through April (and Norway generally has had tons of snow this year). Kvitavtn has many miles of well-maintained XC tracks over rolling terrain, plus a small downhill area served by a lift system.

Accommodation is in the Kvitavtn Fjellstoge 1000m above the town of Rjukan and overlooking a frozen lake. Full board costs NK 2527 (about £211) in 4-person bunk rooms or NK 2996 (about £250) in 2-person rooms. The course fee is £255 allowing for the discount (since TL is affiliated to SSE) but there is a further £25 reduction if you book before the end of February! Flights from Newcastle to Oslo are currently £160 return (incl taxes) via Amsterdam (www.travelselect.com) and transfers from Oslo cost £70 return.

There is a full programme of supporting activities, lectures, demos and videos, plus several fun events such as ski orienteering.

Alasdair Wilson and Alan Mitcham are both already booked! So contact either of us if you would like more information. Or try the SSE nordic website www.escnordic.org.uk or contact the organiser Helen Bell (Yorkshire Dales XC Ski Club) telephone 01274 875680.

SSE Weekend Roller Ski Courses

There are two roller ski weekends of particular interest to Tyneside Loipers – these are 30th June /1st July and 1st/2nd September. Mike Dixon regularly joins the coaching team for these courses (and very inspirational he is too). More details (albeit rather sketchy just at the moment) can be found on the SSE website www.escnordic.org.uk. The website is worth looking at for the great number of other listed events, although in most cases these are some distance from Northumberland and Durham.

The Telemark Ski Company

John Eames and Bonny Masson have been churning out their programme of telemark ski courses for more years than I can properly remember. I am guessing they must have started in about 1992 or 93 (one year earlier, some of us had been staying at Glenfeshie hostel and suffered Bonny's evening of celebrations after qualifying as a BASI Telemark instructor at Cairngorm). They run some pretty good courses and if you want to learn how to ski on telemark skis (freeheel downhill skiing in its various forms) you should certainly give them a try.

I have not been on a Telemark Ski Co course for a couple of years at least. But I did get to do some browsing of their brochure and website this year. Several trips caught my eye and made me start thinking about reorganising my ski season! Could I possibly fit in those extra weeks in between the trips already planned?

Mt Parnassos in Greece – I happen to know that this is one of Bonny's favourites (they started going there in 2002). Mt Parnassos is actually a complex of several peaks and corries (the highest peak is at 2455m) and there are two separate lift systems that serve different parts of the mountain. Apparently there are a series of bowls (great for skiing) just above the tree line and there is impressive scenery and views out to the Aegean Sea. More importantly there is some wonderful off-piste touring with reputedly great snow (all accessed from the lift system) and of course some great Greek food.

The Iceman Tour (in the Oetztal region of Austria) – I am really keen to do this one! (The 'iceman' refers to the 5000 year old body found in the snow between Austria and Italy just a few years ago.) This is a hut-to-hut tour taking in a number of easily accessible peaks linked by high glacier fields and skiable cols. There are some significant daily ascents and the opportunity of bagging lots of high peaks (including the 3500m Wildspitze, the highest in the Tirol).

The Haute Route, Chamonix to Zermatt. This is the classic high tour in the Alps, usually done in late April making use of the longer days and spring snow. It seems to be a bit more strenuous than the Austrian tour – there is up to on 10 hours skiing on some days (and the skiing is more technically challenging)! I think I would need to get really fit for this one.

Riksgransen (Norway/Sweden) in the Midnight Sun. This is a 5-day hotel based 'all terrain' telemark course and I think it would be a lot of fun. The midnight sun occurs from 26th May onwards (and the lift system really does run until midnight!) I think I might actually manage to fit this into my schedule for this year, so if anyone else is keen to do this trip, do let me know!

More information... www.telemarkskico.com

Skating Tips on DVD

Neil Aitchison was giving some good tips on skating technique on the club Seefeld trip. He also has some recommendations for DVDs that will lead towards that graceful and effortless skating style (and maybe even earn you a PB in the Engadin Marathon too!)

www.xczone.com/frames.htm is a Canadian website. Neil has bought two DVDs via this website, both covering track skiing skills and both of good quality.

www.perfectskating.com/test/einhalt.htm - this is an Austrian DVD available in English. Neil doesn't have this one but believes it would probably be worth a try (apparently it was for sale in Seefeld as the German version.)

Wild Exposure (Sweden)

Members might be interested in some information I received from Mark Thorpe, an Englishman now living in Sweden. He has set up a company in the wilds of Sweden and now offers cross-country ski courses in the winter and walking and other activities in the summer. The website looks interesting (some nice pictures) and Mark claims that the Jamtland/Harjedalen area is a Mecca of XC skiing, as yet undiscovered by the rest of the world. It might be good place for the next club holiday?! See www.wildexposure.co.uk

My attention has also been brought to another website which is well worth knowing about - www.skiingnorway.com This has lots of good information (would you believe?) on skiing in Norway. It covers just about everything you are likely to want to know and is a good starting point for a Norway planning trip.

Or for Snow in the northeast...?

Yad Moss ski area (near Alston) – details on the either of the two websites or by phoning the snowline on 01228 561634.

<http://www.thepriceofcheese.com/snowreport.php>

or <http://www.skicarlisle.skiers.co.uk/>

Allenheads ski area – contact www.ski-allenheads.co.uk/ or try the answer phone 01661 860689.

Club Equipment (Skis and Boots)

The keeper of the club skis and boots is Clare Woodall – contact her on clarew88@hotmail.com (or phone 0191 297 2557, or text on 07950 075966.)

Roller Skiing

Looking forward to spring? Well hopefully not too soon – it would be good to have some more snow before then. But there is a way of keeping your skiing going through the no-snow summer months. Join us on roller skis out at Hetton Lyons Park near Durham or along the Hadrian Way. The club has several pairs of roller skis and boots, which can be hired for an evening's skiing (or longer if you want to practice over the weekend).

We will be meeting up on a regular basis through the summer (probably on Thursday evenings again). Contact Alasdair (details on front of this newsletter) for more information and to find out where we will be skiing each week. Don't forget the SSE weekend roller ski courses at Hetton Lyons – for anyone who hasn't yet tried 'skiing on tarmac' these weekends are a great way to get started (more details on these courses on page 13).

And more... Roller enthusiasts might also be interested in these two [Roller Ski Tours organised by the Lakeland XC Ski Club](#). TL members are welcome.

Sat 2nd June – 11 miles in West Cumbria, starting near Cockermouth and following well-surfaced paths (mainly disused railway lines) all the way to Workington and below the cliffs to Whitehaven Harbour. The return journey to Cockermouth can be made mostly by train.

Sat 14th July – 12 miles (6 miles each way), starting near Escrick village and skiing the well-surfaced track along the *Interplanetary Sculpture Trail* to York city.

These roller ski tours are always very sociable events and stops are made along the way for lunch and tea. The Cockermouth – Whitehaven tour is now in its 4th year. Contact Mike or Helen Smith for more details (015395 64742 or email on mh.smith@ktd.broadband.com)

Evening Walks and Bike Ride

We hope to again have a couple of outings (cycling or walking) making use of the long summer evenings and finishing with a meal and a drink at a country pub. Any suggestions or recommendations, or volunteers to lead a walk or bike ride, would be very welcome (perhaps somewhere we haven't been to before). Contact me, Alan Mitcham. Once we settle on a date and venue, the details will go in the next newsletter.

Skis for Free

Ross Mellows has a pair of 190cm Tua Excalibur skis going free. They are without bindings but are in good condition and serviced this year. Width dimensions are 90-65-80mm. Contact Ross on ross@spiritburner.com or phone 01207 545188.