



# TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist  
Cross Country Ski club



## Newsletter October 2014

Welcome to the October newsletter (I am still here as temporary editor, for the time being anyway). Any comments and suggestions will be welcome. The next newsletter is due in January. Alan Mitcham.

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### Club Events

Mon 27 <sup>th</sup> Oct	The AGM at Charlie's house, see page 2.
Date tba	Loipers Xmas meal (details available after the AGM)
Jan or Feb 2015 (tba)	Scotland weekend, based at Braemar YH, see page 14.
5-9 <sup>th</sup> Feb (provisionally)	Long weekend Telemark and Alpine skiing in the Alps, see page 14.
1-8 <sup>th</sup> March	Track skiing in Finnish Lapland, see page 14.
14-21 <sup>st</sup> March	<i>Snowsport England Telemark Coaching, Sauze d'Oulx, Italy, page 9.</i>
9-19 <sup>th</sup> April	Hut to hut skiing in northern Sweden, see page 14.
22/23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2015	<i>Snowsport England roller-ski coaching, Hetton Lyons Park, Durham</i>
plus pub meets and other social events to be arranged.	

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

And find us on Facebook... sign up for latest postings, snow conditions, club activities, items for sale, etc.

### From the Editor

What a fantastic summer! Lots of warm sunny weather – it has been ideal for climbing, mountain biking, hill walking, all of which I have done in spades (and even had a swim in the North Sea)!

Not that this promises anything for the coming winter. Keep fingers crossed. Surely we must be in for a proper winter this year. Last year, as far as I know, nobody in Tyneside Loipers managed any local ski touring.

My apologies for the lack of a newsletter at the end of last season. Better late than never, this issue has reports of the club trip to Finland, the hut touring holiday that we had in Norway/Sweden and the Scotland weekend in Braemar. Also there are reports of TL cross country ski holiday in Dobiacco and Tim and Penny's ski touring week in northern Norway. And there is an enthusiastic account of the Snowsport England week in Kvitavtn by John Peatfield and a report of Mike Hall's trip to the Winter Olympics in Sochi.

This just about wraps up last season's adventures, though I am sure there were lots of other interesting ski trips so far unreported. Articles for the newsletter are always welcome if you would like to contribute.

### Tyneside Loipers AGM – Monday 27<sup>th</sup> Oct

The AGM will be at Charlie's house on 27<sup>th</sup> October – the usual venue 26 Victoria Street, NE4 7JU. Food and drink will be served from about 6.45 and the AGM business will start at 7.45. Charlie will be cooking something for us but would appreciate contributions of food. Bring your own beer and soft drink – the club will provide wine. We expect the AGM to be over by 8.45 so that we can follow with a slide show with a few photos of recent year's club trips, to whet the appetite for the year ahead.

Please contact Charlie as soon as possible to let him know you are coming and what food contributions you will be bringing along. Look forward to seeing you on 27<sup>th</sup>.

### Subs for 2014-15

The usual reminder... Subs for this year are now due! Those who have set up a standing order can relax in the knowledge that their subs are now paid. Here are the details for the rest of you...

Subs have remained the same for the last 8 or 9 years and there is no plan to increase them at this year's AGM (as far as I know). A large part of your subs goes as our affiliation fee to Snowsport England. Please send a cheque, payable to Tyneside Loipers, send to Alan Mitcham (Membership Sec), 5 The Rise, Ponteland, Northumberland, NE20 9LJ. Or bank transfer to Tyneside Loipers – A/C 40134602, sort code 72-00-06.

Full membership	£14
Joint members	£22
Juniors	£10

### Snow Reports

None yet! But hopefully plenty to come over the winter, in the Pennines and elsewhere. Please would members report when there is reasonable skiing to be had in their area. I am happy to receive and disseminate snow reports (Alan Mitcham), though be aware I am often away. A better bet is to send to the membership e-mail list (an updated list will be sent out in time for the AGM) or post a report on the Tyneside Loipers Facebook page.

### A Summer of Roller Skiing

One late afternoon in the early summer, Alasdair and I did a 14.5 km roller ski tour along the traffic-free C2C cycle route, going out and back from Byker to Segedunum, Wallsend. Most of the route is good tarmac along an old railway track. It is very pleasant and enjoyable; though there are several road crossings which present quite a challenge (there are significant inclines where some of the old rail bridges have now been removed). The critical downhill sections either have to be walked, or you develop some very good speed control approaching each road crossing. For all that, it is a worthwhile route (one which we will no doubt repeat) and there are good views across the River Tyne.

The Snowsport England roller ski weekend at Hetton Lyons Park was very successful. John Peatfield and Colin Blackburn and I all took part. The weather was fine but the strong wind on the Sunday proved a bit challenging. The standard of coaching was very good as it always is. Thanks to Alasdair who organised the race on the Saturday – a skiathlon event with each competitor doing four laps of classic skiing then four laps of skating. Next year the weekend is scheduled for 22<sup>nd</sup>/23<sup>rd</sup> August (a date for your diary).

On Aug 31<sup>st</sup> I took part in the one hour endurance race run by Yorkshire Dales XC Ski Club, the inaugural event on the new one-kilometre cycle track at the York Sport Village. I am told that it can be a very windy place, but fortunately the day was very calm and the weather was sunny. I really enjoyed it and was pleased that I managed to keep going for the whole hour and manage 17 laps – the overall winner Dave Coultard did 20! No doubt the flat course and excellent new tarmac surface contributed to that. It was good to see skiers of all standards taking part, including families – a result of a new local initiative by roller ski coach Martin Roscoe, supported by Snowsport England and with help from several members of the Yorkshire Dales club.

Bringing us up to date, the Snowsport England roller ski weekend at the Salt Ayre cycle track, Lancaster was attended by Alasdair. He took part in an intensive coaching workshop and was revalidated for his Club Coach qualification, working with Nordic ski guru, Patrick Winterton. The course included a few new techniques for teaching roller skiing, so Alasdair is raring to start practising with anyone in the Loipers who fancies taking up the sport.

#### Alan Mitcham



Alan competing in the York 1-hour Endurance Race (Skate 3)

### Tyneside Loipers Scotland Weekend, Braemar, February 2014

Fantastic amounts of snow in the Glenshee ski area in the previous weeks before our trip meant an auspicious start to the weekend. Bill Haylock and I travelled together and managed to get to Glenshee on the Thursday to grab an extra day's skiing. We stopped at the ski area and were amazed at how busy the car park was. We soon skinned up and set off for some tops to practice our telemark technique and enjoyed a good run back to the car park – snow conditions were great and boded well for the next day when we bought a full-day lift pass and had good weather and some great telemark skiing.

Although Bill and I had brought tents, we decided to take the sensible option and stay an extra night in the Braemar girl guide hut, which was our base for the weekend, fairly basic but warm and welcome after a day's skiing. We were joined on the Friday evening by Alan Mitcham, Keith Walker, John and Sue Dark, Barney Pilgrim and Tim Elliott. John and Sue had also taken advantage of the good weather and managed to ski most of that day at the Glenshee area.

Saturday's weather was unfortunately not as good as the previous 2 days. Sideways winds and near whiteout conditions meant that the telemark tour around Loch Vrotachen and back to the ski centre was quite challenging. On the Sunday some of the group did another tour on the east side of the ski centre, while Bill and I decided to head home after being unable to park at the ski centre. In any case, the poor visibility and strong winds meant that those who had chosen to go touring aborted the day without even reaching the summit of Glas Maol. The reason for the late start had been due to my purchase of a new pair of Hagen Dragon telemark skis with 7TM bindings from the wonderful Braemar Mountain Sports shop – sorry Bill! However we had a very companionable trip back to Northumberland and I'm really looking forward to testing out the new skis in 2015.

All in all a great weekend away in the Scottish hills with excellent company and some typical Scottish skiing.

#### Neil Waters



Bill enjoying the sun at Glenshee



John, Keith, Alan, Barney and Tim – grim weather at Loch Vrotachen

### **The Club Holiday in Finland, Akaslompolo, March 2014**

This was to be my first cross-country skiing trip for 20 years. Alan Mitcham, Graham Harkness, Nuala Wright, Fiona Macormack, Baxter Fenwick and I took the trip to Akaslompolo in Finland, flying from Manchester airport. We had spent the previous evening in a Premier Inn near the airport and made an early start before breakfast. We were also joined by Judi Webb and Peter Sedgwick and Neil Aitchison, who were staying in a nearby cabin, and members of the Yorkshire Dales XC Ski Club who were staying at the Akas Hotel.

After collecting free rental skis and boots we tried out our cross country techniques on the newly pisted tracks which started just outside our cabin. Baxter and Fiona, complete novices on Day 1 made great progress and kept up with old hands like Alan and Nuala. With skilful and very timely tips from Neil Aitchison, everybody's techniques improved and our group started to cover more kilometres each day despite the unusually warm temperatures (up to 5°C!) for this time of year. Although we anticipated a good display of Northern lights during our trip we found that it was difficult to stay up stargazing at the side of the Lake after working hard each day enjoying the well-groomed tracks through the forests and countryside.

During the week Alan, Graham and Fiona tried skating skis as well as pre-waxed classic skis and, though very tired from the experience, all enjoyed themselves. Peter Sedgwick and Neil Aitchison made the skating technique look so graceful – lovely when you see people who are so accomplished.

Each day our group decided on routes for the day, meeting up at wonderful cafés and huts in the woods where a fire was always burning and where we could barbeque sausages that we had brought for the purpose – delicious with mustard! We managed to ski on average 30km a day and covered many routes north and south of the lake. Neil Aitchison was often at hand with helpful tips at appropriate moments.

The cabin was very comfortable for the week with a very welcome sauna at the end of each day to help with relieving those aches and pains gained from using different muscles.

We enjoyed cooking for each other during the week with wonderful meals from each group member. Peter and Judy also provided wonderful cake and lashings of tea in their apartment. The Yorkshire Dales Club also visited our cabin for shared stories and an occasional beer. A few of us visited the local pizza restaurant one evening but we resisted the 'Bear' topping!

Our week in the arctic soon came to an end and we found ourselves wishing each other well and hoping to meet up again next year.

#### Neil Waters

*Note from the Editor... The trip was great value – we went with Inghams and paid less than £500 each for the flights and transfers and accommodation. Food and beer was extra (cost of the latter a sensitive issue) readily available at the nearby supermarket. The skis were surprisingly good, though most of us upgraded (for a mere 40 Euros) to better quality classic skis which were pre-waxed with a tape system. The tape did the trick pretty well – they were supposed to last for 200km of skiing and to work up to about 5°C (that was what we had on our last day, by which time the wax tape was near its limit).*

*The skating skis were hired by the day from the local sports shop and they were good too. I did thirty-six kilometres of skating on only our second day, which left me well knackered (cannot think of a more appropriate word!)*

*We are hoping to do another Finland trip this winter. More details elsewhere in this newsletter.*

#### Alan

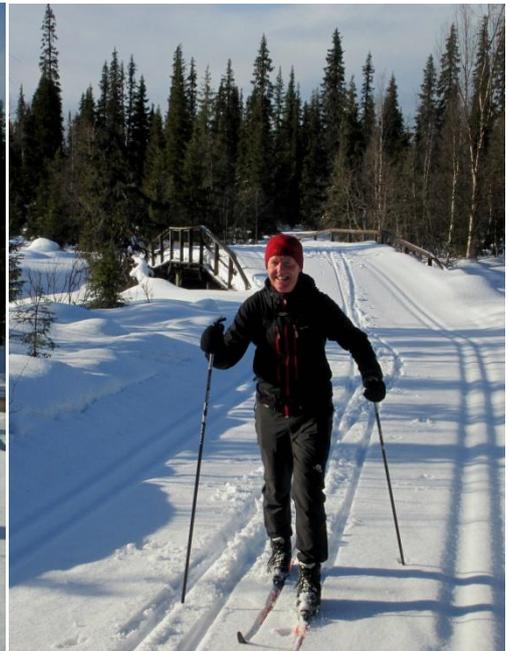


Graham studying the piste map



Nuala in the warming hut cooking sausages

Fiona and Neil – our last day, on one of the unpisted trails



Waiting for the transfer bus back to the airport  
Peter, Baxter, Graham, Neil A, Judi, Fiona, Alan and Neil W

### Hut Touring in Norway and Sweden, April 2014

As a slight departure from our norm, the usual Tyneside Loipers Easter hut-touring trip went across the border from Norway to Sweden. Four of us (Keith, Bill, Greg and I) flew to Trondheim in early April, confident that we were well enough north to get plentiful snow and good conditions for skiing. We had a great trip – but we were disappointed with the snow conditions! We were told by the ladies at the first hut that this was their worst season (least snow) since 1972. It had been a very warm winter and early spring. Later in the trip we met up with a Danish couple (father and daughter) who had toured in perfect conditions in this same area a year ago. This year they planned to ski all the way from Trondheim into Sweden and clearly it was not possible.

We took the bus east from Trondheim and stayed our first night in a cabin attached to the hotel at Stugudalen which we judged to be a good jumping off point to ski north and then east into Sweden. Good value and perfectly adequate, this and our last night at the Storvalen hostel were ably researched and booked by Bill. Somehow our skis had been left behind in Amsterdam but fortunately they caught up with us early the following morning. The sun was shining and we were ready to set off. Well almost – one of us (it was me!) took a tumble on a patch of unseen black ice between the hotel and the annex and suffered a somewhat gory gash on the head. Fortunately it was quickly patched up by Bill and Keith.

On our first day we had some mixed skiing, some good and some not. It was only 15km but we had areas of patchy snow, and all sorts of weather conditions, sunshine and snow storms. Our first DNT hut (Nedalshytta) was very comfortable and traditionally Norwegian and the staff were very friendly. The only guests were us four Brits and four Norwegians – no doubt a result of the poor snow cover!

The next day we headed east into Sweden – a steady climb up to about 1500m above sea level. We crossed the border after an hour and a half of skiing and Greg insisted on producing his passport for a photo opportunity. The weather was getting worse – it was starting to snow and the conditions were unseasonably warm which made it difficult for those of us with waxing skis. At around halfway, we came to a refuge hut (no more than a shed with seating space) which offered a welcome break from the worsening weather. We shared the hut with two amiable Norwegian guys who we were destined to bump into again later in our trip.

Emerging from the hut after our lunch stop we had to battle with strong winds and minimal visibility, plus another 300m of ascent, before our final run down to Sylarnas Fjallstation at 1000m above sea level. Fortunately it was a well-marked route. The Swedish Fjallstations are quite palatial but the main hut was full and we were allocated to an annexe with an upstairs dormitory comprising about 30 mattresses laid out on the floor. That too was almost full. Amazingly it was a peaceful night with no noise – snoring or otherwise.

That evening the clouds rolled back and we had a glimpse of the high ridge leading towards Sylan, the highest mountain in the area. But in the morning we were greeted again by low cloud and frequent blizzards. A few people headed out during the breaks in the cloud but most headed back again pretty quickly. We sat it out in the kitchen/dining area of the annexe until after lunch, the first of several days spent reading, playing cards, or doing crosswords and sudokus. In the afternoon we grabbed a break in the clouds (though it turned out rather brief) and did an 11km circuit over a 1300m col and around a nearby hillside to get back to the hut.

With the forecast still rather unpromising, on Day 4 we moved on to another hut further down the valley Storulvans Fjallstation. Another palatial wooden building, this one was at the road head and accessible for family groups and just about anyone else. We had an en suite room for the four of us! There was even an

indoor climbing wall (which went from the basement through to the first floor common room).

On Day 5 the weather was not too bad. We did a 16km circuit around a good-looking peak called Getryggen (the goat's back). We sheltered in another refuge whilst we had lunch and then aimed for an 1130m col navigating at first through low cloud and then gradually improving conditions until, as we approached the col, the sun came out. We had a wonderful descent down a gentle valley, for about 3km, and then started contouring back to the hut – sunshine for the whole way back and the valley entirely to ourselves until we got to the fjallstation.

On the following day we moved on to Blahammerans Fjallstation, a gradual climb all the way from 630m to 1080m. For the second time on this trip, one of Bill's ski bindings pulled out from the threaded insert in the ski. We fixed it as best we could and this time it lasted until the end of the trip.

Blahammerans is in a remote and windy position. But it has a reputation for gourmet dining. We were relegated once again to the annexe, sharing a tiny bunk room with 4 other people. The toilets were across in the main hut, negotiated on each visit via an ever-increasing snowdrift. Day 7 was another day of reading and playing card games in between watching the wind and the ever-growing snowdrift. In the late afternoon we spotted a break in the cloud and Greg and I went for a 7.5km ski tour including the 1160m top of Blahamarklappen. From the summit we could see no more than 15m and we were pleased to find our way back to the marked trail and the fjallstation. We had booked in for a meal in the main dining room – it was indeed a very gourmet affair (and quite expensive). The sommelier was also a master of ceremonies and he described in detail each course and the recommended wines to go with it – entirely in Swedish and to the great appreciation of all those who could understand it!

On our very last day, the visibility had improved and the wind had abated significantly. We had a very enjoyable mainly-downhill run back to civilisation at Storvallen – 400m of descent in the first 5km of marked trail and then a river crossing over a very fine bridge followed by another 200m of ascent before running back down to the youth hostel. We arrived in the early afternoon and were allocated a very nice room with a lovely lounge area which we shared with just 4 others. Down at this level the snow was melting rapidly in the warm sunshine and the patchy snow was a real problem on some of the steeper descents. The following morning we went by taxi to the nearby town of Meraker and then caught the bus back to Trondheim airport.

Despite the inclement weather and often difficult snow conditions, we felt we had had a great trip. We had achieved most of what we had intended to do, but sadly we could not do the planned ascent of Sylan. This was our first sortie into Sweden. The 'huts' are a lot different from those in Norway. The fjallstations are huge and very impressive. The refuge huts are very welcome and are clearly marked on the map. And the marked ski trails are very clear (with poles surmounted by a large 'X') – not very subtle compared with the birch withies used in Norway. It is more than likely that we will be back in Sweden in 2015.

Alan Mitcham



After the storm -  
Evening sun at Sylarnas

## Mike Hall's Winter Olympics, Sochi 2014

I have been lucky enough to have attended the last three summer Olympics in Athens, Beijing and London for business research purposes. Well someone has to do it! I work for Architects, Faulkner Browns, and have been involved in design of swimming pools and velodromes, and ice rinks and indoor ski slopes (including Milton Keynes Xscape, Braehead and Castleford). And so I was offered a unique opportunity to participate in the Olympic Observers programme for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi.

There is a mandated requirement from the IOC for Olympic host cities to deliver knowledge sharing to future host/bidding cities. This largely takes place during the Paralympics where some of the logistics of access during Games time is a little easier to manage. Despite some unease with events taking place in nearby Ukraine, I packed my winter jacket and made my way to Sochi.

The week long programme consists of a series of workshops and site visits. There is an emphasis on openness (sharing the operational success and failure) though unsurprisingly there was some cultural reticence to focus on the latter! I did however enjoy the seminar from one outspoken official who was berating the quality of the weather forecasters, whose inexperience in this critical and specialist field played havoc with some of the Games schedules.

Most of my time was spent at the coastal cluster assessing some of the arena facilities and regrettably, it has to be said, there are going to be some big white elephants! Whilst I cannot claim to have participated in any of the skiing, I did manage to visit the downhill venue and mountain village, built at huge expense with a massive new rail infrastructure. The Olympics and Paralympics were a memorable experience and it was a privilege to get behind the scenes and see the huge logistics programme which makes it all happen.

I was amused to learn that, thanks to the success of athletes like Jenny Jones and their humble beginnings on indoor slopes, many of the Brits were known as the 'Fridge kids'. I'm sure we are all hoping to have a little less fridge and more of the real thing this winter, Olympians or not.

Mike Hall

### **BMC Autumn Lecture Series – Northumbria University, Wed 29<sup>th</sup> October, 8pm**

The autumn lecture at Northumbria University is hosted by the NMC and is free to BMC members. This year's lecture is presented by Neil Gresham and Kenton Cool. Both are well known climbers and regulars on the lecture circuit so I would expect it to be a worthwhile evening, with a focus on various aspects of mountaineering. Tickets cost £8 (but free to BMC members – just turn up on the night). The lecture venue is the Student Union building (best access from St Mary's Place).

Booking details are on <http://thenmc.org.uk/#lecture>

### **Snowsport England Telemark Coaching Week, Sauze d'Oulx, March 2015**

I suspect some people will have missed this item which has been advertised on the Snowsport England website, details on <http://www.snowsportengland.org.uk/telemark-events> Check out the website then scroll down the page and **click** on further details and booking form. The course is for all abilities and is to be run by Telemark Coaches Andy and Chris Stewart and takes place in Sauze d'Oulx in Italy, 14-21 March. Andy and Chris have been coaching for many years and are very well qualified. I would recommend the week for top level coaching and I would expect it to be a good social mix.

A word of caution... Only 6 participants had come forward by the August deadline and there needs to be a minimum of 10 people. I am told that the course may still go ahead if enough people come forward. Please get in touch as soon as possible, either with the organisers, or with me, Alan Mitcham.

## Snowsport England Coaching Week - Kvitavatn 2014

“Closing the gap!!”

Ambition level ‘high’. Ski marathons are planned for 2015 – love nordic skiing, but just 1 week of instruction in each of the last 3 years, plus some roller-skiing. Skills/technique level is ‘low’ to ‘middling’!!

How to close this gap between ambition and skill? Answer: Head for the Snowsport England coaching course at Kvitavatn in Norway. Fingers crossed for decent snow so late in the season. It was an early start from Newcastle on Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> March and a long day of travel to Oslo via Schipol and bus out to Kvitavatn. The bus journey helps break the ice between me (the only ‘new’ person to this course it seemed) and the 20 or so Snowsport England ‘regulars’. Into my room I had a “wow” view of Gausta – a quick unpack, dinner refectory style and then a briefing by the coaches.

Monday, more getting to know you over breakfast and then out on skate skis to various activities for the coaches to assess individuals into “ability level’ groups for 2 days of instruction and coaching.



Towards Gausta – early morning

So off we went – into a group of 7 ‘beginners’ to skate with Alan Eason . . . taking us over two days from the very basics through to a reasonable level of technique. The instruction was always followed by practice and one-to-one advice/coaching. Going down to the frozen lake to ski 100m and then returning back along your tracks, with Alan pointing out things going wrong and what/how to correct, was a revelation. My first track had curves and ran for 3/4 metres – yet by Friday I was doing 7/8 metres of straight glide, flat entry, progression into compression and power into next step!!

Wednesday – swap to 2 days classic with Mike Dixon. Although I have done all my skiing in this style, Mike instantly highlighted that my strength and fitness was high but ‘hiding’ some deep fundamental issues to do with stance and flow. He assessed this was related to lack of balance!! He made me do some exercises which revealed all . . . so he gave me some corrective techniques to try and these will now last me a lifetime of improving this approach to my snow and roller-skiing. After 3 days I could really sense the benefit - I was amazed!! Now I am doing daily Tai-chi and yoga balances.

By Friday I felt coached to a point I needed to just go off and do a lot of practice/consolidation. Although I could have joined Patrick Winterton, the coaches were very flexible and I chatted through how best to do some solo work. In essence I headed to the lake for at least 3 x 1½ hour sessions per day and worked on my skate which links best with roller-skiing and focused on improving technique, along with some high intensity fitness training.

What I did 'bring' to the week is high fitness (for my age 60+) as I do nordic walking racing, turbo biking/light weights at home and rowing, alongside roller-skiing. Through the autumn and winter I did lots of work inspired by the Swedish Winter Sport Research video on [www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRXB5vEOmC8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iRXB5vEOmC8) (though not to their extremes like perched curls)!

On Friday and Saturday I was able to build on my steadily improving skate techniques, alongside testing and pushing my fitness (all that work proving worthwhile – even attracting positive comments from Mike, which was nice). I was able to do Skate-2 for 2km, with 30-second high-intensity bursts every 3 mins. It is worth investing in one's fitness to take advantage of this week!!

**Reflections** – what a privilege to be coached by Alan, Mike, Patrick and Martin Watkins (who worked with me as part of his coaching assessment). Nine Winter Olympics and multiple world and FIS events between them. Massive expertise and really nice people too . . .

Late season meant that the snow was old and therefore crumbly, frozen in the morning and slush in the afternoons. Waxing was a challenge and I have learned to love klister!!

One advantage was that the bird life was excellent (I am a birder) as they arrived from wintering in the valleys. Each day brought new species. A male Yellowhammer was singing outside our hut all week.

Kvitåvatn Fjellstoge – a superb base and my single room was spacious as designed for 4 with stunning views of Gausta through the trees. The food is healthy, wholesome and hearty!! I had either the vegetarian option or chicken/fish (the chefs delighted in cooking some excellent vegetarian food).

Although the only 'new' person out of 24, I never felt anything other than part of the experience. I have learned a great set of ideas and ways of working that will transfer towards my roller-skiing and closing the gap between my high ambitions and now increasingly confident skills and techniques. In fact I am provisionally signed up to join Alan in Obertilliach in early February 2015 to do the Totally Nordic week that leads into the Dobbiaco – Cortina ski marathons . . . watch this space!!

John Peatfield [john.peatfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:john.peatfield@yahoo.co.uk)



Fancy dress races on the last afternoon  
Super-Elf John outguns Superwoman

### Cross-Country in Dobbiaco

Carolyn, Heather, Jane, Wenda and I went to Dobbiaco, in the Italian Dolomites, in February to do some track skiing. We flew from Manchester to Innsbruck and then by road for 2 hours to Dobbiaco itself. We used the train from Newcastle, which is very convenient going right into the Airport at Manchester.

We arrived to walls of snow everywhere. For several of us it was a welcome return to a beautiful area. The hotel was new to us and, much to our surprise, it was owned by Polish people. Most of the customers were Polish too, with two coach loads arriving weekly! They were very welcoming and friendly and we listened to their music some evenings.

We skied all of the loipes using buses and trains to access the routes further from the town. The mountainscape is quite spectacular and we had many sunny days in which to admire it all. Some of us hired skating skis and others classic.

Jane and I took a day off to go by train to Bolzano to see Otzi, the Ice Man, who is 6500 years old! A whole museum is devoted to him and to the analysis of everything found in the Glacier with him in 1991. Strangely for me, he's exactly my weight and height (5ft 2ins) but doesn't have eyes of blue.

I really love the area and particularly being able to ski right under the dramatic peaks. I would willingly return anytime. We all enjoyed the skiing and social time we spent together. The temperature during the week rose and the snow was thawing lower down by the time we left.

Pat Lynch



Carolyn in her comfy snow-hole



### Spring Touring in the Sunmore Alps, Norway

Our trip to Norway was organised by Sioban, a lawyer from London, who we met a few years ago whilst ski touring with The Telemark Ski Company at Mount Parnassos, Greece. The trip was led by an American guide, Jeff Banks (who knows the area well and speaks Norwegian), along with a Swedish guide colleague. I was the sole telemarker in the group.

Penny and I flew to Alesund on the West coast about halfway between Bergen and Trondheim. Alesund is in fjord country and is based on a stunning archipelago of islands. Due to a fire in 1905 it was rebuilt in Jugendstil style. Nearby is the mouth of the large Hjørundfjord which has a side arm called the Norangsfjord, where we were based in a farm B&B.

Our week there consisted of day tours to local peaks accessed by minibus and often ferry crossings. Typically we would climb about 800-900 vertical metres to a peak or ridge and ski back down, with repeat climbs often possible. The most dramatic days involved climbs to peaks overlooking the Fjord (Bleaja twice and Skarasalen). At the latter we skied down the far side to the fjord and called a boat to take us back to the ferry terminal.

The weather was pretty good, with plenty of fresh snow in the week, but it had been warm and snow cover was less than usual low down. Visibility was a problem at times and at these altitudes snow was sometimes wet and heavy. But we also had days with good visibility, with powder snow, when the skiing was fantastic. It was a great week.

Tim Owen

### FOR SALE.... £90 or near offer

Fischer RCS Skate plus skis – 190cm medium/stiff – very lightweight and in very good condition, with Salomon SNS/Pilot bindings.

I bought these off a friend so I could try skate skiing. They are superb skis but I need to buy 177/182 ones as best for my weight/height.

I can arrange delivery to North East area as I am over most weeks.

John Peatfield ( [john.peatfield@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:john.peatfield@yahoo.co.uk) or 07711325288 )



### Other Skis and Boots for Sale

We have acquired a few pairs of skis and boots over the years in addition to those which are held in the club stock by Pat Lynch. They include at least two pairs of very fine wooden skis. If you are in need of skis or boots please contact Alasdair Wilson or Alan Mitcham (details on the front of this newsletter). Hopefully we can fix you up with what you need.

I am hoping to put details of For Sale items on the TL website very soon.

### **Tyneside Loipers Trips for this winter**

A few of us met up at the pub in Wylam this month and we have mapped out an outline plan for the coming winter. We hope you will approve. Further discussion will take place at the AGM on 27 October before a final plan will be sent out to members. It will be a huge help if you can indicate if you wish to come along on any of these club trips. Trips will only go ahead if we have enough early commitment from members (or at least an expression of interest). Dates are provisional at this stage.

#### 5<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> February –Weekend Skiing in the Alps (Telemark and Alpine)

We expect to have at least 4 days of skiing (Friday/Sat/Sun/Monday) staying in Morillon. We have the use of a 5-person apartment in Morillon as per last year (see the January/February newsletter) right at the base of the piste and we are looking into getting another nearby chalet if there are enough people interested. Two chairlifts serve the ski runs back down to the apartment (good skiing) and they also link to the excellent Flaine ski area and other resorts such as Les Carroz. EasyJet flights from Newcastle to Geneva are not particularly well-timed, but there are other options (we may need to return via Edinburgh).

#### 1<sup>st</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> March – Track Skiing in Lapland

Judi and Peter are going again to Akaslompolo (aka Yllas) on a package deal with Inghams. They will be staying in a cabin, accompanied by Neil Aitchison and Helen Charlton (it was Neil who gave us some excellent coaching on cross country ski technique last year). We are hoping that we can get together 5 or 6 keen Loipers to join us in another cabin. We greatly enjoyed the conviviality of the cabins last year and the convenience of the ski trails going past the door – but there is also the option of staying in the hotel. Flights are from London Gatwick and the all-in package price, ex-Gatwick, is about £500 per person discounted for club members.

(Note that the Yorkshire Dales Club are skiing in the resort of Saariselka which is a further NE near to the Russian border. They have stayed there on previous occasions and I gather that there are good prepared ski tracks (like Akas) but the tracks are generally higher up above the tree-line. Both Saariselka and Akaslompolo have their own downhill ski areas too. The Yorkshire Dales trip (which we are welcome to join) is the week commencing 22<sup>nd</sup> February, which has the added convenience (for us) of flight availability from Manchester.)

#### 9<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> April – Hut Touring in the far north of Sweden

We are planning to ski again in Sweden, this time in the far north and taking in part of the King's Trail (the Kungsladen) from Abisko to Nikkaluokta and taking in Mt Kebnekase, Sweden's highest peak at 2105m. The area is accessible by air (to Kiruna) and train but the travel logistics have yet to be worked out (two TL members have done this trip before and are being consulted). There are alternate staffed huts and unstaffed/unprovisioned huts along the route, which means that food will have to be carried on alternate days (pack weights will be up to about 13/14kg on those days). Kebnekase itself is very skiable mountain. More details will be available soon.

#### Scotland weekend

We are considering going back to Braemar but this time we will stay in Braemar Youth Hostel (which comes recommended by fellow Loipers). We would like to be flexible with dates and we are looking at the following possible weekends... 9-11<sup>th</sup> January, 30<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> Jan/February, 20-22<sup>nd</sup> February. Hopefully we will be able to pick a weekend at reasonably short notice to capture the best weather and snow conditions. It would be much appreciated if anyone interested could get in touch and let us know what dates are suitable for them.

Quite a few of us have booked other ski trips already. A few of us are doing some remote ski touring in Canada and others are doing a telemark coaching week in Italy. Carolyn has said that she is keen to do a week of cross country skiing in the Alps or Norway, or perhaps following the Peer Gynt trail or the Trans-Jura (anything hotel to hotel and not involving carrying a heavy load). Get in touch with Carolyn if you are interested in joining her – carolyn.hawkes@gmail.com

### Club Skis and Boots

Just a reminder... the club has a good stock of skis and boots for hire by club members (at a nominal charge of just £10 per weekend). Climbing skins are also available. The keeper of the club equipment is Pat Lynch who lives in Wylam (e-mail and telephone details on the front of this newsletter).

We also have roller skis along with a range of sizes of track skiing boots. These are held by Alasdair who lives in Forest Hall (again see front of this newsletter).

### E-mail addresses

Most of our club activities are advertised by e-mail or on Facebook. Do please keep the Membership Sec (Alan Mitcham) informed of any changes to your e-mail address. And remember that the e-mail list is to be used for skiing or outdoor related activities only.

**Finally...** a note from John Mordue about the Dalseter Hotel in Norway, who are offering cross country ski holidays since the recent demise of both the UK Cross Country Holiday companies, XCUK and Waymark. Daily ski touring is organised by UK leaders amongst them John himself.

### Skiing at Dalseter –2015

- **Dalseter Høyfjellshotell is organising a daily programme of skiing for UK guests between 21<sup>st</sup> February and 28<sup>th</sup> March 2015.**
- **Track and off track options. Beginners welcome.**
- **UK leaders will act as hosts and will organise daily skiing**
- **Accommodation costs for 7 nights with full board in shared room - £450 to £550 excluding flights etc.**



**Dalseter Høyfjellshotell invites you to book now for 2015. No deposit required.**

**Contact details for further information/bookings:**

• Email: [post@dalseter.no](mailto:post@dalseter.no)

• Telephone: +47 61 29 99 10

<http://www.dalseter.no/engelsk-web/index-uk.html>