



TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist
Cross Country Ski club



**Newsletter
April 2009**

Website: www.tynesideloipers.org.uk

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Club Events

Thurs 21 st May	End of Season Get-together – venue tbc (see page 2)
Thursday evenings	Regular roller skiing – contact Alasdair (page 15)
27/28 th June	SSE Roller Ski weekend, Hetton Lyons, Durham (page 15)
Sat 4 th July	Walk and BBQ at Allenheads, contact Keith (see page 3)
Date tba	Evening walk and pub meal, contact Alan (see page 3)
Sat 16 th Aug (tbc)	Round Kielder bike ride, contact Alan (see page 3)
5/6 th September	SSE Roller Ski weekend, Hetton Lyons, Durham (page 15)

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Editor's Musings

My ski season came to an abrupt halt in mid March as I came home injured only a few days into the TL Norway trip (see Charlie's article page 4). Thoughts of getting some late season snow in Scotland proved to be over optimistic and that was that. There is no doubt plenty of skiing to be had in some of the alpine resorts and in Norway but most of us will now have to wait until next winter.

The usual End-of Season Get-Together is on Thursday 21st May (see below) and I hope to see everyone there. There is a minor problem with the venue this year as Charlie is unlikely to get back to the UK by then. Anyone willing to host the meeting please contact me as soon as possible. There will of course be other events during the summer (see page 3) and lots of roller skiing.

Thanks to those who have contributed articles for this newsletter – Vivienne, Judi, Charlie and Frank. There seems to be something of a Lapland theme this year – probably to be continued at the End-of-Season Get-Together as I think we will be talking about a possible TL trip there next year. There were a couple more articles promised which never materialised! Don't worry if you missed the deadline, as any late arriving articles will be stored up for the next newsletter in September.

Member news

Congratulations to Alasdair Wilson who is now qualified as a SnowSport England XC Ski Instructor after a successful week of training and assessment at Kvitavtn in Norway at the beginning of April. Alasdair qualified last year as a Roller Ski Instructor and hopes that TL members will be able to benefit from his instruction both on snow and tarmac.

End of Season Social Get-Together – Thurs 21 May

In Charlie's absence, we are looking for somebody else to host the end-of-season get-together (contact Alan). Final details will be sent out by e-mail but expect the usual format – club members will bring food and drink contributions. All loipers and friends are welcome. Bring along your photos of various ski trips (digital projector available) and let us hear what you have been doing this winter. You will also see some great slides of the various club trips (French alps, Austria and Norway).

Make a note of the date and watch out for e-mail details from Alan.

Telemark Skiing in Greece – Don't miss this Video

The Telemark Ski Company have posted a splendid 6-minute video of this year's Mt Parnassos ski trip on You Tube. Alan Mitcham was on the trip – we had bucket loads of snow (more and more through the week) and this very professional video produced by the assistant coach Graham Hammond shows just how good it was! Go to www.YouTube.co.uk and search for 'telemark ski Parnassos'. Telemark skiing doesn't get much better than this and I can't wait to sign up for another off-piste telemark trip next year!

BBQ at Keith's House, Allenheads – Saturday 4th July

Keith has offered to host a BBQ similar to the splendid affair we had last year.

Meet at about 10am at the Hemmel Café in Allenheads village (free car park opposite the café). Keith will take us on an 8-mile walk (bring along a snack lunch) finishing back in the village for a beer at the Allenheads Inn. Then we will have a short drive to Keith's house (just outside the village) to start the barbeque. Contributions of BBQ food and drink will be most welcome (salad and jacket potatoes will be provided).

Please let Keith know that you are coming – email: jkeithwalker@hotmail.com or phone 01434 685119, or mobile 07969 021680. The view over the valley from Keith's house is superb and last year's event was definitely the best BBQ I have ever been to! (Ed.)

Evening Walk and Pub Meal

No date is organised yet but we will certainly have at least one evening walk finishing at a pub for some food and a beer. Anyone who is willing to organise a walk, preferably during the long summer evenings (May, June or July), please let me know [Alan Mitcham].

Bike Ride around Kielder Reservoir – Saturday 16th August

Alan is organising a bike ride for Sat 16th August. Meet at Kielder Castle and bring a sandwich and something to drink. The route will take us right around Kielder Reservoir on the new 41.7km trail (an excellent route and a splendid day out). The trail is quite challenging (lots of ups and downs) but none of the hills are particularly steep or long and it should take us 4 hours at the very most. The reward for finishing is tea and scones at the Kielder Castle café.

The route is best suited to a mountain bike but any rugged hybrid or road bike will be ok (Paramjeet and Alison will probably turn up on their tandem mountain bike). Further details will be sent out by e-mail. Contact Alan if you are interested (phone and e-mail details on the front of the newsletter).

Orienteering – Come and Try it! Event

Alasdair is going to organise an evening orienteering event (date to be arranged). It will probably be at one of the permanent courses not too far from Tyneside and will be equally suitable for the keen newcomer to orienteering and the more experienced competitor. More details will be available soon from Alasdair.

Orienteering is good fun and an interesting challenge for anyone who likes the outdoors and enjoys navigation and map reading at any level. You are provided with a map and a control card indicating the order in which you must visit the various control points. You don't necessarily have to be a runner – accurate and careful map reading is more important – walking or running between controls often makes little difference unless you are in the elite category!

Tyneside Loipers 2009 Norway Trip

This year's trip was shoe-horned into a chunk of March so as to fit in with the diaries of participants as well as possible and this meant that the group morphed as the trip went on and eventually shrunk to a cosy twosome. Old hands this year were Alan, Keith, Heather and Charlie, joined by Yani who lives in the Trough of Bowland and helped Charlie in keeping the average age down a bit.

Norway has become even more expensive, with effective exchange rates heading down towards 9 kroner to the pound. The cost can however be kept down by applying common sense and doing some of the following: staying in self-serve huts rather than staffed huts; being very careful about staying in private hotels, without first checking and pleading poverty in order to access the very cheapest rooms (still comfy though!); bringing some foods which are otherwise expensive to buy in the huts; booking flights and trains well in advance; and reaching the age of 67 as quickly as possible (the qualifying age for concessions on Norwegian railways). [One of us reaches that target next year – Ed.]

Despite Alan and Keith almost missing their flight in Edinburgh, the initial foursome assembled on the edge of the Rondane in glorious weather, and set off through an unusually deeply snowed landscape for the only staffed DNT hut of the trip, at Rondvassbu. Like Fondsbu, this is a great place in a fantastic setting, with lovely short tours possible from the doorstep. Day 1 remains a highlight however in comparison to the next two, for a number of reasons. Firstly, the weather was not as good. Secondly, we found out the hard way that out-of-season staffed huts make for poorer quality self-serve stays than dedicated self-serve huts. Our next two huts in the Rondane were less cosy and had a poorly stocked store cupboard (Doralseter even had no gas for cooking).

The biggest 'low' of the trip was reserved for the already half-miserable editor of this newsletter, who had been plagued by dental problems and a persistent hacking cough from the outset, before he skied over an unseen bank of snow close to a streambed and crashed awkwardly onto his back. The shocking thing about this incident is just how far he fell (less than one metre) and that in reasonable visibility such a drop can be impossible to spot until too late. Last year I came within a whisker of skiing over an edge that would have certainly left me badly injured, so we can all be thankful that Alan sustained nothing worse than unpleasant back spasms and short-term discomfort. The lesson probably cannot be written in a large enough font, but to repeat from last year: streambeds and other irregular features, are places that can attract unusual sculpted formations sufficient for a nasty surprise, and should be avoided or skied with great care. Open windswept hillsides, on the other hand, can be a bit raw but are generally surprise-free.

Alan's mishap meant that he was to pull out of the trip and return to Oslo with Heather on day 4, which was when we left the Rondane at Hjerkin. That left Charlie and Keith to meet up with Yani and head back into last year's terrain, Dovrefjell. Hjerkin turned out to be a good and affordable base for regrouping, and the fifth morning provided a pleasant run up past the site of Snoheim under the awesome

corrie of Snohetta, and down to Reinheim. Turning up Sunday teatime was spot on for this busy hut – it was empty of the weekenders, but still warm.

The following day we skied over the tough little pass and onto one of our all-time favourite huts, Amotdalshytta, where hours are consumed by self-imposed tasks such as chopping wood, cutting steps between the buildings, and so on. A day of bad weather kept us hard at the cards and puzzles, and day 8 saw Charlie heading for home back the way we went in. Yani and Keith's trip concluded with some difficult skiing conditions between huts in the valley system to the north of the area, before heading themselves for home.

Lessons learned in a nutshell...

When skiing away from sticked routes (and even then perhaps) be very careful around features such as streambeds, which can conceal drops even in good visibility. Remember the best map contours are still 20m, and this is enough to hide for example a drop in a streambed.

Tour in areas with genuine self-serve huts, rather than using the less-than-adequate self-serve accommodation of the staffed huts in the closed season. The higher the altitude, the less likely it is that you will have to fight demonic birch trees to get in and out of the area.

Play at scouts/guides and be prepared. Think about what to do in the event of an accident minor or major, and try to ensure you know your gear, how it works, and what might break. We had a couple of minor technical issues with kit and one of the waxers struggled to get it right too.

Keep going before Easter... and plan as early as possible, which brings me on to...

Next year

We are already talking about next year, because we are like little kids in a sweetshop when we see our own Norway photos (no matter how bored the rest of you might be with them by now). We are looking at suitable areas, and weighing up their various merits – it is not even certain we go to Norway. It is of course an open invite, and the trip will be tailored to the needs of those who want to go (ie. will be less demanding if need be). So chuck your balaclava in the ring now if you're even vaguely interested, so we can work through the options as early as possible – and hopefully, like this year, have the plans drawn up by Christmas.

Charlie Fisher

Editor's Note (now fully recovered thank you!) I was very sad to miss out on the second half of the Norway trip; but the struggle with the bad back and the cough was just too much for me (the good news is that the insurance company has at last paid up for my expensive flight home). Despite the mishap, I have some great memories of the first 4 days. The first day to Rondvassbu was glorious and the route over the top to Hjerkin was similarly wonderful (or would have been, were it not for my injury). One abiding memory is of the late afternoon trip out from Rondvassbu at the end of Day 1 when Charlie and I skied up onto a succession of

peaks some 550 metres above the hut. The sun was just going down as we pulled off our skins at the top of the last peak and we had to get back for an evening meal at 6pm (we almost made it, but we had only about 15 minutes left for the descent!).

Maps

Lots of us have maps of different areas, which have cost quite a bit to collect. Charlie is offering to compile a list of who has what, on the assumption that they are for lending to others in the future. Of particular interest are Norway maps, but other areas are also relevant. Charlie will set up a spreadsheet; so if you want to add to it, or just let him know what maps you have got, then send him an email.

Snow on TV?

There was some fascinating programme on the nature of snow in the recent BBC4 series about weather. The programme was well sprinkled with lots of interesting scientific facts about snow and how it is formed.

Robert Hooke (the father of microscopy in the 17th century) spent many hours studying the nature of snow crystals. But it was not until the 1930s that a Japanese scientist undertook various experiments culminating in the invention of a cloud chamber in which he grew a wide variety of snow crystals under different conditions of temperature and humidity. The exact nature of the hexagonal crystals depends on the precise climatic conditions. In the experiments the snow crystals were encouraged to grow on a taugt rabbit's hair – real snow crystals only form when clouds are seeded with dust particles (naturally present most of the time).

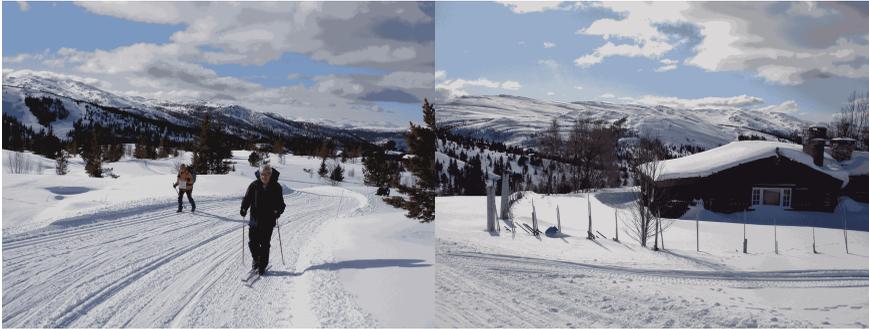
In 1991, British Rail was brought to its knees by snowstorms. Locomotives failed one after another and BR famously blamed their failure on the 'wrong type of snow'. The programme actually proved this was a justified excuse! A combination of low humidity and low temperatures below -10°C (actual conditions in the winter of 1991) encourages the formation of small disk-shaped snow crystals – it was these very small crystals that got into the traction motors and caused their failure.

Amazingly (to me!) even a test tube of pure water will not freeze unless it is seeded with dust or ice particles. This was demonstrated by putting test tubes of water into the freezer and those that were free of dust particles remained unfrozen even at -11°C.

The programme went on to mention how it was now possible to make artificial snow in quantities sufficient for indoor skiing and there were shots of people skiing at the new Chill Factor in Manchester (it is slightly annoying that Manchester has managed to get an indoor ski facility and we still have no such facility anywhere near Tyneside!) The programme also gave an explanation and demonstrated the cause of avalanche phenomena.

Alan Mitcham

Norway 2009 – Rondane and Dovrefjell



(above)
Setting out from
Mysuseter, Heather
and Keith



Evening sun above
Rondvassbu -
Charlie on the first
summit

Keith and Heather
north of Doralseter



Alan – lunch
stop on Day 4



Keith and Yani at
Amotdalshytta

LAPLAND DOUBLE – Ruka and Iso-Syote

Last September I wondered if the early bird deal we had booked with Inghams for Lapland in February had been such a good idea – I was recovering from a fall which had left me with my right leg in plaster and my right arm immobilised after surgery and was not at all sure I'd ever be able to ski again, in fact walking – let alone skiing – seemed a dim and distant prospect.

5 months on... I'm back from a glorious week in Ruka (Finnish Lapland, close to the Russian border) and I skied for 6 days in a row – each day going out for longer or further or a more difficult route. The consultant had warned me I could not go as far or as fast as before, but the point is that I did manage to ski a minimum of 12km a day, and the last day did over 30km!

One great re-discovery was the joys of classic – over the past 6-10 years I have mainly skated, but with the stiffness in the shoulder I found lifting the arm quite tiring so I reverted to classic. The snow conditions were perfect for this, new snow, stable temperatures and only needed blue wax for a really good grip. We had considered renting no-wax skis to make life easier (in the past in Lapland waxing had not been too successful - too much ice in the tracks and not enough fresh snow). But after taking a good look at what the Finns were using (loads of wax) we followed the example of the locals and it worked. I have to admit I really loved it, it just seemed so easy and natural and got into a good rhythm, able to relax and enjoy the scenery.

We had two particularly magnificent routes involving high points with spectacular views on perfect sunny days. The trees were laden with snow and looked like fairy-tale figures that would move if you looked the other way. Another route took us to a lake where we were the only people, acres of near wilderness just to ourselves and yet there were excellent groomed tracks. However, when the warmest it got was -8 deg C (usually -18 in the early morning) you don't hang around too long to admire the view, though the Finns have regular "stops" along the to cook up their sausages on open fires and drink "mehu" a hot sweet drink made from some local berries.

Ruka has about 250 km of tracks which radiate out from the village, a bit like a cloverleaf pattern – circuits to the north, South West and South East with the fell in the centre. There is also a bus service for the two sides of the fell (useful if I needed to take a bus home or to the start of a circuit which otherwise would have been too far for me).

Ruka does not, for me, have the charm of Akaslompolo nor the vitality of Levi, but the skiing is great and the accommodation just what we like – our own apartment for self-catering and its own sauna. Ruka has grown since our last visit three years ago – it's just 40 minutes from Kuusamo airport - and to my eyes the development has taken away some of the charm and originality – especially the building of a large new development of apartments in the central square. The lakeside area is now built over with 2 and 3 storey apartment blocks where there was previously nothing or just the odd cabin. But once out of the village, it is just as before with trails winding through the trees and across the lakes, past cabins with their boat sheds and jetties,

their summer-houses and gazebos overlooking the water. And the incredible arctic light – with, if you can wrap up warm enough at night, a good prospect of a Northern Lights show.

3 weeks later... we took advantage of the late offers from Crystal and returned to Lapland and went to Iso-Syote – part of me wants not to say anything about this resort as I want to preserve it - it is just magical! The pictures in the brochures do not do it justice; it's in a National Park with acres of wilderness and all those strange looking trees, laden with snow and looking like witches – and all so quiet. We skied through the wilderness, the pines draped with catkins of horsehair lichen, small pines overcome by snow and looking like fiddle heads, no sounds apart from occasional bird song, snowflakes like dust motes dancing in the air, catching the light and sparkling.

The skiing is fantastic, well groomed tracks and a varied terrain – some days we skied without seeing many people, and those we did see were very friendly and helpful but also amazed that there were Brits there, they assumed that we were living in Finland! One Finnish man we met was also astonished at the quality of the snow conditions – he thought being “this far south” (at least 100km below the Arctic Circle!) it could not be good.

Iso-Syote is on the top of the fell so the views are perfect – especially this year when we had clear sunny days every day – there had been new snow on the day we arrived and new snow fell as we were leaving, apart from that it was wall-to-wall sunshine. This does mean that you have to take the bus or ski the slope or the black run down to the main centre – the bus is free. Accommodation is in the hotel or in the log cabins, semi-detached with a good thatch of snow, all you need plus your own sauna. There is also a wonderful visitors centre close by with fantastic displays and information – in English too. The small cafes along the loipes are warm and welcoming – even if they speak no English – they sell the usual fare plus locally made items – gloves, socks, jewellery, wooden items etc.

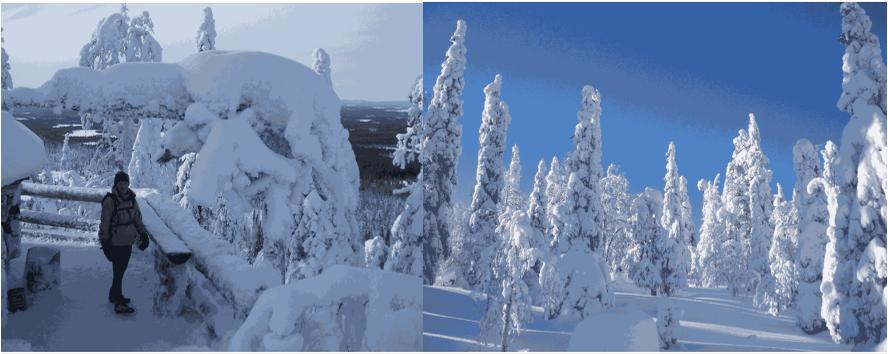
One particularly wonderful trip was the Naamankajarvi circuit of 17kms. A fabulous circuit – quite dramatic in its undulations – parts felt almost like mineral railway lines in the Durham Dales, but all this made by glaciation, the moraines etc. Some big dipper parts through the trees with some interesting descents. The marsh areas just quiet and open, lots of sky and openness, again very few people – just stunning. If you want a day or two of downhill skiing, it is mostly fairly gentle slopes – well maintained and organized and with no shortage of telemarkers.

All in all I recommend Lapland for wonderful track skiing and the guarantee of good snow (especially late in the season – but with climate warming, it is great at any time).

For 2010... barring any new mishaps, we'd thought of combining weeks in Pyote and Salla (both sound good) but Crystal told me (April) that they're considering suspending their Lapland holidays so we are trying a new Lapland resort – Saairselka – in the Inghams brochure.



The cabins at Iso-Syote and (below) the ghost trees at Ruka



Judi and Peter in Finland – Feb and March 2009

Yllas, Finland (March 2009)

I had another great week at Yllas with members of the London Region Nordic Ski club – there were 11 of us altogether and we have all booked for the equivalent week next year (March 14-21) where I shall be staying in the Äkäs Hotel rooms. I have not got much to add to the article I wrote in the loipers newsletter in April last year except to say that this year I hired my Skis from the Askalompolo Ski shop which is just 5 minutes from the Äkäs Hotel. You can hire skis, boots and poles separately if necessary (all good quality). I will again be going from Manchester with Inghams who have early bird and Internet discounts and no single supplements. The only downside to this is that the departure time is 0600 hrs, arriving at the resort at about 1230. But there is an upside to the downside – you will be able to get some skiing in on the first day! Arrival time back in Manchester is about 1330. There is a direct train service from Newcastle to Manchester Airport if you don't wish to travel by car. There are plenty of hotels around Manchester airport – I have stayed at Travelodge at £29 per night with early booking but you need transport to the terminal. I have also stayed at Beweleys Hotel (this year £59 per night) but you can walk to the terminal.

Frank Cauley

Useful web Sites:

www.inghams.co.uk

www.yllas.fi

www.lompolosport.com (local sports shop)

www.laplandhotels.com

www.travelodge.co.uk

www.bewleyshotels.com

Editor's Note – I was pleased to read a short article about the Yllas holiday in the London Region Nordic Ski Club magazine and I intend to reproduce that in the September newsletter with their permission. I had enquired about my joining them in Yllas this year but their dates unfortunately clashed with our club Norway trip.

I got the impression that they would happily accommodate a few extra people from Tyneside Loipers and more importantly I understand that they cater for skiers of different abilities – those that like to do some serious skiing and those that are content to potter! So perhaps that is an option we can consider for next year.

Skiing with a seven year old

Since our adopted daughter, Ebony, came to live with us nearly eighteen months ago, our lives have changed completely. Despite the “steep learning curve” we were just about ready to go one step further and introduce her to cross country skiing. And so it was that we headed for Sjusjoen during the February half term. Was it a success? I think so – but we are still a bit exhausted to be sure!

Ebony had been on a plane a few times to visit my mum in Dorset, but it was her first time abroad and she was extremely excited about the prospect of skiing, which she assured us she’d done before “in her head”. Preparations included finding lots of warm gear for Betty Bear, and making her a pair of skis, which we tested out at 7.30 a.m. on the pavement in Felton during our snowy spell (much to the amusement of passers by).

The journey was straightforward – car to Edinburgh, Norwegian Airlines to Oslo, a very crowded train to Lillehammer and a minibus ride to Sjusjoen Fjellheimen. The room was basic, to put it mildly, and we didn’t wash a great deal during the week, but all the shared parts of the set up were good, and the food was excellent. The feature we were most grateful for was the children’s play area complete with slides, ball pool, etc. as it gave Ebony a chance to play with other kids and Harry and I had a chance to slump into a chair for a rest!

So how was the skiing? Well, on day two, Ebony was heard to say at various intervals “I want to go home” and “I don’t like skiing”. Harry and I were wondering if we’d made a serious mistake – everything was so new to her so she was rather out of her comfort zone. Also the miserable weather and temperatures of -17C were really not quite what we’d had in mind. Thankfully on day three it warmed up and the sun shone, which changed everything. We spent the morning sledging (Betty Bear loved that) and in the afternoon Ebony decided she’d like to put the skis on again and suddenly gained her confidence. She never quite learned how to stop, but took great delight in skiing downhill whenever she could. On the last day we probably skied 4 or 5 kilometres around the tracks.

My lasting memory is of her hurtling downhill past me and careering off into the distance (I’d taken my skis off to catch her part way down the slope she insisted on tackling). Somehow she managed not to fall over, and even decided she’d enjoyed it after she’d got over the shock! Ebony’s overall verdict was that she loved skiing (though I think she enjoyed sledging more really). Our verdict was that we’re glad we went and we’ll try it again next year, but make sure we have a really good rest before we go...!

Vivienne Brown

Always on the lookout for future members of Tyneside Loipers – it sounds like Ebony is about the right age to get started on XC skiing (and sledging of course). Keep up the good work Vivienne. Paramjeet took his daughter (same age) skiing for the first time too and I believe that was a success. Jack Harvie-Clark also has young children – one of them has succumbed to snowboarding! [Ed.]

Engadine Marathon – ‘The Ski Challenge open to Everyone’

This one came from Charlie – he has clearly been watching too much breakfast television! TV presenter Mike Bushell accepted the challenge and went along to find out about XC ski racing and in particular the Engadin Marathon. If you want to find out more, or are considering your first venture into ski racing, this video is worth watching.

Go to www.bbc.co.uk and search with the word ‘Engadine’. At the right of the screen is a quick link to the breakfast TV programme ‘The Ski Challenge open to Everyone’. The programme appears to have been made a few days before the marathon. There is footage from previous marathons and shots of people preparing and training for this year’s event including Sir Norman Foster who is a regular competitor in the Engadin (along with 12000 others!).

Next year’s Engadin Marathon is on 14th March. Details are on www.engadin-skimarathon.ch

The Birkebeiner in Norway is apparently even more popular than the Engadin and this year had over 14500 competitors – more than 13000 finished!

Galdhoppigrennet Ski Race

If the Engadin Marathon is not enough of a challenge, you could consider the Galdhoppigrennet – a downhill telemark ski race with 1100 metres of descent over a distance of just 3.5km. This takes place every year on the first Saturday after Easter. The race has been going since 1934 (then just 12 skiers) but nowadays there are over 300 competitors.

The race starts on top of Svelnosi (2100m altitude) near to the summit of Galdhoppigen (at 2469m the highest in Norway). Competitors first have to get to the start, which takes about 3 hours climbing on skis from Spiterstulen. The winning descent takes less than 3 minutes, but some competitors take a little longer (up to 45 minutes)!

See www.galdhoppigrennet.com (for the linguistically-challenged, click on ‘information in English’ for a worthwhile summary).

Calling all Rock Climbers – the Byker Wall

Charlie and I have recently been going to the new indoor climbing wall in Byker would be very happy to introduce anyone else to the joys of climbing.

Let's be clear – this is not The Byker Wall which was built in the early 70s as part of the regeneration of Newcastle – it is the new climbing wall built by NE company Rockworks inside the disused St Mark's Church. It is a lovely listed building superbly converted into an excellent facility with lots of good climbing routes of various different grades, up to 15 metres height. There is also an upper balcony area just below a big stained glass window and this has views across the main area climbing area below.

It is an ideal facility to learn to climb – please get in touch with Charlie or Alan if you are interested in having a go. As registered climbers, we can each introduce and supervise a maximum of two less experienced climbers and novices. If you are already experienced, you can of course register with the climbing centre and climb on your own. For more information see www.newcastleclimbingcentre.co.uk

All Terrain Events

Paramjeet has passed on some information on the 2009 series of 'Wild Races'. Full information is available on www.allterreinevents.com

Races are held over different distances and of course are very well organised (my experience – Ed.)

17 May	Hamsterley Forest	12km
21 June	Bowderdale, Eden Valley	18km
5 July	Kielder Forest	15km

Distances are approximate and are over trails with mixed terrain. Races start at 10.30. Those completing all 3 races will receive a special series T-shirt.

In addition to the Wild Races, there is also a four-stage relay race around Kielder reservoir, which is being run on Sunday 7th June. Each person runs 7 miles. Teams may be same or mixed sex. If anyone else would like to have a go, please contact me, Alan Mitcham – I would be very keen to run as part of a Tyneside Loipers team! I don't guarantee we will get a prize (but worth noting that Heather ran in the New Year race on Town Moor and won a bottle of wine!)

Long Distance Walking – Durham Dales Challenge

If you like walking and enjoy a challenge, the twentieth Durham Dales Challenge is on 27th June starting from Wolsingham in Upper Weardale. The event is very well organised and I can recommend it – the Mitcham family (and Nuala) did it, all 28 miles, in 2003. The distances on offer this year are 16 miles or 30 miles. It is great walking country and there is lots of food and drink at the various checkpoints. For more info and entry form, go to www.walknortheast.org.uk and click on ddc (or just contact Alan Mitcham).

Summer Roller Skiing 2009

Sadly I cannot report that our roller skiing has properly started this year. But several of us will certainly be out and about on Town Moor, and along the Tyne and around the circuit at Hetton Lyons Park on Thursday evenings over the summer.

For TL members not yet used to roller skis we will probably be getting together an introductory session with Alasdair acting as coach, starting with a half-day session at Hetton Lyons where there is a good tarmac surface and a clubhouse facility with toilets. Please contact Alasdair if you are interested (details on front page of newsletter).

There will be two SSE-organised coaching weekends at Hetton Lyons this year (27/28th June and 5/6th September). These are always well organised with a good standard of coaching – recommended even if you do not have a great deal of roller skiing experience (although a little previous experience certainly will help). More details on the SSE nordic website, or contact Alasdair or Alan.

You may also be interested in the roller ski tours organised by the other SSE affiliated clubs. Some are a little far afield, but a few organised by the Yorkshire Dales and Lake District clubs are not so far away and make for a fun and friendly day out - more details on the SSE nordic website www.escnordic.org.uk/

