



# TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist  
Cross Country Ski club

Newsletter  
January 2010



Website: [www.tynesideloipers.org.uk](http://www.tynesideloipers.org.uk)

## Contents

2	Editor's Musings and Member News	9	Ten Top Telemark Tips
3	Bits and Pieces	11	Beverley Shaw, 1934-2009
3	Local Skiing	13	Beginner Telemark Course, Castleford
5	Loiper's AGM and Xmas meal	13	XC and Telemark – where to buy
5	Club trip to Scotland	14	Classic skiing: 'old' style versus 'new'
5	Club holiday – Lapland 28 <sup>th</sup> Feb	15	Roller Skiing in Gateshead
6	Norway hut touring trip 23 <sup>rd</sup> March	15	Train, Boat, Plane, or Drive?
8	Telemarking – off-piste in France	16	Club Skis and Boots – Sales and Wanted

## Club Events

28 <sup>th</sup> Feb to 7 <sup>th</sup> March	Track skiing in Lapland – contact Alan or Judi (page 5)
23 <sup>rd</sup> Mar to 1 <sup>st</sup> April	Norway Hut Touring holiday – see Charlie or Alan (p 6)
4 <sup>th</sup> to 11 <sup>th</sup> April	SnowSport England Kvitavtn week – see page 6.
Date to be confirmed	Club weekend in Scotland – contact Jane or Rob (page 5)

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### Editor's Musings

Wow! What a start to the season. More snow than I can remember since the late 70s (the year Ponteland and Darras Hall were cut off from the rest of the NE, twice on one winter). Loipers have been out skiing on Town Moor, Slaley Forest and Blanchland Moor, along the Roman Wall, Tyne Valley, Chopwell Woods, Waskerley Way and many other local haunts (and South Shields!). Unusually in recent years, the snow fell with little or no wind, so we had deep snow cover over the high ground without it being blown off.

I suspect (and hope) that other loipers have been further afield (the Pennines and Cheviots maybe) – if you have had a good day's local skiing somewhere, I am still waiting to hear from you.

I shouldn't complain but for me the timing was not too great – with all the family staying over Christmas and New Year, I was not allowed out to play. Then of course the really big dump of fresh snow arrived when I was away in France!

The snowy weather brought chaos in the airports... Jon Mellor and I had a wonderful week of telemark skiing in France but we spent nearly 48 hours getting back from Geneva – unfortunately the extra time was lost hanging around in airports and hotels rather than in the resort! More of that on pp. 9 and 15.

The good snow has brought a welcome influx of new members, and potential new members who are about to join. That is good news for the club. I will aim to give some introductions in the next newsletter when I have met up with some of those who have joined.

### Member news

Alan Mitcham and Greg Buick are off to a remote lodge in the Canadian Rockies with some mutual friends of ours. We booked into Sentry Mountain Lodge with an organisation called Golden Alpine Holidays for a week of guided telemark touring. But we learnt before Christmas that Sentry Mountain Lodge has burnt down! We have now been booked into another lodge owned by the same company.

Alasdair Wilson took part in the orienteering event at Choppington Wood (Bedlington) which went ahead in the snow on 10<sup>th</sup> January – Alasdair was the only person to compete on skis. See photo on page 7.

Chris Ottley had excellent skiing in Scotland on New Year's Day, skiing in sunshine to the summit of Beinn a'Chlachair at 1087m.

### **Stop Press - 25<sup>th</sup> January**

The snow has lasted amazingly well. Seven loipers met up yesterday and skied about 7 miles from near the top of the Waskerley Way along the waggonway to Bolts Law – then back to Parkhead Cafe for tea and scones. Some of us also skied onto the top of Bolts Law (540m). The views were not great but there was plenty of snow!

### Bits and Pieces

The keeper of the club skis and boots is now Pat Lynch who lives at Wylam – details on page 16. Thanks to Paramjeet for looking after the club gear the last year.

Keith Walker sent me details of a novel new form of ski holiday. This one is from a company called Sun Soar who specialise in paragliding – European holiday destination with paragliding tuition (flying off the sand dunes of Bordeaux and other areas). Their latest wheeze is a paragliding holiday in the French Alps. On days when the weather is not conducive to flying, they ski at nearby resorts such as Les Saisie, Les Contamines and Areche (sounds a very good idea to me!) Interested...? See [www.sunsoar-paragliding.com/Fly\\_SkiOverview\\_V2.htm](http://www.sunsoar-paragliding.com/Fly_SkiOverview_V2.htm)

Cross-Country skiing indoors...? Finland is leading the way again. They have built a new ski tunnel, with facilities for year round skiing including a 1.2km long permanent indoor ski circuit, as well as facilities for other winter activities such as biathlon and curling and ice climbing. See [www.yllas-halli.fi/Etusivu.aspx](http://www.yllas-halli.fi/Etusivu.aspx)

And in Germany... yes they have one too! Their year-round ski tunnel opened in mid 2009. See [www.oberhof-skisporthalle.de/fr/](http://www.oberhof-skisporthalle.de/fr/). The 1.9km circuit includes inclines up to 12%.

Nicky Butler pointed out that the BBC Countryfile programme on Sunday 31<sup>st</sup> January (check listings – probably 6 to 7pm) will feature on winter sports around Aviemore and Cairngorm and in particular the Cairngorm Biathlon and Nordic Club.

### **Local Skiing**

Hopefully you will have been enjoying the wonderful snow conditions. As you will see below, Northumberland and Durham have lots of places for lowland cross-country or upland touring. And there are always opportunities to practice your downhill technique using the local ski club areas.

Weardale Ski Club, Yad Moss and Allenheads Ski Area have all had a bumper year, so much so that Allenheads and Weardale have closed their membership for this year. However both clubs are still offering day membership on weekdays (weekends are reserved exclusively for members). Yad Moss have also imposed restrictions to try and cater with increased numbers – they are accepting day members but only for those arriving before 11.30 (more details on their website).

[www.yadmoss.co.uk/](http://www.yadmoss.co.uk/)

[www.skiweardale.com/](http://www.skiweardale.com/)

[www.ski-allenheads.co.uk/](http://www.ski-allenheads.co.uk/)

The Weardale Ski Club recently had a slot on Ski Sunday (10<sup>th</sup> January) and also featured in the TimesOnLine travel blog <http://timestravel.typepad.com/>

Of course, you can have nearly as much fun without going to Yad Moss or Weardale. On a lovely sunny day 23<sup>rd</sup> December, Nuala and I had a wonderful ski

tour along the Waskerley Way, starting at Rowley station on the A68 and skiing all the way through to Stanhope (with a welcome break for tea and scones at Parkhead station). At the end of the day we had skied a total of 11 miles including to the top of Collier Law (516m above sea level).

### **Some notes from Jane Brantom...**

It was hard to resist getting out in the wonderful early January snow. I enjoyed pottering on the Sele Park in Hexham and created an evening loipe lit by the Christmas lights and the floodlights by the bandstand and abbey. Then skiing up with a friend on the hills above Acomb – we had clear sky and wonderful crystals on top of the snow and a great sunset at the end of the afternoon. On another day I joined Pat Lynch on one of her Wylam wagon way excursions, with a halfway break for a drink at the Keelman. With plenty of snow, the riverside tracks make perfect routes and can be reached by train too.

We then headed up to Allenheads where Pat and I disappeared in the deep snow as we followed the footpath south from the village. We enjoyed skiing straight over stiles and gates and Rob enjoyed an afternoon telemarking on the slope. The views were beautiful. Four of us headed up to explore the tracks in Slaley forest where the snow was again deep and good and still hanging on the trees. Then Pat and I had an afternoon ski along the Roman Wall from Brocolitia – we skied past the Roman Temple before heading north in excellent conditions. All good training for our club trip to Lapland, and a wonderful ten days after returning from our trip south at Christmas.

### **And this time in Scotland, some notes from Mike Hall...**

Having watched the weather over the festive season in previous years, we (la famille Hall) have been on standby to head up to the Clashindarroch Forest near Huntly to access their groomed trails. Last year the snow was sporadic and didn't coincide with our availability. This year we made the plunge and booked a nearby cottage over the New Year in the vain hope that there might be a wee bit of snow! As is by now abundantly clear, we needn't have worried about the quanta of the white stuff – but unfortunately any attempt to keep the trails groomed was completely foiled by the huge amounts of snow falling in Aberdeenshire. We managed one day following trails in the forests made by fellow skiers, which was pleasant but not quite what we expected. As it turned out we also managed a day at the Lecht with a bit of downhill but best of all we were simply able to ski most days from right outside our cottage. For those of you who follow Peter Thorn's missive from the Huntly club – after last year's lack of snow, someone is having a joke this year! Further info about the Huntly Nordic ski club can be found on <http://hnoc.nordicski.org.uk/>

### **Norway Maps**

Just a reminder... Charlie is keeping a number of maps which we have accumulated on our various hut touring trips to Norway and it is his intention to build up a Norway map library for club members. If you have any useful touring maps which could be donated to the club, please let Charlie know.

## **Tyneside Loipers AGM and Xmas Meal**

For various reasons, the AGM was postponed from its usual date in October so we had a short but effective AGM at The Chillingham PH just prior to the Xmas Meal on 9<sup>th</sup> December. Ten TL members turned up for the AGM and a further five people turned up for the meal. Thanks to the briefing notes provided by Charlie before the AGM, the business was completed in double quick time.

Two additional people were voted onto the loipers committee: Keith Walker, who is taking on the role of Vice Chair, and Jane Brantom who joins Rob as a committee member.

Several people requested that we organise a trip to Scotland (a long weekend perhaps?) and Jane and Rob agreed to look into this – see details on page 5.

Charlie has already circulated the AGM minutes to which you can refer for a detailed report. Contact Charlie if you do not have the minutes, or would like them to be resent.

The meal at the Sky Apple Cafe was excellent, well up to their usual standard, and it was a convivial evening (most of us had brought along a bottle of wine as the Sky Apple has no drinks license). There was a good menu choice and the service was excellent (especially considering there were 15 of us on one long table). Maybe we will go there again next year?

### **Loipers Trip to Scotland**

Following the discussion at the AGM, Jane and Rob agreed to look into a possible TL trip to Scotland. This is likely to be a long weekend, with possible venues Glen Feshie, Glenmore Lodge or Aviemore YH. Depending on snow conditions, we would have options to ski on Cairngorm or the Monadhliaths or in the Rothiemurchus Forest (or at least find some nice walking if there is little snow). I guess the excellent snow in Northumberland has reduced the need for an early season Scotland trip and it might now be appropriate to delay until nearer Easter, in the hope and expectation of more snow to come in Northumberland in the meantime.

If you are interested in a trip to Scotland, contact Jane or Rob (contact details on page 1) and give them an idea of when you would be available.

### **Tyneside Loipers Club Holidays**

Yllas (Finnish Lapland) – 28<sup>th</sup> February to 7<sup>th</sup> March 2010

It is not too late to join us - 15 of us are now booked for this week of track skiing at Yllas (Akaslompolo). We are booked with Inghams and flying from Manchester to Kittilla. See <http://www.ingham.co.uk/ski/FIN/index.html>

The holiday will cater for all abilities – those who want to potter along the loipes stopping at the wayside cafes and cooking shelters and those wanting to ski further

afield and going for big mileage. Or you could do a mix of pottering and serious skiing to build up your XC ski technique and fitness as the week goes by.

With 300km of prepared ski trails and near perfect snow, this is about as good as it can get. And there is also a small ski hill with a gondola and various drag lifts and alpine or telemark skis for hire, so you can also spend a day or two on the hill on telemark skis (or hire a snowboard if you wish!).

Please get in touch with Alan or Judi if you would like to join us or if you would like more details on the accommodation and travel options.

### Norway Ski Touring – 23<sup>rd</sup> March to 1<sup>st</sup> April

Again, it is not too late to join us! Contact Alan or Charlie if you are interested. We will be skiing from hut to hut in the little known area of Tafjordfjella northwest of Jotunheim. The area has some very fine unstaffed huts connected by recognised marked routes. And there are a number of rewarding peaks to be bagged, ranging between 1900 and 2000 metres above sea level and offering fine views from the Jotunheim on one side to the coastal fjords on the other. We are going just before Easter and currently there are just 3 of us – Charlie, Alan and Greg. We would be pleased to hear from anyone else who would like to join us.

We have just got the maps of the area and it looks to be a gem for ski touring and reasonably accessible high peaks (Google Tafjordfjella for more info). We are flying from Edinburgh to Oslo and will be staying one night in each direction at Lillehammer YH.

Note that this is not a trip for inexperienced skiers! If you are keen to do some Norway hut touring and would like an easier trip we would like to hear from you anyway and will bear this in mind for next year.

### **SnowSport England Kvitavatn Week – Norway, 4<sup>th</sup> to 11<sup>th</sup> April**

At least one TL member is booked to attend the SSE Kvitavatn week (new member Colin Blackburn). It is much recommended by those of us who have been in previous years (including your own newsletter editor). I had hoped to go again this year, though sadly the idea did not go down well with my dear wife who thinks that I have had enough skiing for this year (she is right of course!)

Coaching is given in small groups either on the ski hill (for Nordic downhill and telemarking) or on the extensive range of prepared tracks (for XC skills and racing). The coaching is of a very high standard. You will be made to work fairly hard in the formal sessions every morning but there is plenty of time for fun activities (ski orienteering, hill touring, etc) in the afternoons and quiz sessions, films and wax demos in the evenings. For more information see the separate leaflet sent with the last newsletter, or contact the organiser [wendy.mcrae@tesco.net](mailto:wendy.mcrae@tesco.net)



Alan and Nuala on Collier Law 23<sup>rd</sup> Dec  
 ... and Slaley Forest, Blanchland Moor, and Wylam Waggonway  
 - Jane, Pat and Nuala



Alasdair finishing the orienteering  
 event on skis - Choppington Wood



And Alasdair's wife Dorothy  
 taking an impromptu XC ski lesson  
 in Victoria Avenue

## Telemark Adventures – Off-Piste in France

Jon Mellor and I signed up for a week of off-piste telemarking with The Telemark Ski Company, based at the little known resort of Les Contamines in the French Alps. We went for the first week of January and it was perfectly timed – it snowed continually for the first 24 hours after we arrived and the temperatures remained cold for the rest of the week, whereas the previous week had been high temperatures and rain!

The course was aimed at those who can already telemark proficiently on blue and red pisted runs and are starting to go off-piste. The new snow meant that there was acres of deep snow accessible from near the lift system (and on the first day there was deep snow on the piste too). Our group of more experienced skiers was whittled down to 6 (and then on the second day we were 5) – an ideal size of group for instruction initially from John Eames and on the following days from Graham Hammond (a very good young Aussie skier who has been working with John and Bonny for the past few years).

John's instruction is always excellent and Graham's turned out to be just as good. His approach was perfect for our group in the superb off-piste conditions that we experienced. After 2 days of instruction I felt I had a much better understanding of the elements of good telemarking off-piste (and more importantly I understood why it helps to ski with the technique that we were being taught) – for me, quite a revelation! See my top 10 telemark tips on the opposite page....

Les Contamines turned out to be an ideal resort and only an hour and a quarter from Geneva airport – ideal for our Tyneside Loipers Telemark Weekend next winter, perhaps. This was the first year the resort has been used by the Telemark Ski Company (it is only used by one British tour company 'Ski For Less'). It has 120km of pisted runs to suit all standards – and lots of easily accessible off-piste. The hotel 'La Chemenaz' was very good (very comfortable and excellent food – most nights we had 5 courses of dinner!) Our off-piste ski group were all together in the same hotel and it made for a good spirit of camaraderie (others were booked into hotels and apartments nearer the town and less convenient for the ski lifts).

On our last morning (Saturday) we reckoned that we had about 4 hours of skiing before we had to return to our hotel and await the transfer back to Geneva. But sadly the mountain was covered in cloud. We had not seen much sunshine during the week and we had been dogged by poor visibility on some days but skiing in thick cloud was a significant test of telemark technique (one which I failed!) All too soon we had to retreat to catch the transfer to Geneva...

Telemark Ski Company – [www.telemarkskico.com/](http://www.telemarkskico.com/)  
Low cost transfers from Geneva - [www.ski-lifts.com/](http://www.ski-lifts.com/)  
Les Contamines - [www.lescontamines.com/en/winter/index.html](http://www.lescontamines.com/en/winter/index.html)  
Hotel La Chemenaz - [www.chemenaz.com/index-uk.php](http://www.chemenaz.com/index-uk.php)

Alan Mitcham

## 10 Top Telemark Tips (off-piste essentials)

1. Keep the chin up, look ahead and face down the hill for fall-line turns.
2. Hold the hands low and level and always within your peripheral vision.
3. The upper body should be strong, solid and unmoving (like a Sumo wrestler!)
4. Feel the pressure in the rear thigh to maintain pressure on the rear ski.
5. Start each turn by pushing up on the rear thigh.
6. Maintain a slow lead change and make it last through the turn.
7. Point the rising knee into the turn (it creates a turning force and angulation).
8. Point the new inside knee into the turn to help achieve a wide stance.
9. Sink right through the turn and plant the pole right at the very end of the turn.
10. Hold the pole with a tight grip and plant it firmly just downhill of the lead ski.

This may all sound rather technical. Telemarking was never an easy option (telemarking off-piste and in bumpy conditions even less so) but it is a wonderful feeling to achieve a perfect series of turns. It is definitely worth the effort – it will come with practice by focussing on these various points at each stage of learning.

Two important points... It is good to have a short stance (with the lead ski little more than one boot length in front of the other) and to have a wide stance (skis about hip width apart). By using a slow lead change and feeling the pressure on that rear ski, it really is possible to avoid ending the turn with too long a stance. And by steering the inside ski (even at the very start of the turn at the beginning of the lead change) it is possible to maintain the width of stance. Note also that keeping a tight grip on the pole prevents the common mistake of the pole plant being too far forward.

### The Nightmare Journey Home

Geneva airport was in chaos. Before we left Les Contamines we had secretly hoped to find that our flight was cancelled (we could then have cancelled our transfer and stayed another night at the hotel). No such luck... it was scheduled to fly! At 9.30pm, after several hours of waiting, our Newcastle flight was ready to board – but then they changed their minds and it was cancelled. So we had to troop back into the arrivals area to pick up our baggage and then queue for hours to rebook the flight and to arrange a hotel in Geneva (we didn't get there until 2am on Sunday).

People near us in the queue had to rebook for a flight to Newcastle on Tuesday with 3 extra hotel nights in Geneva! But we had negotiated an EasyJet flight to Paris Orly on Sunday afternoon and we had also booked at our expense a follow on flight from Paris CDG to Newcastle (so, in theory, we should have been home on Sunday evening). Then the Paris Orly flight was 3 and a half hours late and it was soon obvious that we would miss our connection (EasyJet don't do connections!). When we got to CDG we managed to get transferred to a very late EasyJet flight to Luton and another late night hotel (2am again!) Then finally we took the train to London St Pancras and a train north from Kings Cross. We were without my baggage (it went missing at Orly) and both our skis (missing at Luton)!



**Off-piste in Les Contamines.**

Thanks to Jon for the flattering picture of me in the steep and deep (above).

Jon going long in the deep and choppy stuff.



Frank and Beverley on holiday in Trins, Austria  
(taken some while ago!)

## BEVERLEY SHAW, 1934 - 2009

Beverley Shaw joined us in the mid 80s, in the early days of the Loipers, and he was a member through to 2003.

He died on 5<sup>th</sup> November 2009 from motor neurone disease and Alan, Alasdair, Peter and I went to his funeral in Durham.

Beverley was a loyal member of the Loipers, an enthusiastic – though not technically the best – skier! Cross country skiing, on snow and rollers, came to him in his later years and, like everything he did in life, he made the best of it, and always tried to work on improving his skills. He was always ready to make the Friday evening trek to Scotland to join us on our club weekends to Glen Feshie or Ardeonaig. He was great company and we were always entertained by his witty commentaries on life.

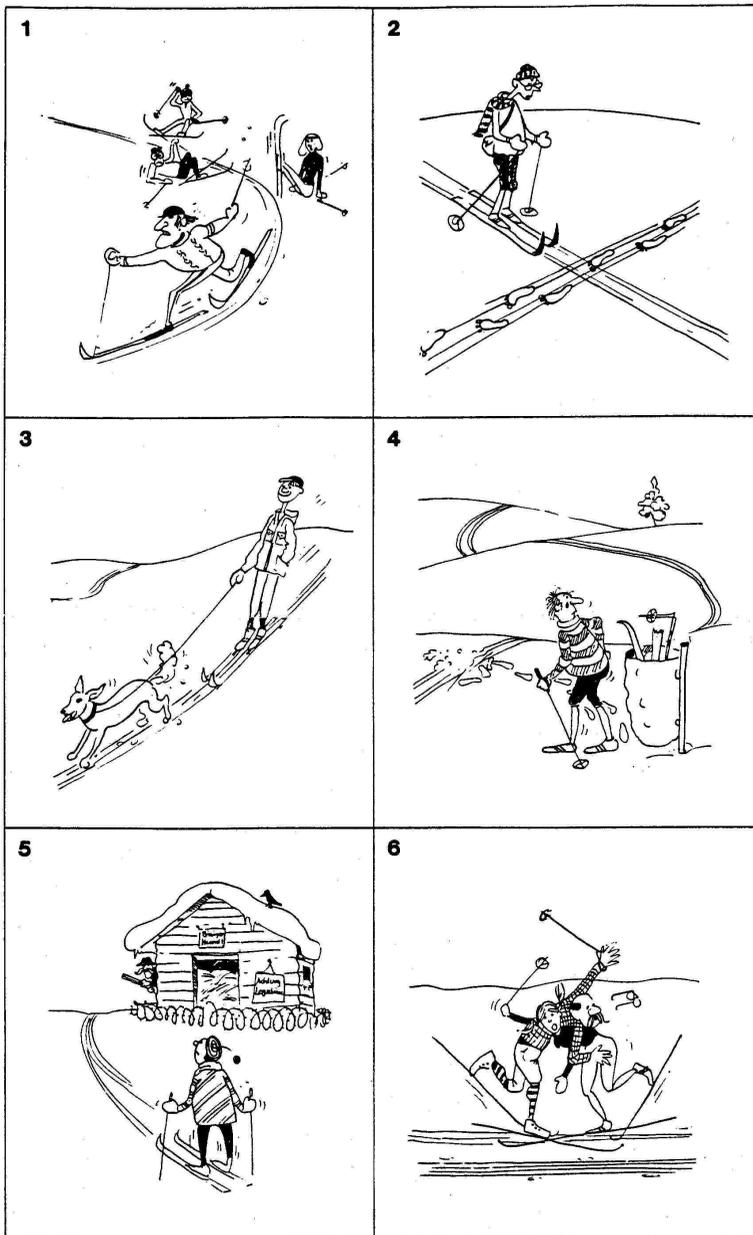
He was a person of many and varied interests but his abiding passion was his art. Many of us will remember his drawings. Always with a pad in hand, he drew us and the places we visited, the landscapes and the hotels or hostels at which we stayed on trips to Scotland and abroad. Some of these are shown here, courtesy of Frank, who has kindly sent some of his sketches.

He was a complex character with a wry and sardonic sense of humour and always willing to argue and debate on a wide variety of ideas and issues. His family was all important – he was almost always accompanied on the skiing trips by his son Owen, who shared his interest in skiing. I knew his daughter, Jane, some years before I met Beverley, though she did not follow in his cross country skiing footsteps. He had many other shared interests with his wife, Angela, and she was happy to accept his new passion for skiing (indeed it got more than a passing mention, along with the Loipers, at his funeral).

Beverley will be missed by the Loipers. All of us need someone like him to make us question and argue and appreciate life!

Judi Webb

The photo of Beverley and Frank, shown on page 10, was taken when they were on holiday in Austria 1993.



**Some hazards of Cross Country Skiing!**  
Original sketches from Beverley Shaw (from an early TL newsletter)

## **Beginners Telemark Coaching at Castleford Snozone**

Until recently *Telemark* for me conjured up images of Robert Mitchum and Richard Harris in the epic 1965 film *The Heroes of Telemark*, set in occupied Norway during World War II. As a new member to the club, I was initially interested in developing my cross country skating technique (Thanks to Alasdair for those lessons!). When one of Alan's emails mentioned a beginner's course in telemark skiing, it seemed a good opportunity to widen my horizons in matters related to cross country skiing.

The session I attended in early December was organized by Matt Higginson who runs telemark-skiing.co.uk sponsored I understand by SnowSport England. See [www.telemark-skiing.co.uk/index.html](http://www.telemark-skiing.co.uk/index.html).

The session lasted three hours and was based at the artificial snow slope at the Castleford Snozone. The course and use of the slope cost £42, plus an additional £10 equipment hire. The group comprised nine of us – all beginners and mostly from an alpine background. We begin on the nursery slope with various balancing exercises before progressing on to the main theme. Learning at slightly different rates we moved onto the main slope in smaller groups of three and four. By the end of three hours of continuous skiing (I had reckoned on a half time break for hot chocolate) the quads were nearly bursting. The session had been great and I felt had come on a lot, never having attempted that style of skiing before. Executed well, telemark skiing looks so graceful – I will definitely be pursuing further opportunities to practice and develop my technique, though I suspect it will be a while before I can say..... I am a hero of telemark.

PS. Alan has kindly sold me his old telemark skis at knock down price and I am now looking for some suitable telemark bindings. If anyone has any telemark bindings (and indeed boots) that they are willing to sell, that would be much appreciated. Contact me on 01661 872 259.

**Mike Hall**

## **XC and Telemark Skis – Where to Buy in the UK**

Braemar Mountain Sports. Tel. 013397 41242 or [www.braemarmountainsports.com](http://www.braemarmountainsports.com)

Cairngorm Mountain Sports, Aviemore. Tel. 01479 810 903 (same website)

Mountain Spirit, Aviemore. Tel. 01479 811788 or [www.mountainspirit.co.uk](http://www.mountainspirit.co.uk)

Backcountry UK, Ilkley, Yorks. Tel. 01943 816011 or [www.backcountryuk.com](http://www.backcountryuk.com)

All of these places will give good advice (usually!) if you call in at their shop or speak to them on the phone. Braemar Mountain Sports and Mountain Spirit will also hire out equipment (skis and boots) – check this on their websites.

Be prepared for a shock when you see the prices. I have just bought new telemark skis from Backcountry UK (and I am very happy with them) at a cost of £439. Had I needed new 7TM bindings, they would have cost me another £300!

### 'Classic' style skiing – the old versus the new.

When I started skiing way back in the 70's wooden skis were still common and bases were prepared with a black stuff called tar wax that went all along the base. Grip wax was then added all the way along. My first skis were basically wooden skis wrapped in fibre glass on the top and polythene (p-Tex) on the base. They had a very soft camber and grip waxing was again all along the full length. This drove the style of skiing to a longish kick and a high follow through – elegant and balletic but a great contrast to the modern technique. If you get a chance to watch coverage of races last century and compare them with say present day Eurosport coverage, you'll see what I mean.

Modern cross-country skis are engineered to maximise speed and control. For skate skis this means a flex that generates a flat ski when edged. But for classic, this flatness is achieved when the ski is fully weighted onto the snow, the spring force of the ski's camber being overcome by your body weight. For racing skis an even more positive push into the snow must be given (for touring skis a simple complete weight transfer will be fine if your grip wax is right for the snow). Modern classic skis have a much better defined wax pocket (the waxing area produced by the camber of the ski). This means that the push into the snow of the weighted leg should be quicker and hence the length of "kick" will be shorter. As a result the follow through is no longer so balletic, although with a good glide the tempo would probably be similar.

Key pointers for the modern style, apart from the shorter quicker weighting of the ski, are:

- limit hip rotation,
- maintain the centre of balance over the centre of the leading foot,
- relax the leg that is just unweighted as you land on the gliding ski.

Poling action is similar to the older style with some shoulder rotation to achieve a long push – but the forward reach of the arm has become a bit shorter with more bend in the elbows. This is a quicker and more compact style for going uphill and developing a complete weight transfer from ski to ski. It feels more like running – trying to emulate Seb Coe or Daniel Komen in full flight when all the leg motion happens behind the front of the pelvis.

When touring you'll probably have a pack helping you weight the ski but the shorter push should help conserve energy by keeping your centre of gravity more level (particularly if you've been in the habit of extending your front foot beyond your pelvis, i.e. allowing your weight to drop behind your shin).

Useful web links are <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xBnOg5Z3Eu8> and <http://www.roberts-I.com/xcski/classic/resources/index.htm#advanced>

Applying the style to your roller skiing will help get you ready for next season!

Happy striding - as the Yanks call it.

Alasdair Wilson

*I think the YouTube link is excellent [Ed.]*

### **Roller Skiing in Gateshead**

A recently upgraded part of the Keelmans Way (Cycle Route 14) provides a first class surface for roller skis. The length covered is about ¼ mile and even has an adjacent parking area. Travel west out of Gateshead along the A184 until you get to the traffic lights just before Gateshead Stadium and turn left down as far as the T junction with Saltmeadows Road. Right here and then almost immediately turn sharp left into South Shore – a narrow road which runs steeply down past the Schooner public house to the parking area by the river (grid ref NZ 269633).

From the car park you can ski east as far as the T Junction with the track to the Elephant on the Tyne Hotel. To the west is a steeper section up to South Shore Road. And there is also a narrower section lower down which leads to the ‘Kittiwake Tower’. This unusual triangular shaped construction was built to accommodate displaced Kittiwakes when the ledges on the refurbished Baltic building were covered over to prevent nesting. The Tower has proved popular with the birds and many can be seen nesting there when they return in the spring. There is only one problem with the track and that is that several areas get covered in leaves in the autumn; however I skied there in early December and the leaf cover was minimal.

Frank Cauley

*Editor’s comment: ¼ mile sounds a bit short, though I reckon this could be a good area to practice technique.*

### **Train, Boat, Plane or Drive?**

After the frustrations of returning from Geneva in January (and the outward journey was also not without its frustrations), I am wondering about future travel options to the Alps. Anyone who was stuck in the tunnel with Eurostar just after Christmas will not be too keen on that option either.

Jon and I were unlucky with EasyJet and, to be fair, there were long delays with other airline operators too. Our return airfare with carriage of skis and all the other extras was £190 each (hardly what you might expect for a ‘cheap airline’). But when things go wrong with EasyJet, they do so quite spectacularly. They have such small margins that there is nothing to spare when problems occur (no spare aircraft and no spare staff) – so one cancellation or one late aircraft has big knock-on effects. Indeed people behind us in the queue to rebook after our flight was cancelled had to accept flights on the following Tuesday and stay 3 extra nights in Geneva. I have a fancy that some of them may not have got home even then.

I would be interested in other people’s views (an appropriate article for the next newsletter perhaps). Meanwhile Jon and his wife are back in the Alps now and they have taken the car (using the ferry from Hull to Zeebrugge) but the fuel and ferry costs are significant and it is a long drive. Heather, I know, recommends the train (about 12 hours from Newcastle to Geneva) but that is not a cheap option either.

### Club Skis and Boots

We have about 5 pairs of metal-edged skis and 9 pairs of leather boots available for use by club members. These are ideal for ski touring for Norway and in the UK. We also have at least two pairs of climbing skins. There is a small hire charge of £10 per weekend for club equipment (negotiable for longer hire).

The equipment is now being held by Pat Lynch at her address in Wylam (5 Algernon Terrace, NE41 8AX). Contact Pat on 01661 853475 or 07708 012795 (or e-mail on [trishwylam@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:trishwylam@yahoo.co.uk) ).

The club skis all have waxing bases (not fish scales). Pat has a small supply of waxes and you will indeed need to apply various waxes, or klister, to the bases before skiing.

Understandably, waxing skis have rather gone out of favour for skiing in the UK – snow conditions are seldom reliably constant and it is difficult to wax for the varying temperature and condition of the snow (and particularly difficult for anyone new to cross country skiing). With this in mind, we are hoping to get some non-waxing skis for the club in the near future (and perhaps more pairs of boots in the more popular sizes). We are also rather short of poles. If you have any equipment that you are willing to donate to the club, do please get in touch with Alan or Pat.

In the meantime, for anyone wishing to borrow club gear, Pat will do her best to help you with the gear that we currently have.

#### Sales and Wanted (plenty of 'wanted' and not many sales!)

These are the ones that I know about. But there must be more stuff out there that people want to sell or buy.

Pat Lynch was looking to buy a pair of metal-edged touring skis and size 6 boots (phone 01661 853475).

Vivienne Brown was looking for skis and boots for their 8-year old (children's size 11 ½ and skis in the range 110-120 cm probably (phone 01670 787073 – email [vivpbrown@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:vivpbrown@yahoo.co.uk) )

Mike Hall wants telemark bindings and possibly boots (size 43?) (01661 872259 – e-mail [mjhall41@btinternet.com](mailto:mjhall41@btinternet.com) )

Nicky Butler is looking for some 75mm 3-pin touring bindings (0191 536 0897 – e-mail [nickybutleruk@yahoo.com](mailto:nickybutleruk@yahoo.com) )

I intend to issue the next newsletter at the end of April. Do please get articles and photos, or any other contributions to me by soon after Easter.

Alan Mitcham (Newsletter and Membership Sec)