



TYNESIDE LOIPERS

The NorthEast's Specialist
Cross Country Ski club



Newsletter October 2015

Sorry, a bit later than planned (again). I hope there is something here to interest everybody. The next newsletter is due in January (by which time we will have deep snow of course). Contributions welcome!

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Club Events

January (tba)	Post-Xmas meal –The Sky Apple, Heaton, contact Nuala (p.4)
Jan 14-18 th	Telemark/Alpine skiing at Les Houches, French Alps, contact Tim or Alan (p.3)
Feb 5-7 th	Scotland weekend, Glen Feshie Hostel, contact Alan (p.3)
March 5-12 th	Dalseter, Norway, track skiing and day touring, contact Alan (p.3)
April 2 nd -10 th	Silvretta Alps, Telemark/Alpine Touring, contact Tim (p.3)
April 3-10 th	Snowsport England Coaching Week, Nordseter, Norway (p.4)

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Club website 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

John Dark tells me that we are in for a very cold and snowy winter. Apparently it is due to the mischievous El Niño which brought us the harsh winter of 2010 (I have memories of snow lying in the Pennines into March and April of that year). Check it out the latest story on

<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/weather/11864067/Britain-braced-for-long-snowy-winter-as-strongest-El-Nino-since-1950-expected.html>

I trust the Telegraph is a reliable source! We will see how it turns out.

We are planning a club trip to Scotland in February and most of us will also be hoping to ski in the northeast. Fingers crossed that the snow actually arrives. There are a few trips planned to Europe and Scandinavia too – read more in this newsletter.

Snowsport England have produced an excellent new video promoting roller skiing. The video was filmed in York and shows experienced and beginner skiers using the excellent new track. The video can be accessed on the web – see the link on p. 5. Roller skiing is a good all-round body workout and great training for cross country track skiing. If you want to give it a go, please contact Alasdair or Alan.

Tyneside Loipers AGM

The AGM has been and gone. Many thanks Charlie for hosting yet again. It was an enjoyable and sociable occasion. Twelve members turned up and consumed plenty of good food and wine before and during the serious business of looking at the club accounts and our progress through the year. Just for the record, we had 55 paid up members for the last year (all full members) and the highest number that I can recall. The club accounts are very healthy and the committee were tasked with looking at ways of spending some of the excess for the year. Surprise, surprise! The existing committee have been re-elected. Though all agreed that some new blood would be welcome – please come forward if you would like to join us.

Subs for 2015-16

The usual reminder... Subs for this year are now due! Those who have set up a standing order can relax knowing 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 still no plan to increase them at this point. A large part of your subs goes as our affiliation fee to Snowsport England. Please send a cheque, payable to Tyneside Loipers (send to me as Membership Sec, at 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

Many thanks... Alan Mitcham

Tyneside Loipers Trips this Winter – lots planned already!

Telemark/Alpine Skiing in the Alps – 14th to 18th January

A few of us are going to Les Houches (down the valley from Chamonix) for three and a half days of skiing on the piste (and off-piste too, if we can find good snow). Thanks to Tim Owen for organising. We are staying at the Hotel Les Mêlézes, in Les Houches itself, and we are flying direct from Newcastle to Geneva. Contact Tim or Alan if you want to join us.

Scotland Weekend – 5th to 7th February

This year we are going back to the hostel at Glen Feshie (Balachroick), which was a favourite of Tyneside Loipers for many years. We intend to book the whole hostel (which gives us a total of 16 beds). If the winter snow forecast is right, there will be lots of skiing options... cross country skiing in the forest, hill touring in the Monadhliaths (3 Munros easily bagged on skis) or summiting on Carn Ban Mor (direct from the hostel), or a trip to the Cairngorm Ski Area. Please get in touch with Alan Mitcham as soon as you can to book your place on the weekend. Details of the hostel are on www.glenfeshiehostel.co.uk/

Dalseter in Norway – 5th to 12th March

At least a dozen of us are going on this holiday, staying in the Dalseter Høyfjellshotell at the head of Espedalen. Some of us are staying an extra two days and returning on 14th. Flights are from Newcastle via Amsterdam to Oslo. The hotel has an excellent reputation and was a favourite venue of XCUK and Waymark. John and Sue Dark had a lovely week there last winter and are returning again with the Loipers this year. There is plenty of good skiing both on- and off-track. There are high peaks to be skied (the highest is Ruten at 1517m altitude). Daily guiding (on- and of-piste) is provided by resident UK guides during the week (including our own John Mordue) and various types of track and touring skis can be hired from the hotel. The hotel also has its own small ski hill which can be accessed by a 750m long drag lift. Have a look at www.dalseter.no/engelsk-web/index-uk.html for more details.

Ski Touring in the Silvretta Alps – 2nd to 10th April

Thanks to Tim who has organised this one. The Silvretta Alps are a range mountains on the Swiss/Austrian border. They offer good intermediate skiing with peaks over 3000m. Eleven of us are booked already (a mix of telemark and alpine skiers, 6 of us Loiper members). We probably cannot take any more people at this stage but, if you are desperate to join us, get in touch with Tim or Alan anyway. We have two guides booked (the lead guide is an American Jeff Banks who spends his winters guiding in Europe and knows the area very well). We will be staying in the high mountain huts (lodges) and skiing from hut to hut and doing day-tours along the way. More on <http://jeffbanksmountainguide.com/ski/silvretta.html>

Judi Webb has also asked me to mention a trip that she and Peter are arranging – back again to their favourite track-skiing destination, Akaslompolo, in Finland. They will be staying in one of the Akas cabins for two weeks from 28th February, joined for their first week by Helen Charlton and Neil Aitchison (both well known to the Loipers). Judi would be pleased to hear from any club members wanting to join them for a week (hotel or cabin accommodation available). Email Judi on judi.webb1@btinternet.com

I know that there are lots of individual trips being organised for this year too. Let me know what you get up to and please send me an article or a few lines for the next newsletter (Ed.)!

Loipers (post)Xmas Meal

We unanimously decided at the AGM to return to the Sky Apple Cafe in Heaton (our third successive year I think). The menu is entirely vegetarian but seriously good – that last comment aimed at Bill Cooper who is not yet convinced about vegetarian eating! Have a look at the menu page on their website <http://www.skyapple.co.uk/evening.php>

Nuala is looking into convenient dates in January – probably a Wednesday or Thursday evening. Please contact Nuala nuala.wright@hotmail.co.uk to let her know you are interested.

Note that the menu changes every few weeks, so that which you see on the website now may not be the same in January (there may actually be a festive menu held over from the Christmas period). The cafe is now licensed, with a small selection of wines and beers available, though you may take along your own and pay a small corkage charge.

Hope you can join us!

Snowsport England Coaching Week at Nordseter in Norway, 3-10th April 2016

This event focussing on cross-country skiing technique is returning to Nordseter for the second year. Accommodation as per last year is in the Lillehammer Fjellstue (previously called Nordseter Fjellstue). Mike Hall and John Peatfield have both done the course recently and recommend it highly. Mike's article from last year's course was in the May newsletter.

Full details of the course and the accommodation at Nordseter can be downloaded from www.snowsportengland.org.uk/Coaching/Nordic.aspx (or contact me and I can forward the 5-page brochure as a pdf file).

It is an intensive coaching week with six full days of instruction with the mornings being structured coaching and the afternoons less formal with options to go touring and see more of the area. The coaches are Mike Dixon and Patrick Winterton, who are both excellent coaches and both ex-Olympic biathletes. You will be guaranteed to improve your cross-country skiing skills and learn a great deal about race training if that is what you are looking for.

Club Skis and Boots

The club skis and boots have now been transferred to Neil Waters who lives in Wylam. Many thanks to Pat Lynch for looking after the club skis for the last several years.

We have about 10 pairs of skis and a similar number of pairs of boots of different sizes. All of most of the skis are non-waxing metal-edged touring skis and all of the boots are leather boots which are ideal for ski touring. Hopefully we will have lots of snow for local skiing.

Neil can be contacted by phone or email (contact details on page 1). Or for this winter only (when he is in New Zealand) contact Alan (details again on page 1).

We also have several pairs of roller skis and boots which are held by Alasdair.

Please be aware that the club make a small charge for hire of club equipment (payable to Neil or Alasdair).

This Year's Summer Outings

I don't recall much summery weather but we still managed some very good trips.

In July we had a very pleasant bird watching walk along the Northumberland coast at Druridge Bay - just 4 of us. Starting at the Drift Cafe in Cresswell (cheese scones highly recommended) we made our way up the coast via Cresswell Pond and Druridge Pools. We bagged 38 species. Favourite birds were the sandwich terns and red-breasted merganser (seen from the beach) and stonechats seen behind the dunes.

One week later, Jane Brantom organised an evening walk, about 5 miles around Devil's Water near Slaley, looking at the archaeology of the recently restored Dukesfield Arches. A good turnout – 10 people(?) enjoyed an interesting walk and nice pub meal.

Tim and Penny's coastal walk was in August, starting with coffee in their cottage at Craster. Ten of us walked inland to Howick Hall and then down the coast to The Fishing Boat Inn at Boulmer. It was a fine day and we finished with afternoon tea on Tim and Penny's garage-top patio overlooking their garden.

Keith's bike ride in the North Tyne Valley was about 35 miles of good riding (4 miles off road on the Border County Ride and the rest mostly on quiet lanes) though it was just two of us, Keith and Alan! We had a pleasant coffee stop at the cafe in Falstone but the pub at Greenhaugh was closed and we finished with a late lunch back in Bellingham. See Keith's article on p 10.

Jane Brantom and Bill Haylock organised a lovely sailing weekend in late September based on Ullswater. The weather was fantastic (warm and sunny all weekend) though we didn't have a huge amount of wind. Jane has a 4-berth 24-foot Westerly Kendal sailing cruiser which is very comfortable and sails beautifully. Bill has an open Drascombe longboat (traditional 22-foot west-country design). Jane and Bill were joined by Keith, Nuala, Pat and Alan. We had a memorable evening on Jane's boat on Saturday, eating and drinking with a clear starry sky and an almost full moon. We had some good sailing too – the wind crept up to a Force 3 or 4 on Sunday morning. Have a look at the photos on page 11. Thanks Jane and Bill for a fantastic weekend!

2015 Roller Skiing Summer

Several Loiper members have been out roller skiing on a regular basis and no less than five Loipers participated in the Snowsport England roller ski coaching weekend at Hetton Lyons in August. Two of us also went on the coaching weekend in Lancaster at the beginning of October. Your newsletter editor Alan Mitcham signed up for the Roller Ski Instructor course with ex-Olympian Patrick Winterton, as a result of which I am now a qualified Level 1 Roller Ski Instructor!

Our favourite roller skiing venue nowadays is Town Moor and Exhibition Park. It has good tarmac and plenty of space and a pleasant environment (around the pond at Exhibition Park) and a steep hill for a training workout (the motorway underpass). It also has a nice cafe – The Cafe in the Park!

If you have not already tried roller skiing, I recommend you give it a go. Alasdair is a qualified Level 2 Instructor and has been giving lessons to a number of people over the summer. I am also now available (Alan), and happy to help anyone get started on roller skis.

Have a look at the new Snowsport England video filmed on the track in York to get a good appreciation of what roller skiing is all about... www.youtube.com/watch?v=53FSsf0gDaQ&feature=youtu.be

A Fabulous Loipers Trip to Arctic Sweden – April 2015

Great snow, great scenery, excellent mountain huts and mostly blue sky weather! That nicely sums up this year's Loipers' hut touring trip in northern Sweden.

Our 2014 trip had given us a taste of Sweden but this year we went further north beyond the arctic circle in search of some better snow. Greg and Alan were joined by David and Lewis who were both newcomers to hut touring. We followed in the footsteps of Chris Ottley who had done a similar trip a couple of years ago, flying in to Kiruna and working our way down the King's Trail (the Kungsleden) towards Kebnekaise (Sweden's highest mountain).

After a hearty breakfast in Kiruna (thank Lewis!) we left some of our gear in the hostel and took the 70-minute train journey to Abisko which is at the northern end of the Kungsleden. The trail starts right outside the station and straightaway we are in the Abisko National Park – quite a scenic area. And the sun was shining (as it did for the next 3 days)! We skied our first half day (15km) initially alongside the river, then gently climbing and following a wide valley, and finally for the last 3km skiing across the lake with our first hut Abiskojaure visible at the far end.

Most of our huts were unserviced (self-catering). They are run by the STF (the Svenska Turistforeningen) which is very similar to the equivalent Norwegian organisation the DNT. Many of the huts have an adequate food store where you can buy basic provisions. Others are completely unprovisioned and we had to carry food supplies from the previous hut. All are wardened – we were greeted by the warden(s) and allocated our beds in one or other of the hut buildings. Often we were offered hot fruit juice on arrival.

Lewis (the only one of us wearing leather boots) already had blisters on both heels part way through our first day. They got worse over the next few days but eventually he found the best treatment was to cover the heels with a stretchy adhesive tape (which Alan had taken to treat his dodgy knee!) Some comfort came from the hot sauna each evening (yes, even the unserviced huts boast a sauna cabin)!

Soon into our second day we had a 300m climb out of the valley up onto a plateau and eventually through to the next hut Alesjaure (20km) in an elevated position at the head of another long lake. Great views (especially from the sauna cabin, which was perched just on the edge)!

We were given the task of filling two 25 litre water containers from a water hole down at river level and hauling them up to



Greg relaxing in the hut at Alesjaure

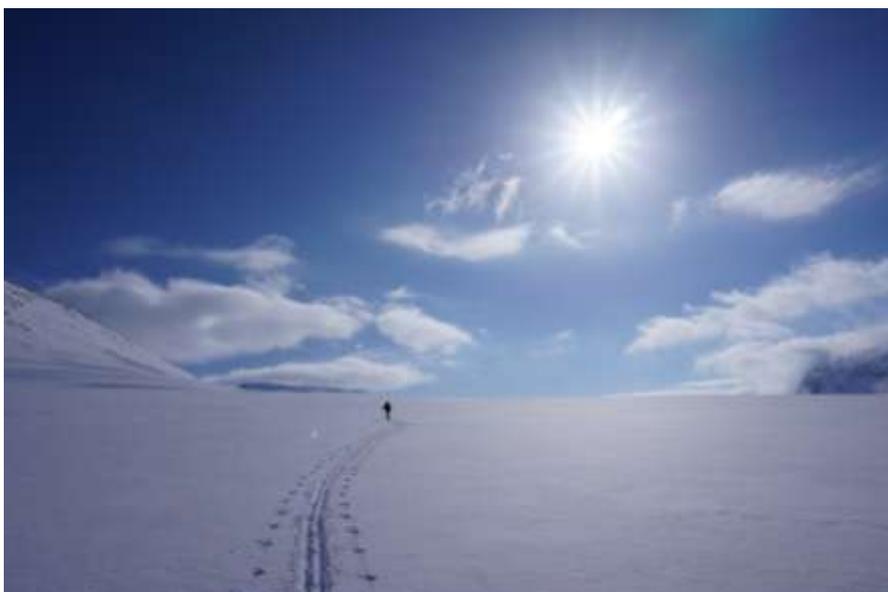
the sauna cabin.

On our third day we decided to divert from the King's Trail to a small unprovisioned hut (Nallo) which was recommended to us by some of the Swedish people we had spoken to over the last two days. This was about 21km of which the last 7km was away from the marked trail. We climbed steadily for about 90 minutes to get to a narrow col and then had a steep descent to the valley and the hut below (normally accessed from the valley to the north). It was indeed a small hut. We had one room shared with a young Swedish couple (a 4-bunk alcove for them and another for us). The other room was taken by a Sami woman who was skiing with her two dogs.

The following morning the predicted storm had arrived and we quickly gave up any thought of doing the remote day-tour which had been recommended to us. Visibility in the blizzard was less than 50 metres. We decided to ski out over the head of the valley to our next hut, Salka. The Sami woman asked if she could ski with us, though subsequently (fortunately) she decided the conditions were too difficult and she stayed for another night at Nallo.

Navigating in the white-out was quite challenging. The terrain was fairly featureless and it was not easy to identify the high point of the col. Eventually, with the aid of the compass and a little help from Greg's GPS mapping system, we were going downhill in about the right direction. But we found ourselves on the wrong side of a stream gully, which of course was filled with snow and difficult to make out in the flat light with minimal visibility. Once we had successfully negotiated the gully and a few other obstacles, we were very relieved to come out below the cloud and see the huddle of huts below us.

There was a strong wind blowing right past the hut and Lewis and I were in the coldest corner – I was awake much of the night (my bladder was on high alert)! But next day we braved the wind and skied on to Singi (back on the King's Trail). We took two days worth of food knowing that Singi was an unprovisioned hut (we were hoping to stay for an extra night and use our spare day to climb Kebnekaise). This soon looked unlikely as the wind became even stronger. We spent the evening coming up with various plans for the following day. The ascent of Kebnekaise was Plan A but (to the amusement of others in the hut) we were also working on Plans B, C and D.



In the morning, with the wind still blowing strongly and the tops enveloped in cloud, we went with Plan D and skied through to Kebnekaise Fjallstation. We were leaving the Kungsleden and the last of our unserviced huts. It was an easy day, mostly down a dramatic valley with steep mountains on both sides and with the weather improving during the day. We were treated to a clear skies and a fine sunset.

Kebnekaise Fjallstation is a large and impressive lodge. It was very busy and we were lucky to get a room in the main lodge. We chose to cook for ourselves (the kitchen was in one of the large annexes) but on our second night we went for the special buffet meal was expensive and disappointing.

The Fjallstation was hosting a big international ski mountaineering race The Kebnekaise Classic – a 2-day event for pairs of competitors. The place was heaving with fit-looking athletes. The main (alpine) ski race involved about 2000 metres of ascent including the top of Kebnekaise and some very severe descents and also a short abseil! Finishing close to 4 hours would be good enough to be in the medals. We didn't consider participating (though we did watch the start of the Nordic ski race on the morning that we left!

Ironically the weather was now just about perfect. We had blown our chances of summiting on Kebnekaise – the ascent from here is much more technical and is only done on alpine (or telemark) skis. We nevertheless had a wonderful 1-day ski tour up to another STF hut, Tarfala, situated at about 1200m above sea level with dramatic peaks and glaciers all around us. We



skied to the base of one of the glaciers where it terminates in a stunning little lake and we talked to the warden about his favourite summits (most of them skiable). We had heard of a 'four cols' ski tour which crosses some of these glaciers – some challenging skiing (maybe another year)!

On our last day we skied in warm sunshine from the fjallstation all the way down to Nikkaluokta (a hotel and gift shop at the road head at about 480m altitude). Good snow all the way and quite well tracked (used by snowmobiles). Greg and Alan skate skied most of the way and we covered the 19km in next to no time, which left us two and a half hours to kill in the cafe (waiting for the bus back to Kiruna).

It was a superb 8 days of skiing. The huts were very good and the Swedish people exceedingly friendly. It helped a bit that Lewis spoke to them in Norwegian (which they of course understood perfectly) and Lewis seemed to have no problem understanding their Swedish. For us it didn't matter because they spoke good English too! I would be easily persuaded to ski again in that part of Sweden. There is plenty more to do – and of course Kebnekaise summit remains to be conquered.

An interesting note... the very skiable south peak of Kebnekaise is shown on my map as 2106m altitude. Apparently it is now down to 2104m and with further melting on the summit it is likely to become lower than the much more daunting north peak (at 2097m). It had better be climbed soon!

Alan Mitcham

Roller skiing at Hetton Lyons Park in August

The race on Saturday afternoon was a very competitive event (part of the GB series that ran throughout the summer at different venues through the UK). A lot of competitors turned up from London and beyond, with many of them also participating in the SSE Roller Ski Coaching weekend.

Huge thanks to Alasdair for organising the race and thanks too to members of Tyneside Loipers for help with lap timing and other tasks. The main race was a skiathlon comprising four laps of classic skiing followed by four laps of skate style. The top skiers were very impressive, skiing the full 8 laps (14.4km) in a little over 33 minutes. Some of us did a shortened race of just two laps classic and two of skating. *(I will be up for the full race next year – Ed.)*



Loipers Bike Ride – a report from Keith!

After a couple of delays, we settled on a date in late August for a medium length ride out of Bellingham. The wind and temperature were in our favour as we headed out to the west on minor roads. We then crossed the C200 and continued on minor roads north of the River North Tyne as far as Falstone and an exhilarating descent to the Village Tea Rooms where we stopped for coffee.

However we had to climb back up the hill out of Falstone as we headed for Greenhaugh. On the way there is a choice of on- or off-road. We opted for the off-road route with lots of muddy puddles to negotiate. But we were soon back on the tarmac. The inn at Greenhaugh was closed and the nearest food outlet was back in Bellingham – so we set off for a late but well-deserved lunch of home-made soup in the first cafe we came to.

After loading the bikes, we called in at the Heritage Centre and found a well-recommended cafe which we agreed to sample on a future occasion.

Keith Walker

Skiing in Dalseter – some bits and pieces plucked from Sue Dark’s article in the last newsletter

The hotel... Sue says it is a large, comfortable hotel with a decent-sized swimming pool and very good food, especially the buffet lunch with at least 6 different puddings. Alcohol is expensive!

The setting and the prepared ski tracks... The hotel is set in mixed terrain, with lakes, woods and reasonable mountains. There is an extensive area of cross-country tracks between 5 and 30 km in length (totalling over 150km) with huts and shelters along the way (two of them with stoves). The hotel is at the start of the 74km Peer Gynt trail, and several groups were using it as a setting-off point.

Ski hire... We had excellent equipment hired for just £25 per week, and the hotel shop sells waxes and other necessities.

Ski guiding... For £10 per day, you could join one of the resident UK guides and either be guided or have real tuition. Despite the range of abilities it worked very well and felt like skiing with a group of friends rather than “having lessons”

Skiing off-track... Judging the snow condition was quite a skill and choosing wax in the relatively warm conditions was especially difficult. *Editor’s comment... It should be easier going at the beginning of March when the conditions are colder. Hope so!*

A new Skate Skiing Video

Alasdair has recommended this excellent video posted on the US website crosscountrykitechnique.com See <http://crosscountrykitechnique.com/video-tutorial-how-to-use-your-legs-skate-skiing/>

This is a very good explanation and demonstration with lots of tips for perfecting your skate-skiing technique (applicable to roller skiing as well as skiing on-snow). There are lots more worthwhile videos and articles also on this website.

Loipers Sailing Weekend on Ullswater



1. Bill's Drascombe Longboat 2. Camping on board. 3. Jane at the helm of Akindle
4. Keith arriving at the mooring by kayak

Cross-Country Skiing with Visually Impaired Skiers

Alasdair wrote a very good article not long ago about his ski trip to Austria acting as a guide for visually impaired skiers. It was clearly an enjoyable and worthwhile week.

The same group of visually-impaired (in some cases fully blind) skiers, plus guides, are going this winter to Finland. Read their blog on <http://blog.ingham.co.uk/ski/join-lyn-lapland-start-something-wonderful/>

It is a great read!

The link was sent to me by Des Goff of the London Region Nordic Ski Club. Des has launched an appeal for much needed equipment for their forthcoming trip (funds are needed for specially overprinted his-vis jackets and personal communication equipment for the skiers and guides). If you would like to help, please get in touch with desgoff@hotmail.com

Bits and Pieces

The Telemark Ski Company are running their usual programme of courses, now aimed at both telemark and alpine skiers. Significant amounts of snow have already fallen at Hintertux which is the venue for one of their pre-Christmas courses. Full details are on their new website www.telemarkskico.com/

Tom Hicks has written to me with details of this winter's ski tours that he is leading in both Lapland and Hardangervidda. Full details are on his website www.tomoutdoors.co.uk

Tom is a member of the Lakeland Cross-Country Ski Club and is a BASI-qualified instructor and also a mountain leader (ML) and BCU 4-star sea-kayak leader. He will be arriving in Dalseter towards the end of our visit there in March for the start of one of his ski touring trips (an opportunity to talk about what he could do in the future for Tyneside Loipers).

E-mail addresses

Most of our club activities are advertised by e-mail or on Facebook. 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... some recent roller skiing at Exhibition Park – Fiona MacCormick, Mike Hall and Alan Mitcham