



TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist
Cross Country Ski club

Newsletter September



Website: www.tynesideloipers.org.uk

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Club Events - see page 15

Sat 1 Oct.	GB10 roller-ski race - Lancaster
Sat/Sun 1-2 Oct.	Snow Sport England roller-ski weekend course, Lancaster
13 Oct	AGM - Newcastle
10-17 Dec.	Snowsport England Early Season Course, Austria
25 Mar - 1 Apr 2012	Snowsport England Nordic Skills Week, Norway

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From the editor

Sadly, in this month's newsletter, we report the death of one of our members: Ruth Fletcher's untimely death has been a great loss to sports clubs throughout the region.

On a happier note, we carry a full report (held over from our last newsletter due to lack of space) of Paramjeet's trip by bike from Newcastle to Delhi to raise funds for UNICEF. Paramjeet rode 10,423km over 21 days, crossing 12 countries – and spending 3 nights in a police station!

What do Loipers do in the summer? You can read all about their escapades: walking in France and Spain, mountain-biking in Switzerland, biathlon training in Scotland, and a bicycle beano in the Welsh Borders.

Tommy Lees enthuses about the roller-skiing course at Hetton Lyons, which was very well organised by Snowsport England, Helen Bell of Yorkshire Ski Club and Alasdair Wilson of Tyneside Loipers.

We look forward to getting onto snow again – if you are interested in any of the planned trips on page 12, contact committee members directly or join us at the AGM at Charlie's house on 13th October.

Ruth Fletcher

Sadly, one of our members, Ruth Fletcher, died on 17th July in a diving accident off the Farne Islands.

Pat Lynch writes: "I had known Ruth for about 21 years until her untimely death while diving off the Northumberland coast. I first met her through a mutual love of walking and then, as she went on to tougher sports, we continued as very good friends. Her enthusiasm and energy were a great inspiration to her friends and she always kept in touch and arranged get-togethers. I valued her for her love of life and her warmth. Her inimitable laugh always preceded her arrival. She was a one-off and will be sorely missed."

Alan Mitcham adds: "I first met Ruth when she joined Tynedale Harriers in the mid 90s. She was full of energy and she developed a passion for long distance trail running. She was a keen member of Newcastle and Tyneside Orienteers too. She joined Tyneside Loipers just last winter. In early May, she was roller skiing with Alasdair at Hetton Lyons Park (and doing very well too). We met again at the end of June, just 3 weeks before she died, when we were both out with Tyne Valley Mountain Bikers (TV MTB) near Derwent Reservoir. She certainly will be missed."

Skiers clock up 3-minute miles

The GB Series Race 06 roller ski race took place on 27th August 2011 at Hetton Lyons Park. This race, in classic style, attracted 14 entrants, nine men and five women, including two junior women (one under-16 and one under-18). The course was 14.4 km - eight circuits of the cycle track. Times ranged from 43 minutes by two experienced and very fit skiers to 1 hour 16 minutes by a determined and tenacious novice. The first man was Miroslav Havella from Pontefract in 43 mins 19 secs, closely followed by Brian Adams of Western Track Ski Club in 43 mins 32 secs. The first woman in the veteran's class was Fiona Crossley Cairngorm Biathlon and Nordic Ski Club in 56 mins 43 secs. But the star turn was a storming performance by Fern Gates of London Hyde Park Ski Club, the only under-16 competing, to cross the finishing line in 52 mins 59 secs, taking the medal for first woman overall and first junior and gaining sixth place overall.

So why not challenge yourself and enter the next local roller-ski race, a sprint in either classic or freestyle, on Saturday 1st October at Salt Ayre, Lancaster - see <http://www.gb-raceroll.org.uk/>.

Heather Dickinson and Alasdair Wilson

Roller Skiing Course, Hetton Lyons, 27-28 August 2011

I have just completed my first roller ski course, organised by North Yorkshire Cross Country Ski Club in conjunction with Snowsport England at Hetton Lyons Country Park in Durham, and I had a fantastic time!

Cross-country skiing has always appealed to me and I spend the winters glued to the biathlons and racing on Eurosport. With a hip replacement scheduled for last February, a few shuffles on the snow at Allenheads was all the experience I could manage, until one day, in a blaze of light, I discovered skiking on the internet and sent off for the equipment. Because skikes have a brake and all-terrain wheels, I thought I could use them as part of my post-op rehabilitation without risking a bad fall. Thus the spring and summer were spent developing muscle-tone and balance and copying technique from videos on You Tube until I had the confidence to progress on to roller skis.

I called Alasdair Wilson and he patiently started to coach me on skating technique with visits to the Town Moor and Hetton Lyons Country Park. Alasdair certainly knows his stuff and is so good about passing on his expertise that we are very lucky to have him in the club.

In between weekly training sessions with Alasdair, I practised at Newburn Business Park and on the road behind the Egger factory in Hexham – both safe and traffic free. I felt I was improving and Alasdair was correcting my faults, although I did

manage to develop some ingenious ones of my own! It was time to learn more and I was keen to attend the roller ski course at Hetton Lyons Country Park.

On the course, there were people of all abilities. I was with the beginners, but others were there to improve their competitive and coaching techniques. The coaches included a six times British Olympic bi-athlete, a successful American international cross-country skier, and a member of the Great Britain Cross Country Ski Team who spent last winter racing internationally.

The first day started wet – well, it was a Bank Holiday weekend. Our coach, Eric, an experienced skier and coach, took us out onto the cycle track. The venue is ideal with a smooth tarmac surface and a few bends and gradients to keep us focussed, all surrounding a large pond with trees and a wooded track leading up the hill and back to the circuit.

The first technique was classic skiing. Eric demonstrated such things as skating with one ski and pretending to be on a scooter – you'd be surprised how you need to relearn this simple childhood skill! Next we moved on to double poling, diagonal stride and marathon skating – all designed to help us with balance and confidence. We spent a lot of the time laughing at ourselves and each other – our apprehensions gone.

The afternoon was devoted to freestyle skating. Some of our party could only manage a slight shuffle to begin with, and to see the difference in our ability at the end of the course was quite amazing.

On the second day, we worked on both styles again. This time we were captured on video to highlight the good and bad in our technique. More laughter ensued.

By the end of the weekend, with further stretching of our capabilities on Sunday afternoon, we beginners all noticed a real improvement in skill and confidence thanks to Eric.

If this account has inspired you to have a go at roller skiing to help your winter skiing or even just to keep you amused in the summer, Alasdair runs regular instruction classes and the courses run throughout the summer months. *[Editor - or you can sign up for the next Snowsport England Roller-ski course, 1-2 October 2011 at Lancaster - see <http://www.lakelandxcski.org.uk>]*

Tommy Lees

Mountain biking through Switzerland

At the end of July, I went with Tyne Valley MTB for a week of mountain biking in Switzerland. The trip was led by Ted Liddle who has spent one or two weeks a year over the past few summers researching a route across the alps going east from Geneva through France, Switzerland, Italy and Austria. The Italy and Austria

sections are still to come but if it all works out, he intends to publish a guide book covering the whole route.

This year's section went from Grindelwald to St Moritz. Six of us rode the route and our support driver Graham met up with us each day and provided us with a wholesome spread for lunch as well as carrying our baggage. The support van also transported our bikes from the UK to Switzerland.

The whole trip was quite an adventure. Our first night's accommodation was at an excellent hostel just below the Eiger. The view from the hostel was magnificent and the view from the top of the Grosse Scheidegg on our first morning was equally so.

On several days we took some mechanical assistance to reduce the amount of climbing – chair lifts, gondola, train or bus. We still managed up to about 1500m of climbing per day. And on one day we did a magnificent 3000m of descent – a mixture of tarmac, off-road double-track and some very demanding sections of single-track (steep and narrow with rocks and sharp bends).

We got cheap travel by using a 'Swiss Pass' (£116 per person bought in advance). That gave us half price on all the lifts and bus and rail journeys through the week and free rail connections to and from Zurich on the first and last days. Our overnight accommodation was mainly in hostels and bunkhouses and (one night) in a barn, sleeping in straw – initially very comfortable but, without a pillow, I spent much of the night awake with occasional intervals of snoring.

On our last day, in and around St Moritz, we had a free one-day lift pass and we found some exhilarating downhill single-track from the top of the lift system (challenging biking but seriously enjoyable). A great way to finish the week – topped up with a swim in one of the lakes too.

Next year's trip goes from St Moritz into Italy and through the Dolomites!

Alan Mitcham

Camino de Santiago de Compostella

This year was THE year for the long walk. We started the 'Camino de Santiago de Compostella' 21 years ago and decided we had to finish the whole 'Via Podiensis', or GR65, this year with no more procrastinating.

We got the train to Figeac in southwest France and walked to St Jean Pied de Port, at the foot of the Pyrenees. We took 21 days to walk the 300 miles and because we had booked a carrier we only carried a day sack. The walking was not challenging, except for the long distances on some days.

We passed through several distinctive regions and crossed many of the major rivers: the Lot, Tarn, Garonne, Adour, Gers and finally the Nive. My impression of France through this walk is of a huge country dominated by extensive, lush forests and dissected by huge river valleys.

The diet for two veggies was very limited - mostly, fish, fish or fish. The mainstay of the menus seemed to be Canard in its many forms, but there was lots of fruit in season and we helped ourselves from wayside cherry and apricot trees.

You may wonder why we were doing a Pilgrimage, as we are not religious. Well that's a long story, but I confess I love the architecture, both grand as in the great cathedrals of Moissac and Condom, but more particularly the vernacular architecture seen in so many untouched towns and villages of France. The small Romanesque churches are my special delight and in one such we heard two German women break into a two-part harmony - the acoustics were perfect.

May was a wonderful time for wildflowers and butterflies and every day I saw a different type of orchid just alongside the track.

So what's changed in 21 years? Well the gear for a start - lighter rucksacks, more effective waterproofs, good boots but more significantly the 'Girls' now need their creature comforts: comfy beds, showers etc.

The biggest disappointment was to find that we hadn't quite finished when we got to the end. We had forgotten that we had started six or seven miles up the hill 21 years ago & there was no time left to correct the error. But I can't see us going back to do such a short distance.

Pat Lynch

Walking in Haute Savoie

The founders of Tyneside Loipers; Helen Charlton and Sylvia Daley had a fantastic walking holiday based on their ski apartment in Les Gets, Haute Savoie, in August. Sylvia and her family now live in The Netherlands.

Sylvia and I walked in a different area around Les Gets every day. On our last day met up with Terry White, another former Loiper who now lives in Samoens. The Club has certainly been the catalyst for some lasting friendships over the years. We took the main lift and walked above Flaine. If we had known that there were all those monster holes in the limestone we might not have been so brave in venturing off piste on the Loipers Flaine trip a couple of years back!

Les Gets makes a great base for both the winter and the summer and is much less "hard core" than resorts in the nearby Chamonix Valley. Praz de Lys, next to Les Gets, has some excellent, challenging cross country ski tracks; but really only enough to keep serious Loipers entertained for a day. I am happy for any Loipers who would like to know more about the apartment to get in touch with me. It has a super king size sleeping platform with a single bed under in the bedroom and a super king size sofa bed in the lounge. Ideal for up to three people; but it can cope with a family of up to five!

Helen Charlton

Camino de Santiago de Compostella



The fortified bridge at Cahors

The Route de St Jacques



Walking in Haute Savoie

Geordie ex-pats.....
Sylvia and Terry



Biathlon Course, Glenmore Lodge, 28–31 July

One of the great sports to come out of Nordic skiing is biathlon. This is a mix of cross country skiing and rifle shooting. A typical competition involves five bouts of skiing wrapped around four shooting sessions: two prone, two standing. There are then variants such as sprint and relay. This sport is absolutely huge in countries such as Germany and Austria with their top biathletes getting the sort of attention, and money, that a top footballer might get here in Britain. In Britain biathlon gets very little attention and even less money. It's very much a sport confined to the military who have the opportunity to shoot and ski. However, that doesn't mean that ordinary citizens can't get a feel for the sport here in the UK – and in summer too.

There are a couple of places in Britain where you can learn to shoot a biathlon rifle and Glenmore Lodge in the shadow of Cairngorm is one of those. They are home to the Cairngorm Biathlon and Nordic Ski Club and they have a six-lane biathlon range and an extensive, if challenging, roller ski circuit. The biathlon course is given by the indomitable Mike Dixon, who is a six-times Olympian and a fantastically knowledgeable and motivational coach.

The course is residential: over the four days you learn shoot and build your shooting skills. The costs include all equipment hire and the ammunition — I fired around 150 rounds per day over the course. You do this both rested and out-of-breath. Although roller skiing is integral to the training of biathletes, it isn't a required part of this course: you can opt to roller ski, run or cycle to get out of breath.

Each morning began with classroom activities, ranging from holding rifle positions, balancing or watching videos of your previous day's exercises or of professional biathletes. This was followed by some rested shooting at paper targets, which allows you to zero the sights as well as to get some sort of ranking for your precision. After zeroing you can then shoot at the proper metal biathlon targets, five targets in a row that turn from black to white on being hit. In the prone position the target is around the size of a golf ball. Oh, did I not mention that it is 50m away! In the standing position you are given a bit more leeway with a saucer-sized target.

Then it is on to the out-of-breath shooting which is dramatically more difficult! You have to control your breathing, take a few deep breaths followed by a slight exhale and a hold, then a very gentle squeeze of the trigger when the target is central. As my roller skiing isn't great, I chose to run and so a 4–8 minute light jog around some of the Lodge's trails — think red squirrels and pine martens — would be followed by some shooting. Prone follows the first two runs with standing after the third and fourth runs. So, standing is when you are most tired. I think my record for out-of-breath standing was two out of five targets and my record overall was 7 out of 20. The top biathletes rarely miss one out of the 20. There were three people on the course (the maximum allowed is six): me, my friend Chris and Bev whom I had previously met roller skiing, so these sessions were mini-competitions with lots of chocolate as prizes. Bev was the most consistent shooter of the three of us, even managing to hit all five targets on one occasion.

On this particular course Mike's son Scott was helping out (Mike had a broken rib and so holding a rifle position wasn't easy) and he usually hit 18 when out-of-breath and 20 otherwise. Scott is only 17 and heading out to the Youth Winter Olympics; hopefully he's destined to represent Britain in the Winter Olympics in a few years time. Scott was great to have around as he demonstrated just how to get it right!

The later part of the afternoons was designed to take your mind off shooting. One day we did a hill walk up Meall a' Bhuachaille and on another we roller-skied up a section of the ski road – Scott and Chris did a longer steeper section three times!

Overall this was a terrific course and I found the shooting very addictive. I'm already looking at trying to do some biathlon on snow this coming season and I'll certainly try to return to Glenmore next year. I'd wholeheartedly recommend the course to anyone who'd like to spend a few days in a beautiful location doing something different. Courses are on offer at Beginner and Intermediate level. If nothing else comes out of it at least some of Mike's enthusiasm will rub off on you!

Colin Blackburn

Bicycle Beano, Herefordshire, 13-20 August

Bicycle Beano is a small holiday company run by Rob Green and Jane Barnes. They put on a handful of cycling holidays a year in Wales and the Welsh borders — a mix of long weekends and full weeks. The holiday I took was a week in the Welsh borders based in a massive old Victorian house, Poulstone Court, outside the beautiful Herefordshire village of King's Cople.

We had five meticulously planned day rides with a day off in the middle — though a ride was also on offer that day for those who just couldn't say no to cycling. Each day ride was somewhere between 30 and 40 miles. For the fitter cyclist there were a number of detours pushing the distance up to around 60 miles; for the less fit cyclist, there were some short cuts. Each ride is planned around morning coffee, lunch, and afternoon tea... and often a pub stop near the end. So everyone rides at their own pace, in groups or alone if you prefer, but people tend to meet up at one of the stops.

After a very hearty, help-yourself breakfast, Rob gives a route talk, supported by route maps and written route descriptions. Rob's maps are a work of art and tell you what you need to know as a cyclist: is there gravel on the road, is the tarmac in good repair, any short sharp descents? The routes use the quietest country lanes possible, only straying onto A-roads when there is no choice.

Over the week we went off in every conceivable direction. We visited churches, castles, gardens, cider makers, tea shops, coffee shops — and lots of pubs! Although Bicycle Beans are vegetarian cycling holidays, most people who go on them aren't, so the lunch stops tend to be decidedly omnivorous. We visited one village called Dymock and, in the spirit of Douglas Adams, we defined a Dymock as "Someone who comes on a Beano to lose weight." There's very little chance of that happening!

Colin Blackburn

Mountain biking through Switzerland



Walking in Haute Savoie... ex Tyneside Loipers but still skiing



Newcastle to New Delhi, India – April 2011

Many years ago I got it into my head that I wanted to travel to India by road, visiting Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. Now, the political map of the middle east has changed, and I decided to do the trip on a motorbike and miss out Afghanistan.

I needed visas for Iran, Pakistan and India. The visa for Iran was fairly straightforward – but at a cost of £330 as I had to travel to London to apply for the visa at the Iranian Consulate in person. The visa for Pakistan was a bit more difficult. I needed a letter of invitation from a Pakistani national and resident, letters from my employer, references, and a letter from someone in Pakistan who would look after me whilst I was there; then I had to go to Bradford (the nearest consulate) to go through the bureaucratic process of form filling. The whole process cost about £200! Then I applied for an Indian visa, which was fairly easy at a cost of £87.

My route consisted of riding to Dover (as the ferry to Amsterdam was too expensive), across to France, Belgium, Germany and a stop-over with a friend in Vienna for a day. This first stage went well despite the very wet conditions from day one). The rain never stopped and even got torrential in Germany and Austria. From Vienna I rode into Hungary, Serbia, Macedonia and Greece. Getting through Belgrade (the old Yugoslav capital) was a nightmare as the road went into town and the signage seemed to disappear – my GPS came into its own. Southern Macedonia is extremely scenic and views of the mountains were just fantastic. Arriving into Greece was a significant change in the road conditions and general economic feel of the country. I found a small hotel at Agios Gordios, south east of Thessaloniki and the lady manager was just wonderful. I had taken five days to travel this distance.

In Greece I decided, as the sun was out and it felt warm, to send home my rain gear and winter gloves. This was to be a mistake. I rode across the southern Greek coast into Turkey on new roads and made great progress. The change was dramatic with soldiers with guns on the river border and national flags fluttering at all points. I had to buy a visa for Turkey at the border and show my bike documents, including the Carnet de Passage, issued by the RAC in the UK. Many countries don't want people to bring vehicles into their countries to sell to the locals, so they impose a system whereby you have to place money into an account in your home country (this was 5 times the value of the bike, £15,000!) and you get documentation which customs officers stamp on entry and exit. Once your bike is back home, you send the document to the RAC and the deposited money is 'safe'. But if the document is not returned, then customs can get their hands on your deposit.

The ride into and past Istanbul did not turn out the way I had hoped. About 30km before the Bosphorus, the road became so heavy and, with the pouring rain, very dangerous. It also became dark: I had intended never to ride in the dark, but on this occasion could not find a way to get off the highway. Eventually at about 9.30pm I stopped at a petrol station and was directed to Gebze, a small town on the coast past Istanbul. I swore never to be in that position again. It seemed to me that they mix

marble into the tarmac in Turkey and when it rains you get this emulsion which seriously impacts your visibility on a bike. It was a horrible experience.

The ride across Turkey via Ankara in Central Anatolia was amazing: great roads and wonderful service stations with lovely food. However the lovely roads were enhanced by snow! I was amazed to see this, but then some of the roads went up to 2000m. Not having my winter gloves meant I had to stop frequently to warm my hands. However I really enjoyed Turkey and the people are fantastic.

The border crossing into Iran and Bargazan was fraught with not knowing who was in charge. But an immigration officer took it upon himself to sort out all my paper work. At the end of this, a man grabbed my papers saying to follow him to the gate. He turned out to be a 'helper' and I asked him to sod off! He demanded money for helping me and I again told him, politely that I was doing this journey to raise money for UNICEF and that in fact he had not really helped me at all. He walked away muttering to himself.

Arriving into Iran was like walking into an oven. The border crossing is over some low mountains and the plains of Azerbaijan were hot. However, after about two hours ride I hit a dust storm. Although the visibility dropped to about 3m, I decided to go on. Once this had passed I stopped at a petrol station to recover from the experience and sand was everywhere – up your nostrils, in your ear, down your pants etc. The boys at the station were great and blamed the sand storm on the Saudi Arabians. Crude oil used to be spread on the sand and this stopped any being lifted up and brought across into Iran, but this practice had apparently been stopped – I guess because of the current price of crude.

I travelled from Tabriz, Hamada, and Esfahan to Yazd. I loved Yazd in central Iran. This is an ancient town whose history goes back 3-4000 years and is on the ancient Silk/Spice route from India and China. It was also the centre of the old Zoroastrian religion. The small town had amazing old buildings, water canals and systems for cooling houses and collecting pigeon droppings for fertilizer! I spent two days and engaged a local guide. He was a troubled young man on the grounds of his politics, sexuality and relationships with his family. He was a good guide and very interesting and really wanted to ride my motorbike – but I couldn't take any risks.

I rode to Bam from Yazd to see the impact of the earthquake of 2008 on this citadel. In 2008 some 40,000 people had died from the earthquake and this ancient mud-brick citadel was flattened. The site was just amazing, but there was little else to see in Bam. I rode towards the Pakistani border (12th day) and near the town of Zahedan was met by the Security Police. They escorted me for two days which was annoying, slow and frustrating. Border crossing into Pakistan was painful because of the number of people you had to see and then having Police to escort you across to Quetta in Baluchistan. At this stage an English car with two brothers and their uncle were taking a car to Bangladesh and we had to go together, at a very slow pace with Police Officers sitting in the car holding their Kalashnikovs!

Across the southern Afghanistan border I split from the car because I was not prepared to ride in the dark. At night the trucks and buses have huge lights and the dusty roads make for very dangerous riding. I had to spend the next three nights in local Police stations, for my protection. The men were great, but the accommodation and facilities somewhat basic. The Police escorts and effects of the flooding in November 2010 ensured very slow progress through Sindh province. The roads and bridges had been destroyed by the floods and many people have died, more from starvation than the flood. I saw many fresh graves and UNHCR tents. The work of international charities is vital and our support helps. The very heavy truck traffic taking goods into Afghanistan via Quetta also made riding a real challenge, especially for those in cars! At one point, whilst waiting for the next escort to arrive, I could hear automatic gun fire and bomb blasts in the distance, not something that one really wants to hear on a 'holiday' trip. My impression of Pakistan is that it is a country with a lot of difficulties, caused by internal conflict, natural disaster and Al-Qaeda.

Crossing into India made me feel as if home was not too far away. There is a marked change in the infrastructure and pollution levels once you arrive in India. The roads are better and vehicles not broken down. I spent two days with my Aunt in Karpurthalla. This is a replica of Versailles built as a palace for the Maharaja of Karpurthalla, now an elite military school.

I had to ride to Delhi in order to ship the bike back to the UK. This trip of 360km was on a road that was being upgraded and the traffic was horrendous and the driving even worse. I had a little fight with a truck and was knocked off the bike and suffered a sore back. Delhi would have been a real struggle if it were not for a car with two young men who stopped and escorted me to Lalli Singhs in Karol Bagh to arrange bike shipping. Mr Lalli Singh was great and sorted out all the paper work and shipping stuff in a day and half. On the flight home I was upgraded to business class – wow there is a God after all!

I enjoyed and learnt from this trip. I also raised money for UNICEF and people can still donate at www.justgiving.com/Paramjit-Bhogal and see my pictures and blog at www.psbhogal.ning.com. I saw the work of UNHCR in Sindh, Pakistan and every penny helps those who are less fortunate than us. This trip brought home to me the kindness of people to strangers and the inequality that exists between people. I think that a more equal world would be better for us all.

Paramjeet Singh Bhogal

Congratulations to Alasdair Wilson who competed against an international field in the Scottish Six Days orienteering event held near Oban in August. Alasdair achieved a personal best third position on Day 4 and ended the week 17th out of 120 in the M55L class. The biennial Six Day event is a festival of orienteering attracting entries from over 3000 people from many countries. It uses some of the best forests and moorland for orienteering in Scotland.

Loipers Summer 2011

We had lined up a Loipers' summer programme including this year an all-day bike ride around Stanhope and Rookhope, an introductory orienteering event near Ashington, and an evening walk and pub meal in Allendale. The bike ride was a wash-out – it rained horrendously! Keith turned up at the start venue in case anyone came along but we really weren't expecting anyone. We intend giving it another go in late September. Please get in touch if you would like to join us (21 miles on quiet roads and tracks – a lovely route but fairly hilly).

The orienteering day was part of the summer series of events run by Newcastle and Tyneside Orienteers – a low key event, ideal for anyone wanting an introduction to the sport. Alasdair and I turned up and we both enjoyed the event but sadly there were no other takers from the Loipers. Do let us know if you would like to try orienteering – otherwise we won't pursue it.

The best event of the summer was Keith's evening walk from Allendale. After a very showery day, six of us met at Allendale Town under a dark threatening sky. We walked south along the East Allen Valley and then the skies cleared to give us a beautiful sunny evening walking through the hay meadows, with lapwings, oystercatchers and curlews calling overhead. After a delightful walk of about 5 miles we moved on to the Crown Inn at Catton and met up for a pub meal with Rob and Jane and later we were even entertained with folk music – it was Thursday Folk Night at the Crown.

Alan Mitcham

Snowsport England Launches Own Insurance Scheme

Snowsport England has launched a new travel insurance scheme to meet the needs of its coaches and competitive snowsport athletes. It also covers normal recreational skiers and cover can be arranged for one, two, or all three, of these categories:

- **Performer** - covers race training & racing in FIS and BASS races and because many performers are under 18, there's cover for accompanied travel as a minor. Suitable for Freestyle, Snowboard & Nordic too.
- **Coach / Instructor / ASCL** - covers courses (including course fees) and working as an instructor, coach or ACL.
- **Recreational** - Automatically covered, it includes off-piste skiing with or without a guide and you can select up to £2,000 cover for your equipment and personal possessions. Your policy will also cover other types of trip like summer mountain biking, watersports or just lazing under the sun.

The policies can be bought online via a secure website www.snowsportenglandinsurance.com or over the telephone on 01732 853192.

Club events

Tyneside Loipers AGM

This will be held on Thursday 13 October at Charlie's house, 26 Victoria Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE4 7JU. There will be a shared meal from 7pm onwards; please bring contributions. Business will start at 7.45pm. Please let Charlie know by email (charlie.fisher@phonecoop.coop) of any items you would like to put on the agenda and what food you plan to bring.

We hope next winter's activities will include:

- **World masters** Oberweisenthal, Germany, 1st - 9th March, 2012 - contact Alasdair.
- **Hut touring in Norway** - contact Alan, Keith or Charlie.
- **Introduction to hut touring in Norway**: staying mostly in staffed huts, skiing mainly on marked routes, easy/moderate terrain - contact Heather. If there is enough interest, I would suggest a meeting in September to discuss area, dates and what people want from the trip.
- **Yllas, Finland**: Mostly track skiing but also some downhill. - contact Alan.
- **Telemark weekend** in the Alps - contact Alan.

Snowsport England Courses

Roller Ski Coaching: 1st - 2nd October 2011, Salt Ayre, Lancaster

Another course similar to the one Tommy Lees enthuses about in this issue. For further details, see <http://www.lakelandxcski.org.uk>.

Early Season Cross Country: 10th - 17th December 2011, Obertilliach, Austria

The skiing is excellent with a very good snow record, and superb tracks based around the world class biathlon training facility. Basic information is:

Lead coach: Alan Eason (SSE Senior Tutor)

Cost of Course: £250 per person

Level of course: skills development for 2* and 3* level skiers

Format: classic and skate coaching, plus evening demonstrations/discussions on waxing etc

Accommodation: range available from 4* hotels to self catering accommodation @ 25euros/pp/night - you will book your own but we can provide information

Travel - fly to Munich or Salzburg - we are then hoping to provide minibus transfers from one airport and will confirm this once we know course numbers.

For further details, contact dagmarjunghanns@tiscali.co.uk "

On Snow Nordic Skills Week: 25th March - 1st April 2012, Kvitavtn, Norway

A very popular course for cross-country skiers who wish to improve their skills – whether their interests are in touring, racing or freeheel downhill – and for alpine skiers who wish to convert to telemark skiing. Top class coaching, great countryside for XC skiing, excellent accommodation.

Coaching costs: £300

Accommodation costs: from £308 (in 4-person room without bathroom) - £680 (in single room with bathroom)

For further details, contact wendy@royds.org.uk.

Other events

The following events may also interest Loipers:

Saturday 24th September 2011, 1.00pm - 4.00pm: Nordic Walking Festival

Druridge Bay Country Park. Free event. See: www.northumberlandsport.co.uk

ProActivity Ski Tours offers:

- Cross-country skiing holidays in Funäsdalen, Sweden, 11th -18th March or 25th March –1st April. Accommodation in Hotel (£1199/person) or Self-catering (£999/person).
- To facilitate your entry in the Vasaloppet, the biggest and longest cross-country skiing race in the world (90km on 27th February) or an alternative 45km race on 28th February. £650, 25th-28th February 2012.

For further details, see <http://skiing.proactivity.se>.

John o'Groats to Lands End on roller skis, 20th - 30th September 2011

A team of five Royal Marine mountain leaders intend to roller ski from John o'Groats to Lands End, passing through Newcastle on their way. Working in rotation, each team member will do a 4-hour stint on the rollers, with a distance target of 20 miles. The team aim to raise awareness of, and funds to help resolve, the problems suffered by wounded servicemen and their families. The Royal Marines, like every other arm of the forces, have been going through some really tough times over the last five years in Afghanistan and Iraq. All funds raised will go to two charities: The Royal Marines Charitable Trust Fund and The Baton.

For further details, see www.rmrs1664.co.uk.