



TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist
Cross Country Ski club

Newsletter

October 2012



www.tynesideloipers.org.uk

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Calendar of Events - see pages 15 – 16

22 nd Oct	AGM @ 26 Victoria St., NE4 7JU
5 th -9 th Nov	Wildtrak discount week
18 th Nov	Yorkshire Dales XC ski club: roller-ski tour
9 th -16 th Dec	SSE cross-country skills course, Austria
29 th Dec - 6 th Jan	SSE/Totally Nordic telemark course, Austria
11 th -17 th Feb	World Masters Ski-Orienteering Championships, Latvia
14 th -22 nd Feb	Cross-country Masters World Cup, Italy
17 th -24 th Feb	SSE XC & telemark course, Austria

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From the editor

This month, the newsletter looks back, with a report of two adventurous trips to date: ski touring and camping in Greenland and trekking to Everest base camp. Nearer home, Alasdair reports on the August roller-skiing weekend in Durham.

We also look forward: Loipers have lots of ideas about ski possibilities this season and Snowsport England are running several of their excellent courses for both telemark and cross-country enthusiasts. Come to the AGM at Charlie's place on Monday 22nd October (doors open 6pm, business starts at 7.30pm) to discuss the trips and courses on offer and choose the right one for you.

Subscriptions

Annual subscriptions are now due: £14 for individuals and £22 for a couple. These rates compare favourably with those of other clubs; for example, London Region Nordic Ski Club and Yorkshire Dales Cross-Country Ski Club both charge £20 for an individual and £30 for a family. The committee of Tyneside Loipers will consider putting up our subs next year, for the following reason.

Tyneside Loipers are affiliated to Snowsport England (SSE). As a small club, we believe we benefit by joining the wider cross-country skiing community; and we need SSE support e.g. coaching scheme, courses, insurance. For these benefits, we pay an annual levy for each of our members; this comes out of your annual subscription to Tyneside Loipers. This year, SSE have put up their levy from £6.50 to £10 per person. The committee have decided not to pass on this increase to members this year, as we have financial reserves. However, we may have to increase the subscription next year.

We welcome comments from members - talk to any member of the committee and let us know what you think.

Sad news

We send our condolences to Yorkshire Dales Cross-Country Ski Club who have lost two of their members recently in tragic circumstances.

Graham Beesely died on 26 September from carbon monoxide poisoning, caused by the fumes from a faulty solid fuel heating system. The funeral has been provisionally arranged for Thursday 25th October at Grimsby. If you are thinking of attending please let either John Anderson (john.anderson93@ntlworld.com) or Helen Bell (helenbell115@btinternet.com) know so that they can inform those who are making the arrangements. They will also pass on any messages, tributes or memories you wish to send. Graham's family would like to stress the importance of fitting smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, which could have saved Graham's life, if you have coal, wood or gas fired stoves.

Alan Shepard died at home on 6 September from a heart attack.

Goodbye to last season

Greenland for Softies – Skiing in South Liverpool Land

The initial idea of the trip brought images of vast icefields as seen from transatlantic flights, of trips into the unknown by people like Malcolm Slesser, of polar bears, darkness and intense cold. But as the reality, put together by old friend Barbara Gibbons, took shape a year ago, we began to see what turned out to be one of the very best outings any of us have ever done.

Our party was eventually Barbara, her friend Jane, together with Loipers' Alan Mitcham and I, with Kendal-based guide Paul Platt. Barbara's philosophy, born out of previous laborious trips to both Greenland and Svalbard, was that we would tour, but not pull huge loads. Camping, and therefore self-sufficiency, were unavoidable, so the final component was dog sled support – hence the “Softies” bit.

We chose East Greenland primarily because that was the base of Paul Walker's Tangent Expeditions. Paul, a Greenland specialist, is based at Constable Point, one of only two airstrips on the East Coast with regular flights. He was able to supply us with most of the essential gear, book the dog team, and link us up with Paul Platt, a guide working for him in the short Greenland ski season. From early April the cold is not too bad (just -25°C at night) and by the middle of the month (at about 65° north) there is continuous daylight, but the snow stays good until mid May.

After a couple of days in Reykjavik, and one flight cancelled because of poor weather, we arrived at Constable Point. Sorting gear, collecting and packing pulks, we set out across the sea ice of 10 mile wide Hurry Fjord in evening sunshine. Camp was made halfway, with views across to the mountains of South Liverpool Land.



From there we moved up one of the valleys, with great weather for all but one grey day. There was a minor crisis when the dog team failed to appear with our food and fuel, the result of good old-fashioned industrial action. But once solved, we had much of the heavy gear carried.

The next few days were classic touring, along one valley, up a long glacier then down to the sea ice. There were side trips, one evening to a col to spy out the land above, and a couple up side glaciers, just to have a look around and get a feel for the shape and size of the country.



The snow was perfect, the angles relatively modest. Mainly we managed with wax alone, and only required skins on a handful of occasions. Telemark experts Alan and Barbara gave us virtuoso displays, and even I could carve huge looping turns in the easy-angled powder.

Travelling across the sea ice was a particular delight, with a constantly changing panorama of coast, weaving between grounded icebergs. One long, 25km day took us to the final camp on a col between two fjords, one being our route back to the only settlement for hundreds of miles, the Inuit village of Ittoqqortoormiit.

Apart from our dog-man, Jens, we saw only one other group of four Norwegian tourists in eight days. No internet, no telephone, no noise; we saw fox tracks, but despite much looking, and carrying the rifle everywhere, not even a trace of a bear print.



On our final day we skinned up to the nearest local top, at 730m, across to a couple of others, and finally for 5km down an empty glacier of perfect powder. To be skiing down what someone called ‘the best blue run in the world’, on an unnamed glacier between hills defined only by spot heights, making the first and almost certainly only tracks of the year, defined the whole trip.



Then finally, down to the village, for a hot shower and ‘the only flush toilet in East Greenland’ A night of beer and freshly cooked food, then the 50Km transfer back to Constable Point, on the back of a Skidoo. Even at 25mph, this was the coldest part of the whole trip, despite wearing every last item of clothing. But late that day we were on a flight back to Reyjavik and civilization, the last sight of sea-ice, glacier and mountain falling behind. We will all be back.

Practicalities: The trip was run by Tangent Expeditions, <http://www.tangent-expeditions.co.uk/>. They provide the equipment and logistics in a very professional manner, and make skiing in East Greenland a practical, if expensive, proposition. A guide experienced in travelling in the Arctic was essential, and Paul Platt provided knowledge, reassurance and good company.

John Dark

Hetton Lyons Roller Ski Races 25th August

The cycle circuit at Hetton continues to be a prime venue for roller skiing and on the weekend of 25th /26th August Tyneside Loipers organised the 7th race of the GB roller ski series for 2012. This was part of the usual Snowsport England development weekend that saw about 20 skiers of a range of abilities receive high quality coaching and instruction over the two days.

The day dawned wet and windy. By the time Frank and I arrived to deliver the new roller skis and poles that we host for SSE there were puddles forming across the track in various places. The rain continued to fall for most of the morning but this didn't deter the trainees and instructors - not too much anyway. As lunchtime came the rain started to ease off to the extent that the planned ski-cross course was laid out for all-comers to try. If you want to see how much fun and challenge a ski-cross can generate, check out Cairngorm Biathlon and Nordic Ski Club's site <http://www.cbnscc.co.uk>.

It was beginning to look as if the race would need to be cancelled but a course inspection enabled us to see where some of the excess water could go with some ditch digging by ski-boot and vigorous brushing of the water into the verges. This was important as we had a good number of competitors lined up by then from as far as Aberdeen and London including many of the British Nordic Development Squad and at least one of our Olympians, Fiona Hughes, who skied at Vancouver.

As 4pm approached it was clear we could go ahead and 20 skiers of all standards and aged from under 16 to over 65 were lined up at the start.



The format of the race is now called a skiathlon but you might be more familiar with the term "pursuit" where skiers race first in classic technique and then change skis and race the second half freestyle. Total distance was just under 15km, i.e. 2x4 laps of 1.8km.



Robert Sircus and Calum Irvine of Cairngorm Ski Club and Simon Platt of Lakeland who stayed together for all the classic legs and soon lapped most of the field apart from Fiona Hughes (Yorkshire Dales) and Miroslav Havelka (last year's winner from London) who had their own tussle.

At the changeover the front runners all changed their skis for fast skating skis and longer poles, some quicker than others. Miroslav lost several seconds fumbling with his bindings, which he couldn't recoup over the rest of the race.



Meanwhile places were being traded further down the field as relative skills at the two techniques favoured some more than others. With two laps to go it was clear that Simon and Calum were going to contest the win with Robert having faded quickly after the effort of keeping up on the four classic laps. Fiona meanwhile was skiing smoothly and edging further ahead of Miroslav.



A sprint finish was captured on camera by Rex Sircus as Simon beat Calum by 0.4 seconds in a total time of 36.01, very impressive skiing by both these internationals.

Others had their own private battles, some just to finish and Stephen Young from Huntly was cheered in as he finished in almost twice the winning time to bring the racing to a close.



After time to sort the results and allow the racers to shower off the mud stockings they'd accumulated, everyone stayed back for the friendly and appreciative prize giving in the main room of the pavilion for the first three in all classes from U16 to Veteran men and women.

The race couldn't have been run without the help of several Loipers including Frank Cauley who acted as my chauffeur and ran the water station. Keith Walker and Bill Burlton of Tyneside Loipers and the Sircus family of Cairngorm Ski Club made up the timekeeping team, and Tommy Lees, who took time out from the training course, marshalled. Several other trainees also marshalled for whom I am very grateful. Next year the weather is sure to be even better so please keep your diary free for the last weekend of August for next year's exciting racing and an excellent venue to improve your skiing.

Alasdair Wilson (awilson.craw@blueyonder.co.uk)

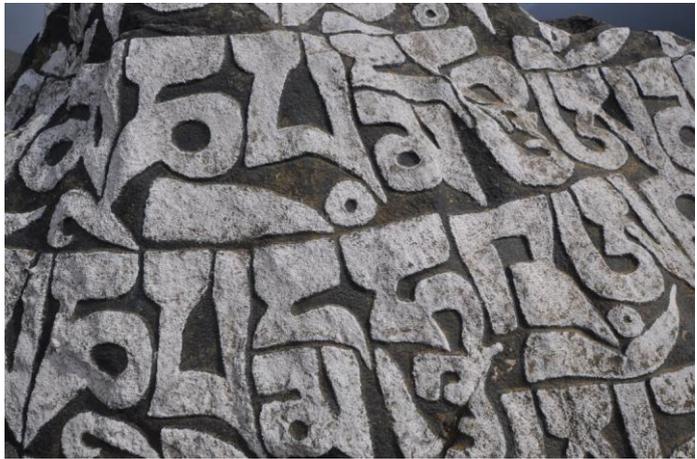
Trekking to Everest Base Camp

One day in January my daughter Kelda phoned me, saying that she had three weeks leave to use up before March, and was I interested in a holiday. Thinking of somewhere warm and relaxing I agreed. A few weeks later she told me she had booked us onto a trip to Everest Base Camp, with 'Explore'. Daughter number 2 was so jealous that she decided to come too!

On 23rd March we flew, via Delhi, to Kathmandu where, despite the chaos, we found a taxi to take us to our hotel. Early evening we met up with the rest of group - ranging in age from late 20s to early 60s -and our leader Jangbu Sherpa. We ate at a Nepalese restaurant which provided traditional food and dancing tourist style!

After a day sight-seeing and shopping in Kathmandu, we took an early morning flight to Lukla (2860m). Stunning views from plane, followed by a very abrupt landing strip which finished in a cliff face! After lunch, we walked along the valley, crossing the river on the first of many bridges to Phakding (2652m).

Many 'Mani' – decorated stones and walls – were examined on the way.



Overnight at the Himalaya Lodge, and the last shower for many days! The following morning we continued along the Dudh Kosi River, to the entrance to the Sagarmatha National Park, where we had to collect trekking permits. We dropped down alongside the river, then crossed it on a long suspension bridge for the first of many times.



Then we had a long steep climb to Namche Bazaar, made much more severe by the altitude. On the way, we stopped at the first 'Everest viewpoint', but had a view only of clouds. We stopped for two nights at Namche (3446m) to acclimatise.

Namche Bazaar

The rest day involved a morning walk up to Chorkang to the National Park information centre and Panorama View – good views to Everest – and back down via the Sherpa cultural centre and museum, then an afternoon walk towards Thame, to a tree nursery and a chorten under construction.



The next morning we climbed out of Namche continuing above the Dudh Kosi with views towards Everest, Lhotse, Nuptse, Ama Dablam and Taboche.

Chorten and Ama Dablan

We climbed up to visit the Thyangboche Monastery, and then dropped down to our lodge in Deboche (3757m). Early evening we went wildlife spotting for deer.

Next morning we continued along the trail, crossing the Imja Khola, climbing up to Pangboche with stunning views of Ama Dablam, before passing more mani on the way to Shomare, then on to Dingboche for two nights at the 'Everest Resort' (4350m) for acclimatisation. A fairly basic resort! The following morning involved a long climb up to a 'chorten' on the ridge above Dingboche (4,412m), followed by an afternoon lecture about mountain sickness by a Himalayan Rescue Association doctor. Next day we continued up the valley, climbing steeply up onto a ridge with many memorials to sherpas and some of the climbers who died on expeditions to Everest.

We followed the moraine of the Kumbu glacier, with views of Kala Patar, to Lobuche, then ventured up to a ridge to see the icefall before the weather got bad.

Kumba Glacier, Kelda and Nuala



The extreme cold continued overnight and the next morning, when we continued alongside the Kumbu glacier, before dropping down to Gorak Shep.



Then we followed a very rough track to the ‘tourist resort’ of Everest base camp (5300m), before returning to Gorak Shep (5184m) for another very cold night.

Everest Base Camp, Kelda, Nuala and Morven

There was a very early start in the morning for those who were still up to it, to climb Kala Patar (5623m) for the dawn, which my daughters said was the highlight of the trip. I left later and walked up to a viewpoint for Everest.



Everest from Kala Patar

Then back to the lodge for a late breakfast, before continuing down to Periche for the night. A morning visit to the Himalaya Rescue Association health centre and ‘shop’ was followed by a long walk down to Pangboche to visit the monastery, before climbing up along a narrow trail leading up to Phortse. The weather was not good – driving snow and mist obscuring what would have been fine views. The following morning it had dried out and we had good views all day. As we dropped further down the valley we took a detour (uphill of course) to Jangbu’s house, where his wife provided copious quantities of lemon tea and also Sherpa tea! We continued down the valley to Mondzo for the night at ‘Mini Tibet’. The next day we continued rapidly on down the valley and into the rain, on our way back to Lukla. We even had to buy some very colourful umbrellas!

In Lukla we again had an early morning start, to get the first flights back to Kathmandu. The next day most of the group joined us on a morning trip to Bhaktapur, an interesting city full of craftsmen, 16km east of Kathmandu. In the evening we patronised 'Rum Doodle' – a well known restaurant amongst the Everest climbers – for dinner! We ended up jiving to a Nepali band playing Geordie music! We flew back via Delhi, with a long stop over, so we spent our time there having a massage. Recommended! The most relaxing part of the holiday!

I felt that although a reasonable amount of time had been allowed for acclimatisation, I would have benefitted from an additional day at Lobuche or Gorak Shep, as I did not have the energy for the very early starts and increasing altitude. The return journey was also very rushed, and it was difficult to appreciate the scenery. There was not enough flexibility built into the trip, for example to cope with the plane being unable to fly to Lukla on the first morning, as apparently frequently happens.

The sherpas were all extremely helpful, and the local communities were so friendly. I think I enjoyed the cultural aspects of the trip almost more than the trekking!

Nuala Wright

Loipers' summer events

On the evening of 19th June, a select few of us turned up at Thornley Woods Visitor Centre for a walk with a difference – bird watching in the Derwent Valley. The woodland hide turned up only a wood pigeon and a chaffinch – not a good start! But things quickly got better when we took one of the trails down to the viaduct and on the way we had good close views of a chiff-chaff with its instantly recognisable song. Across the viaduct, there were swallows and house martins in abundance and also a few swifts. Then we saw our first red kite – it circled right above us and patrolled the valley looking for easy prey or carrion.

Later on we walked along the meadows beside the river and we had good views of a song thrush, singing loudly, at first from a tree near to the river and then another a little further away. Then we stopped for a short while at Hollin Hill Farm where there was a lot of activity from some warblers, probably whitethroat (they managed to evade closer identification). All in all it was a pleasant sunny evening and nicely rounded off with a beer and pub meal in Burnopfield.

Keith's bike ride was on 15th July. We met at Alston – just Keith and I. The weather was dry and cloudy but it was one of those chilly days so I soon realised it was a mistake to be wearing shorts. We rode a circular route via Nenthead and Garrigill, one of the routes published by the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty under the title 'Packhorse Trails'. We passed much evidence of old mining works, mainly lead and copper. The circuit was just 30km but there were a number of lengthy off-road sections and it was testing enough. It was a great route, with lots of added interest. It took us about three hours of riding – more like three and a half if you count the lunchtime stop at the George and Dragon in Garrigill.

Alan Mitcham

Three Cheers for Wildtrak and Mountain-Equipment!

It is nice to report some good news ... whilst not quite so good to start with, it has all turned out fine!

You would expect a £380 sleeping bag to give top quality performance. But a few nights into our ski trip in Greenland (camping in the snow at well below zero), I was feeling decidedly cold. And my tent mates were complaining loudly about the surfeit of feathers and down floating around the tent. My expensive sleeping bag was leaking!

Detailed examination revealed that one of the seams on the inside of the bag was opening up – so that was the source of all the feathers. With now a 5cm gap, the obvious solution was to seal it with a length of gaffer tape. Problem solved, no more leaks.

Back home and back to Wildtrak. They were quickly persuaded that it was a faulty bag and they of course returned it to the manufacturer. One week later I was informed that the sleeping bag was undergoing tests in the lab and they were sending me a brand new one. A happy outcome – I might need another trip to Greenland to test it out!

Technical details:

Manufacturer	Mountain Equipment
Model	Snowline
Sleepzone	10 to -20°C
Comfort zone	-9
Comfort limit	-17
Extreme risk temperature	-37

Technical nerds should look at the European standard EN13537 to see what all this means.

Alan Mitcham

Looking forward to this season

Loipers Ski Trips - Ideas

Some of us have been planning for the coming ski season and a few ideas have emerged already. No doubt plans will be firmed up after the AGM.

Mosstrond, Norway

John Mordue has organised a trip to Norway along with Martin Read of the London Region club whom some of you may know. They are finishing with 9 nights at Mosstrond starting from about 22 February. Mosstrand is a comfortable lodge (old schoolhouse) on an island in Mossvatn near Rjukan in the Telemark district of Norway. They are happy for anyone from the Loipers to join them, as long as they have a reasonable skiing ability. There are lots of day touring opportunities but the skiing is typically at about Grade 3 or 4 (based on the old Waymark grading) so it is not for beginners. Each day starts with 1.5km of skiing across the lake to the mainland. There are a number of small peaks which can easily be reached using metal-edged touring skis. More detail can be found in John's article in the May newsletter.

If you are interested, contact John Mordu (jmordu@yahoo.com)

Selkirk Mountains, British Columbia, Canada

A group of us are going to Sentry Lodge which is run by a company called Golden Alpine Holidays (<http://www.goldenalpineholidays.com/>). Dates are 9th-16th March. The remote lodge is a 20-minute helicopter ride from the town of Golden in British Columbia. The key to perfect (we hope) untouched powder skiing. Once at the lodge, it is entirely remote back-country skiing and we will have just the ski guides and a cook for company. We will be skiing from the lodge using telemark or alpine touring skis and skins for climbing during the day and typically doing up to 1400m of ascent/descent per day.

If you are interested, contact Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk).

Telemark Coaching at La Thuile in Italy

Jon Mellor and Alan Mitcham are planning to join the Telemark Ski Company (<http://www.telemarkskico.com/>) for a week of telemark coaching in La Thuile (a warm up for the Canada trip for Alan!). See Probable dates are 19th-26th January. Coaching is available for all abilities from beginner to off-piste.

If you are interested, contact Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk).

Loipers Ski Trips - Ideas (continued)

Norway Hut Touring at Easter

We don't yet have any plans for next Easter but if anyone is interested please contact Alan or Keith. Possible venues are the Jotunheim mountains or in the area close to the Swedish border.

If you are interested, contact Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk) or Keith Walker (jkeithwalker@hotmail.com).

Greenland Skiing and Camping

Barbara Gibbons is organising another trip to Liverpool Land in Greenland (end of April). This time the intention is to set up a number of base camps and tackle some of the skiable peaks in each area. Moving on from camp to camp will mean pulling pulks to transport the food and camping equipment. Telemark or alpine touring skis are required. Barbara already has a number of people committed to the trip but there may be another one or two spaces. She is already thinking of a similar trip for the following year 2014.

If you are interested in either the 2013 or the 2014 trip, contact Barbara Gibbons (barbaragibbons@btinternet.com).

Scotland weekend

Another probable trip is a Scotland weekend (date and venue to be arranged).

If you are interested, contact Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk) or Keith Walker (jkeithwalker@hotmail.com).

Track skiing week

We are also hoping that someone will organise a week of track skiing (Finland, Norway, Austria?). Let us know if you have any ideas or would like to organise a trip.

Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk)

International events

The World Masters Ski-Orienteering Championships

These are being held in Madona, Latvia next year from 11th-17th February. There is a growing interest in ski-O in the UK with a team being sent to the World Champs 2012 by British Orienteering and two of our own members taking part in successive masters events in Romania and Norway. The advantage of the masters events is that you can enter whatever your standard yet mix with the best in the world. The area is fairly accessible being about three hours from Riga International Airport and there will be accomodation to suit all budgets. See: <http://www.esoc2013.lv>.

If you are interested, contact Alasdair Wilson (awilson.craw@blueyonder.co.uk)

Cross-country Masters World Cup

Another event for the mildly to enthusiastically competitive is the Masters World cup in X-C skiing, which is being held in Asiago, northeastern Italy, from 14th-22nd February 2013. This is an excellent ski area with over 500km of trails, not too far from Venice. See: www.mwc2013.com/en/ .

If you are interested, contact Alasdair Wilson (awilson.craw@blueyonder.co.uk)

Snowsport England On-Snow courses

Snowsport England is running two 'On-Snow' courses this season:

- The first is an early season cross-country skills course with Alan Eason to be held at Obertilliach, Austria, 9th-16th December 2012. There is also the possibility of running a race training course at the same time if there is enough interest.
- The second course is again at Obertilliach, Austria, 17th-24th February 2013. This is a replacement venue and time for the SSE Nordic course (XC and Telemark) that has been held at Kvitåvatn, Norway for the past twelve years.

For more info, see <http://www.snowsportengland.co.uk/cross-country-events>.

Obertilliach Telemark Festival, Austria, 29/12/2012 to 6/1/2013

Wish to learn telemark skiing or improve? Then Obertilliach and Totally Nordic (<http://totallynordic.co.uk/Services/Telemark>) offer a perfect location for all levels with the ski slopes starting in the village centre and offering all grades of ski runs. Top Snowsport England Coaches Andy and Chris Stewart will be the two lead instructors for the week, with assistance from other BASI, SSE and local ski school instructors. The ski runs open early and close late, with night skiing once a week, this gives a great opportunity to ski all day. For those looking for a little more of a challenge, the area offers ski touring into the surrounding mountains to find the steep and deep snow.

If you are interested, contact Alan Eason (alan@totallynordic.co.uk).

Club events

AGM, Monday, October 22nd, 6pm onwards

Yes, it's here again. The AGM, a bit of business but hopefully an evening to remember more for the aimless chat, the lukewarm food, the difficulty parking nearby and so on.

- Door ajar as of about 6pm, business will be a bit later on, say 19.30 or so.
- Location: 26 Victoria Street, NE4 7JU, free parking a stone's throw away.
- Business: usual stuff, agenda etc nearer the time.
- Vacant positions: the committee is looking for a new treasurer and a new newsletter editor. Volunteers and/or nominations to Charlie.
- Vittals: club to provide wine, if you drink beer/guava juice BYO, Charlie will do chilli sin carne and pitta/rice, other food contributions welcome.

Please email Charlie no later than Saturday 20th to tell him if you can/can't come so we can plan. If you wish to contribute e.g. snacks, salad, bits of quiche, dessert let Charlie know, so he can co-ordinate as required. If you have friends interested who aren't members, bring them along. Also photos can be shown at least on the PC screen if not the big one.

Charlie Fisher (charlie.fisher@phonecoop.coop, Tel: 0191 261 7719)

Xmas meal

We'd like to have a Loipers' Christmas meal, either before or after Christmas. Any suggestions for venues? Anyone out there like to volunteer to organise it? Please contact any member of the committee.

Club discount events at Wildtrak and Nevisport

The usual 20% discount week at Wildtrak will be from Monday 5th to Friday 9th November.

Details of a discount event with Nevisport will follow.

Roller Ski Tour on the Yorkshire Wolds, Sunday 18th November

Members of Tyneside Loipers are welcome to join Yorkshire Dales Cross-Country Ski Club for a roller ski tour from North Newbald to Bishop Burton on the Yorkshire Wolds, with lunch in the picturesque village of Bishop Burton. Skate or Classic.

Contact Martin Appleby. Tel 0113 258 6678 m.appleby451@btinternet.com