



TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist
Cross Country Ski club

Newsletter

February 2013



www.tynesideloipers.org.uk

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Calendar of Events - see page 10

26 nd Jan-2 nd Feb	Telemark skiing, mainly off-piste, Zinal, Switzerland
2 nd - 9 th Feb	Track skiing, Fieberbrun, Austrian Tirol
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 course, Obertilliach, Austria
22 nd Feb-2 nd March	Ski touring, Mosstrond, Norway
9 th -16 th March	Telemark touring, Selkirk Mountains, BC, Canada

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From the editor

In January we had some excellent local snow and Loipers have enjoyed it to the full: Frank and Alasdair set off into the wilderness from Pelaw Metro; Alasdair swapped his roller skis for the real thing at Weetslade; Alan, Neil and Nuala skied along Hadrian's wall; Nuala, Pat and Heather enjoyed Wylam to Prudoe cycleway; and Davey Briggs reported excellent snow on a trip up to Kielder where he stayed overnight at Wainhope Bothy.



The club has also gained some excellent publicity recently: Alasdair, Alan and Neil have achieved fame on Sky TV - Alasdair tells the tale:-

Roller-skiing stars on Sky TV

Back in late November, a young reporter from Sky Tyne and Wear got in touch to ask if some Tyneside Loipers members could be interviewed and filmed in action for a short piece to add to the webtv channel on a strand highlighting minority sports.

A couple of weeks later Alan Mitcham, Neil Waters and myself met Mark Masterton and an assistant on an icy morning at Leazes Park. Luckily the black ice wasn't too widespread and Mark, equipped with some rather swish camera equipment put us at our ease with his genuine interest and easy manner. A bit of explanation about roller ski equipment and then on to some skiing alongside the Leazes Pond. Neil was our guinea pig novice to whom I gave some classic skiing instruction while Mark filmed. Then he brought out a neat camera the size of a 35mm film canister called a dog cam that was strapped to my calf and a head cam which I wore over my beanie. Alan and I then did some skating, trying to ski fast and close past Mark's main camera propped up just above ground level. Fortunately we both managed to miss hitting it despite an odd heart in mouth moment as we skidded over a patch of black ice.

Then Mark entrusted me with his big camera; I held it in one hand as I skied along behind Alan and Neil. It was then that the famous Leazes rat jumped out from beside the Pond and ran across my path. Maybe we can be thankful for that incident since it gave an eye-catching headline but Mark made an excellent job of editing all that material down to 90 seconds and putting across a pretty good message about roller skiing, Nordic skiing and the club.



Check out the link: <http://tyneandwear.sky.com/news/video/50070>

Alasdair Wilson

East Gateshead Haute Route (Wardley section)

Open! But not for very long – there was a fair covering of snow on the morning of January 15th and I managed to get there for 9am but by 11am the snow had turned a bit soft and had started to ball up on the base of the skis. However the couple of hours skiing I did get in was passable, and this enabled me to visit the Wardley Trig Point at 55m (GR308625 on Ex316). The best skiing is to the south of here in the triangular area on the south side of the railway line.



Frank Cauley

First ski ascent of Weetslade



I have often used the tracks around Weetslade Country park, near Dudley, for roller skiing including the semi-helix up to the top. Today I took a chance to try out the snow there and was pleasantly surprised. The park is clearly a popular venue for walkers since the existing tracks were well packed so although a little lumpy were quite easy to skate on. Avoiding a few children and some older people on sledges I glided my way along the waggonway to the Wideopen end and went up the normally very stony track to the top (80m elevation I guess) This was my first ascent on snow skis, hence the picture. Has anyone else got there first?

So - a canny venue for an afternoon ski - seven miles from central Newcastle, car park, low level tracks extending to Wideopen and Seaton Burn and some good slopes for practicing your uphill skills and, given cold snow, plenty of scope for downhill. The grass is mostly fairly short so the four inches or so there today was well covered and grand for classic off track.

Alasdair Wilson

Kite-skiing in the Cairngorms on Christmas Day

The snow conditions on Cairngorm gave some excellent skiing over the Christmas period. But on Christmas Day the car park was virtually empty save for Kevin Moore's caravan. Kevin is something of an extreme sports fanatic, one of his sports being kite surfing in the North Sea (usually on the roughest and windiest days). He is also quite an accomplished telemark skier.

Kevin had previously kite skied across from Cow Green to Cross Fell (taking in Great Dun Fell and Little Dun Fell) doing the round trip in two and a half hours. Kevin takes up the story...

“On Christmas Day all the lifts were closed but the snow was good and there was plenty of wind for the kite. In fact the wind was on the upper limit for my 6 sq m kite which is my smallest one. It took me just 15 minutes to get to the Cairngorm summit. It is easy enough to ski at about 25 mph on a flat piste with a good wind.

All of my kites are designed for use on water and hence they have air bladders to keep them afloat and make them easier to relaunch on water. It is possible to get a more conventional (paraglider style) kite for land use but I cannot justify the cost of buying

yet more equipment! The kite takes a while to inflate and I have to carry around an air pump. All of the kites have 5 lines – two lines attach to the harness and take the weight, another two lines are used for steering and control, and the fifth line is used for emergency depowering. That was certainly necessary on the top of Cairngorm when the kite had to be collapsed very quickly in the high wind. Then I deflated the bladders and packed the kite into the rucksack. It weighs just 7kg and packs easily into a 30 litre sack. After that, I had a great run down to the car park.”

Kevin tells me that he originally learnt to windsurf during the miner’s strike (1985). He was still an apprentice and spent his time down on the beach instead of joining the picket line. He also built a skiing windsurfer contraption for use on snow. It worked! But not so well that the idea caught on! Kite skiing was the obvious way forward.

Alan Mitcham

Club trip to Scotland: Lagganlia Lodges, Feshiebridge

Ten members booked for a weekend of mixed Nordic skiing in mid-January, based on these comfortable lodges near Aviemore. It had to be the weekend when snow came to the north east but not to the Cairngorms. Sadly Tim and Penny did not make it having chosen the Easterly route North. The remainder of the group chose the A68 and gathered at the Old Bridge Inn, Aviemore to plan the weekend.

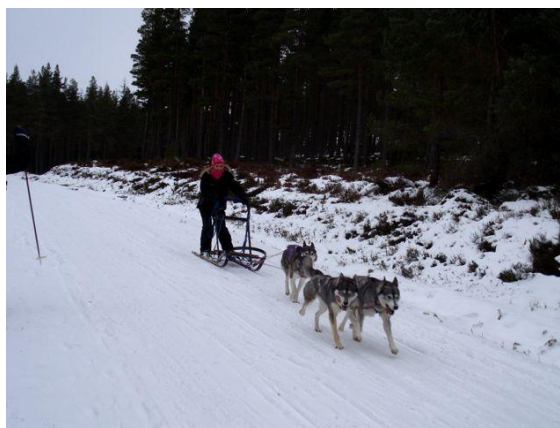
Alan and Keith managed a flier on the Friday and enjoyed a bright, bracing walk in the Pentland hills en route. Winds were high on the tops so Saturday was spent partly on prepared tracks around Loch Morlich and forest challenges in Rothiemurchus.



Sunday saw most of the group skinning up alongside the ski slopes. Alan was feeling off colour so stopped halfway with Keith while the rest made it to a very windy top but enjoyed a clear ski down. The snow canon were operating but it looked as though the snow was landing in the loch.

Paramjeet and Neil did a good walk on Sunday, topping out on Cnap Coire na Spreidhe at 1151m. They had very strong winds and snow was being stripped off the tops.

On Monday trails through the forest took us to Drakes bothy and on to Loch an Eilein. The trails were well used by dog teams in training.



All in all a very good weekend. Thanks to Paramjeet, Neil and Alan for a first rate meal on the Saturday evening.

Keith Walker

Social meets

Sixteen members enjoyed a rather different post-Christmas dinner at the Lebanese restaurant Al Sultan on 7th January. As well as excellent food, some members had their portrait drawn by a very gifted young Korean visitor.

Eight members gathered at the Union Rooms on the 24th January for a chat, catch up and a good beer. Most had called in at Cotswold Outdoor beforehand to see what they had on offer on our club discount night.

If any members have suggestions for a gathering place and a date please contact a committee member.

Keith Walker

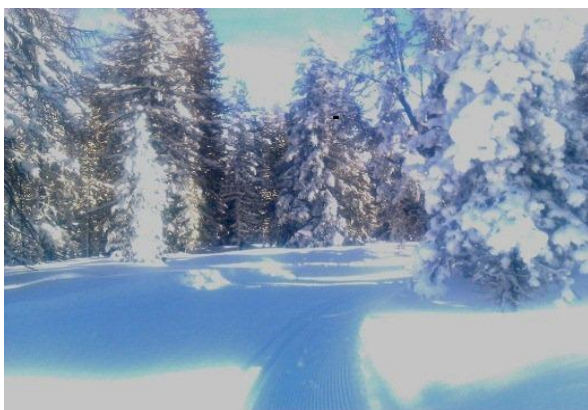
Dobbiaco – loipe, pistes, coffee and Kuchen

Dobbiaco and its surrounding areas are a great place to ski. It is at the northern end of the Dolomites. 30 kilometres north of Cortina. Less than 3 hours by train from Innsbruck. Spectacular jagged ridges and pinnacles characterise the high mountain landscape which towers above Dobbiaco (1200 metres). The famed Drei Zinnen is only a few kilometres away.



Dobbiaco is in the South Tyrol - a part of Italy with many characteristics of Austria. All towns have both a name in German and another in Italian i.e. Toblach and Dobbiaco.

There is a good choice of both loipe and pistes. A good selection of loipe gives you exciting and long spectacular descents and many others provide easier charming routes through woodland and across open meadows. There are many pleasant stopping places for coffee, lunch or gluwain!



A number of pistes are well served by ski buses and trains. These provide a range of routes from coasting blues to more the more challenging – all enjoying spectacular scenery.

The Pustertaler Classic (<http://www.ski-marathon.com/de/ski-marathon/1-0.html>) race takes place at the end of the second week in January, followed by the Dolomitenlauf (<http://www.dolomiten-sport.at/?lang=en>) at the end of the third week in January. At Obertilliach (just over into Austria) there is extensive loipe and a biathlon stadium. Alan Eason (Snowsport England) operates here throughout the winter providing specialist coaching enjoyed by many people e.g. London Nordic.

Good loipe include:-

- Dobbiaco to Cortina – 30km. Durrensee cafe recommended.
- Fischleintal to Dobbiaco –15km. Try the Green Lantern cafe just outside Sexten.
- Praz Wildersee to Sage – 6km, combined with Sage to Brukele – approx 6km.
- Also investigate Obertilliach (40km), Gsiesertal (20km), Antholzertal (25km) .

<http://www.three-peaks.info/alto-adige/alta-pusteria/winter/cross-country-skiing/open-cross-country-skiing-tracks.html>

Pistes:-

- Helm – approached by Versciaco or Sexten.
- San Candido – on the edge of the town.
- Moos – just a few kilometres from San Candido
- Cortina – day trip possible using service buses.

<http://www.yanahzone.pl/uploads/images/Alta-Pusteria-Ski-Trail-Map.jpg>

<http://www.myslopes.com/italy/webcams-innichen-san-candido.php>

Local Transport

You need a loipe pass to ski on the loipe. If you get the 7 day Dolomiti Nordicski pass with Mobi Card (31 Euros) you get free transport on buses and trains for the week across a wide area. The 7 day Dolomiti Nordicski pass also provides free bus travel to Obertilliach! A guide to all buses and trains is available from the Tourist Office and on some buses. There is a free ski bus to pistes. Remember to 'validate' all travel tickets and the mobi card *for each journey* in the machines provided!!

Accommodation

Over the years many UK skiers have stayed at Hotel Tschurtchenthaler in Dobbiaco.

This winter I stayed at the Dobbiaco youth hostel (Grand Hotel formerly!) for 38 Euros half board in a single en-suite room. Some weeks are fully booked with school parties. Other weeks can be fairly quiet. Other accommodation in Dobbiaco can be found through the very helpful tourist office, e.g. Gasthof Her-bri.

Obertilliach is another good place to stay. It is a compact village (about an hour's bus journey from Dobbiaco) in a side valley with a number of older farmhouses. I stayed at the Bucherhof for 2 nights B and B at 25 Euros per night. There is a very helpful tourist office who will help with finding accommodation.

Getting there

I flew BA from Gatwick to Innsbruck. Stayed at Travelodge in Gatwick the night before for less than £30. Packed everything into a 6ft ski bag and checked that in as my check-in luggage for no extra charge. From Innsbruck I took the train to Dobbiaco (2 changes) costing 31 Euros single and less than 3 hours travelling). On the return trip you can use your loipe 'mobi card' to travel 'free' to Brenner Pass.

Eating and drinking

There is a choice of places to eat in Dobbiaco – e.g. pizza restaurant, Winkelkeller (very pleasant atmosphere). Bars include – Station bar (good music plus 'biker' ambiance). Winkelkeller, St Moritz (charming 'patron'), Hotel Tschurtchenthaler.

Innsbruck

Spending a final night in Innsbruck is a pleasant option. It has a spectacular 15th century centre. There's a hotel right in the centre called Weisses Kreuz which can be reasonably priced if booked in advance. The old centre has a variety of bars and restaurants. There is usually jazz on a Tuesday.

<http://www.weisseskreuz.at/en/rooms-hotel-innsbruck/index.php>

It's of course also possible to get the train to Seefeld and get in a final bit of skiing!

Useful Links

<http://www.three-peaks.info/alto-adige/dobbiaco.html>

http://region.austria.info/at/guide/152785sy,en,OEWE/objectId,RGN628at,_area,provinces-and-regions,_site,us,curr,EUR,season,at2,selectedEntry,home/home.html

John Mordue

Climbing in sunny Greece

Think of N America and you might conjure up dramatic images of rock climbing in the Yosemite Valley (Half Dome, El Capitan, etc). Think of the UK and one's mind turns to Derbyshire Gritstone country or the Cuillin Ridge in Skye. But where should one climb in Europe? The answer is Kalymnos, a tiny little island in the Dodecanese in the Aegean Sea – now a paradise for climbers from all over Europe (and even Canada it seems).

Kalymnos is much closer to Turkey than to Greece. It has nearly 2000 routes, all bolted for sport climbing. Each route is described and graded in a climbing guide - the most expensive guide book in Europe!

Eight of us went for a week at the end of October, flying from Newcastle to Kos – and thence a 30 minute ferry ride across to Kalymnos. The eight included myself and Keith Lambley from Tyneside Loipers. Keith is a much more experienced climber than I am and he was leading climbs up to grade 6c.

The climbing is on rocky limestone outcrops which occur all over the island. They include a great number of interesting cave formations. The limestone erodes quite differently to that in the UK (presumably it is the different climate). Many of the tiny handholds are razor sharp and capable of tearing one's fingers to shreds (or feels like). Once home, it took about ten days for my hands to recover.

On our final day we climbed in an area with several dramatic caves and rock features and by lunchtime we had full sunshine beating onto the rock face. Far too hot to climb! The Aegean Sea was beckoning below us, just a short drive away. We had a glorious swim in the sea. It was the 4th of November and a lovely way to finish. We just had time to shower and collect our things from the hotel and then catch the ferry and our flight home from Kos.

Alan Mitcham

P.S. If any TL member would like to try rock climbing, indoors in the safe environment of the Newcastle Climbing Centre (with myself and perhaps one other experienced volunteer to supervise the session) then please let me know. It can easily be arranged. Alan.

Skis for sale

One pair of Nordic/x-country skis for sale, about 5 year old, includes size 9 Salomon boots & bindings, skis are 200cm, waxless, sidecut 54 48 52, Sporten Favorit wood core touring series. Boots bindings & skis only used twice along the bridleway from Newburn to Wylam. Open to offers, contact Davey Briggs, Tel: 07921728419, davey_briggs@yahoo.co.uk, at Denton Burn if you wish to view.

International events

The World Masters Ski-Orienteering Championships

These are being held in Madona, Latvia next year from 11th-17th February. See: <http://www.esoc2013.lv>.

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

Cross-country Masters World Cup

This is being held in Asiago, northeastern Italy, from 14th-22nd February 2013. See: www.mwc2013.com/en/.

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

Snowsport England On-Snow course

This will be at Obertilliach, Austria, 17th-24th February 2013. This is a replacement venue and time for the SSE Nordic course that has been held at Kvitåvatn, Norway for the past twelve years. It will cover only XC skiing; the Telemark course had been canceled due to lack of interest.

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

Club events

- 26nd January - 2nd February. Telemark skiing, mainly off-piste, in Zinal, Switzerland, with Telemark Ski Company. Contact Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk).
- 2nd - 9th February. Track skiing (also gluwain, downhill skiing and winter walking) with Crystal Holidays in Fieberbrun, Austrian Tirol. Contact Carolyn Hawkes (carolyn.hawkes@gmail.com).
- 22nd February - 2nd March. Day touring (Grade 3/4) from Mosstrond, on island of Mossvatn near Rjukan in the Telemark district of Norway, jointly London Region XC. Contact John Mordu (jmordu@yahoo.com).
- 9th - 16th March. Telemark or alpine touring from Sentry Lodge in the Selkirk Mountains, British Columbia, Canada (see <http://www.goldenalpineholidays.com>). Contact Alan Mitcham (alanmitcham@metronet.co.uk).
- 28th April, 19th May, 30th June. Wild Races. Three trail races in scenic settings to suit all abilities. All races start 10.30am. Enter online at www.raceentry.co.uk. For further details contact Paramjeet Bhogal (psbhogal@yahoo.co.uk)