

HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

www.nordicski.org.uk

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SUMMER ISSUE



Editorial

There was a time when spring heralded quiet times for cross-country skiers but it doesn't really seem that way as we now have a full & hectic rollerski calendar to keep us occupied during the long absence of snow. I feel I'm busier skiing in the summer than I am in the winter. The first two Huntly rollerski races of the season were a great success due to the hard work put in by the large number of volunteers on the day - thank you. As always I will be appealing for the same willingness to help for our next race on Sat 12th Sept.

The British Nordic Development Squad organised several fund raising events in June & I would thank all of you who have supported these. In particular congratulations to those who completed the Ming Midsummer Madness run/bike event. Four hours of pure misery & whoever organised the headwind for the last 4 miles of the cycle deserves a special award. This is then capped off with a ceilidh in the evening. Madness indeed.

Snowsport GB are currently in severe financial difficulties however it seems that they have managed to put a rescue package together that secures its immediate future. Although this does not affect the majority of you it does have important implications for the Club's national skiers. As Scottish rep on the SSGB Nordic Executive I will of course try to keep myself up to date with developments.

This is a bumper issue with a variety of contributors so you won't have to put up with my rather tired & predictable jokes. I hope you enjoy it.

NORDIC SKI OFFICIALS COURSE - by Alan Telford

The first Nordic Ski Race officials' course to be run in the UK in 17 years was held at Huntly on the 2nd and 3rd May 2009. The course was presented by Jim Davidson, one of only two FIS qualified Technical Delegates in the UK, and run under the banner of Snowsport Scotland. The idea of the course was to produce level 1 and level 2 qualified race organizers. We now have skiers competing at World Cup level in Nordic races so there is a need to improve the quality of race organization in the UK. Although the possibility hosting a FIS level on snow event seems to be becoming more remote every year, a rollerski event could be practicable.

As well as delegates from Huntly, students were present from Highland Nordic, Cairngorm and the Army. The first presentation was made by Gordon Seaton who gave the attendees an overview of Nordic ski racing in the UK over the past 20 years. Jim took over for the rest of the course. The emphasis was on how a modern Nordic ski event would be organized to FIS level, and how this could practically be implemented in UK.

Saturday afternoon included a visit to the Clashindarroch forest to assess the ski area and how it could be adapted to a FIS level competition. Sunday featured presentations on a ski route from the forest and its suitability and how the Clash arena could be laid out to host a FIS event. Frank Musgrave was sent to stand in the corner for not doing his homework!

Finally the day ended with an open book exam on the FIS Nordic skiing rules.

This was quite a demanding weekend, but well worth the effort and should contribute to the improvement of Nordic skiing events in the UK, which has to be welcomed by everybody. Thanks to Jim Davidson for writing and running the course.



* Funding for the Huntly delegates was received from Aberdeenshire Sports Council.

* For the record the eight Huntly members are now qualified to Level 1, & some may be upgraded to Level 2 once Jim has examined their logbooks. The eight are: Hilary Gray, Paul Gray, Dave Horsley, Andy Miller, Frank Musgrave, Hilary Musgrave, Alan Telford, Peter Thorn.

ROLLERSKI RACING

The rollerski season is well underway & this year the Scottish Rollerski Series was officially launched. Comprising six races: Huntly Sprints (FT), Clashindarroch Hill Climb (CT), Glenmore 3km (FT), Cairngorm Hill Climb (FT), Huntly 3-7km (FT) & Cairngorm Hill Climb (CT) the series gives a good variety of races in both classic & free techniques. In

Scotland we are lucky enough to have hills & relatively quiet roads which allows the Scottish clubs to put on three superb hill climbs. The series rules are adapted from the GB Series rules with modifications to cater for the bigger base of juniors we have.

The GB Rollerski Series has grown to eleven races & the London Region Nordic SC run their 4-race London Series. The rollerski calendar is getting very crowded but hopefully this gives more opportunities for skiers to take part.

Hayes 15km (FT) - Sun 10 May.

The rollerski season got underway with the London Region Nordic SC 15km race at Hayes. While this is not a GB Series race it is the first race of the London Series. Huntly were represented by Andrew Musgrave & Alex Standen who, the day previously, had undergone VO2 max testing at the British Olympic Medical Centre. This basically requires an athlete to run themselves into a state of exhaustion while someone pokes needles into them for ~~fun~~ blood samples - not ideal preparation for a race. Maintaining an average speed of ~30 km/hr Alex & Andrew broke clear of the rest of the field & in the sprint finish Alex kept just ahead of Andrew to take first place & win himself a set of Skike rollerskis. A full report, results, photos & videos are on the LRNSC website at: <http://www.londonnordic.org.uk>

OFF TO THE RACES - by Frank Musgrave **Huntly Sprints & Clashindarroch Hill Climb, 30/31 May.**

It's the week before the Epsom Derby, it must be time for the Huntly races. Early season odds were disrupted when it emerged that the well known thoroughbred Mr Peter Thorn had to work offshore and would not be able to compete. World Cup qualified racers breathed a sigh of relief, while the rest of the committee fell into panic at the idea of trying to marshall a race without Pete's steadying hand.

Fortunately Peter's training regime (for race officials) paid off and thanks to his hard work and preparation we were able to canter our way through the events (all except the race director, who had developed a list of 35 degrees and could barely hobble round the course). The morning dawned dry and sunny – Peter had even arranged the weather for the weekend. As well as a good turnout of club members it was great to see a strong visiting contingent from Cairngorm, England and the RAF. George Gabriel, the SSGB Nordic Director, had caught the express carriage from Wales to join in the fun.

Runners and riders saddled up (well, Dave Horsley gave them roller skis) for the time trial stage, followed by the by heats and semi finals. Runners and spectators were fuelled through the day by the inimitable Rick and Nick barbeque, and visitors who didn't have their hands full of beefburgers risked having their arm twisted to buy a T shirt. In the time trials Andrew Musgrave & Sarah Young both set course records for both Flat & Hill with Andrew's combined time 17 seconds faster than the old record & Sarah's 31 seconds faster. In fact the first three in both mens & ladies races were inside the old record.

The tension built as we progressed to the KO finals – Hector Cowie of CBNSC won the Men's Plate and Freddie Starkey hung on brilliantly to take the Novice event^[1]. In the Elite Men's final Andrew Young managed to avoid being tripped up by a cameraman, but was handicapped by a broken rollerski, allowing Andrew Musgrave to take the trophy. The day reached a climax when Sarah Young defeated Fay Potton of the RAF to take the Elite Ladies Trophy.



Callum Cooper (on left) lines up for start of Novice Final – they come in all sizes!

Lynne Gray.

Fergus Newman chases down Dr. Dave.

^[1] Special mention must be made of Callum Cooper, the youngest competitor (U8), who made his racing debut & came an excellent 2nd in the Novice Final.

^[2] Frank was almost put in the delicate position of having to disqualify one of the RAF skiers for not double-poling at the start of his KO race but decided that he gained no advantage. When he approached the skier afterwards he was told that he didn't double-pole because he didn't know how to, he wouldn't be taught that skill until he had done lesson no.2! - now that's what I call a novice. How many of us would have entered a rollerski race after only a few days of practise? So well done all those RAF novices.

The following day, Sunday May 31st, found competitors and officials gathered outside Rhynie Kirk, not for a service of celebration of roller skiing, but for the start of the Clashindarroch Classic Hill Climb. One or two runners had fallen at the hurdles of exams, triathlons and other distractions. However a healthy (in numbers, if not in body) field gathered. After a few technical adjustments (ratchets that would not ratch etc) short course competitors left the Mains of Lesmoir for a 4.85 kms jaunt then the thoroughbreds left Rhynie for the full 8.05 kms with over 200m vertical ascent to the Clashindarroch car park. Conditions were fast, but the heat was unusual for Aberdeenshire. Race officials dispensed water en route and ensured that (unlike the Edinburgh marathon on the same day) no competitors suffered from heat stroke or dehydration. After determined racing Iona Gatenby and Baz Michel won the ladies and mens short course competition while Fay Potton and Andrew Musgrave won the full course event, Andrew in a new course record of 24 mins 29 secs. Deborah May and Ruaridh Newman were first in the junior categories of the long course. After a brief laze in the sun it was back to Huntly Nordic Center, where Peter, keeping us on our toes to the end, had us baffled for a while with an incredible random number generating spreadsheet for the results. However paper, pencil and human endeavour triumphed to allow the award ceremony to go ahead. Snow having passed us by in the winter, the Clashindarroch Cup and Quaich, normally presented to the winners of the winter championship, were awarded to Andrew Musgrave and Fay Potton.

A hugely enjoyable weekend, greatly helped by that rare Aberdeenshire commodity, sunshine. Thanks to all the club members who acted as race officials on one or both days, to Sandy and the staff at HNOC and to competitors, especially those who had travelled long distances, for producing such a high standard of racing.

Glenmore 3.3km & Cairngorm Hill Climb - Sat/Sun 13/14 June.

Cairngorm Biathlon & Nordic SC weekend of racing starts with the Glenmore 3.3km (10-lap) race. The only Huntly representatives were Dave Horsley & Peter Thorn who both coped, albeit with one or two wobbles, with the sneaky bend.



Andrew Musgrave on his way to a new Course record. Photo courtesy of www.action-heroes.co.uk

The Sunday saw a far larger Huntly contingent take part in the Scottish Rollerski Championships & face up to the challenge of the Cairngorm Hill Climb. Although at 5.4km it is shorter than the Clash Climb (8.05km) there is something like an extra 100m of climb involved. This year the Sun shone, the midges were docile & records tumbled in all races & categories. Andrew Musgrave won the mens climb in a time of 17:35 with Callum Smith only 20 seconds behind & the pair of them 4 1/2 minutes ahead of the next skier. Fiona Hughes (Yorkshire Dales) won the ladies race beating her old record by 2 minutes & with Sarah Young just 9 seconds further back, they posted the 3rd & 4th fastest times of the day. William Newman won the U18 Scottish title in another course record over the 3.1km race.

Cairngorm Mountain ski centre kindly gave over a room for prize-giving where Dave H. & Peter T. celebrated their own personal triumphs with a well earned pint. Congratulations to CBNSC for putting on a great race weekend.

Results & photos for both the Huntly & Cairngorm races are on our website in the news section at <http://news.nordicski.co.uk> (has link to the www.cbnsc.co.uk site).

General news on rollerski racing & the current standings for both GB & Scottish Rollerski Series is on the Nordicscotland Yahoo Group at <http://uk.groups.yahoo.com/group/nordicscotland> It also acts as an archive of previous event results & photos.

OFF-ROAD ROLLERSKIING.

Comparison of Trailskates & Skikes - by John Shanks.

The Club has for some time had a couple of pairs of Trailskate all-terrain rollerskis/skates & recently Euroski of Brighton gave us a complementary pair of off-road Skikes to try out. John & Andrew Shanks have recently been test driving these. Here are their first impressions.

The first thing you notice about both sets of skis is the large pneumatic air wheels, 6in on the Skikes and a beefy 8in on the Trailskates. In addition both systems can be used with regular footwear, ordinary X-country boots being ideal, and come with an inbuilt braking system. As a consequence a wide variety of terrain can be safely explored in a fixed heel skating mode.

The smaller Skikes use a light-weight aluminium frame which can be quickly attached to the skiers boot via two Velcro straps. In addition a third strap around the shin operates the rear brake. This is achieved by leaning backwards, initially

a rather strange feeling. However this is quickly overcome as there is a natural equilibrium between breaking and leaning forces. With emergency stops thus sorted, its time to venture further a field. On paved country lanes and paths, a real sense of being on tour opens up as the large air wheels soak up any bumps and the brakes provide reassuring speed control on steep down-hills. Off road dirt and gravel tracks can also be explored, although increasing ground roughness quickly challenges the skier.

In contrast the Trailskates are attached to the skier's boot using a stiff plastic "snowboard" clam shell rigidly fixed to a central composite board thus providing a high level of support. Since hydraulic disc breaks are also used, two hydraulic lines run from the back of each roller up to a brake lever attached around the skier's waist. This seems rather fiddly at first but is quickly forgotten about once out on the track. Here the inherent spring in the central board combined with the large air tyres gives a slightly ponderous but great fun sensation to the ride. However the use of the brakes needs care in order to avoid a rapid and unintentional head plant! Due to the larger wheels the Trailskates can handle somewhat rougher surfaces compared to the Skikes but as a general rule of thumb the gap between limiting skating and mountain biking conditions will be significant for most skiers. Hence a non-technical track that can easily be tackled on a mountain bike can prove near impossible to skate.



John & Andrew Shanks putting the Skikes & Trailskates through their paces.

In conclusion both systems are a whole lot of fun. For younger skiers and/or use on paved surfaces, the Skikes would probably be the better choice for most skiers, especially as they are significantly cheaper. However if you are really determined to skate dirt tracks go for the Trailskates – just don't overestimate what you will be able to do on them.

Further information can be obtained at www.skike.com and www.gateskate.com. The PowerSlide Nordic trainer on www.powerslide.de also looks interesting, but has not been tested here. Perhaps we can persuade Peter to buy a set for the club?

*Ed: *All I would add to John's comments is that I found the skis hard work on grass & softer surfaces. Although they won't take you everywhere they are a fun way to explore forest tracks. Contact me if you want to have a try.*

MOUNTAIN TOUR (5th Apr 09) - Dave Horsley

Dave Horsley describes an end of season tour on the Cairngorm plateau with John & Andrew Shanks.

The weather was cool, sunny but fairly windy. We spent most of the day touring the ski area making use of the conveniently placed mechanical uplift (*isn't that cheating?*). Snow conditions started hard and icy with some wind drifted powder. After lunch we headed over to Ciste Mhearaidh to find



Dave Horsley relaxes after using all that mechanical uplift.

some really nice untracked snow - a mix of wind drifted powder and hard grippy spring corn. Unfortunately the old and decrepid uplift :) was rather slow so we only managed a couple of runs. We dragged John over later to find it wasn't quite as nice, having softened further. We ended with a run down the M1 and Cas on soft sugary spring snow which turned heavier down at the bottom of the Gunbarrel. A great day was had by all (I hope) I definitely enjoyed myself.



Andrew Shanks pulls a tidy tele-turn

Beach Boulevard Club.

A splinter group of dedicated skiers have been meeting regularly in Aberdeen to do a bit of rollerskiing along the Beach Boulevard. To vary things they have located another venue that is good for rollerskiing, the Dunecht estate roads (just west of Westhill) where they've found a few hills. They are always looking for other desperados to join them. They meet 6-6:30pm on the 1st & 3rd Tuesday of each month at the entrance to the Dunecht estate & on the 2nd & 4th Tuesdays "roughly opposite the pool" on the Beach Boulevard. If you want to join them you should email Dave Horsley (D.Horsley@abdn.ac.uk).

ARCTIC CIRCLE RACE by Louise Scott

Earlier this year Louise Scott from Edinburgh approached the Club for some advice about how to prepare for a long distance ski race she had entered. Andy Miller gave her some tips & lent her a pair of rollerskis to train on & in March she headed to Greenland. This is her account of the experience.....

The Arctic Circle Race (ACR) takes place through the majestic countryside around Sisimiut on Greenland's west coast 65km north of the Arctic Circle. The total race distance is 160 km, over three days, through varied and sometimes harsh Greenlandic terrain. The population of Sisimiut is approximately 5400. The Arctic climate has a temperature of up to 20°C in the summer and down to - 35°C in the winter. Sisimiut is the most northern ice-free town in the winter and the most southern town for dog-sledging. The main trade is fishing. They fish shrimps, salmon, Greenland Halibut and cod. Hunting is also another mean of livelihood. Animals that are normally hunted are seals, walrus, Beluga Whale, narwhale, reindeer and musk oxen.

Despite having some experience of skiing in Greenland, I am new to the art of Nordic track skiing and this was definitely an adventurous way to learn! The competition was scheduled for Friday to Sunday but the first day had to be cancelled due to severe weather – significant snow fall on Thursday and Friday coupled with high winds made visibility close to zero for several hours. This prohibited the organizers being able to make tracks or transport the volunteers to all the check points along the route. Personally, I was quite happy with the decision not to race on this day, it was - 45 with wind chill and the tracks were completely covered with drifting snow. The prospect of going skiing in those conditions did not appeal!

However, we got off on the Saturday (in fantastic weather...clear blue sky and temps between -17°C to - 10°C), weather conditions were pretty similar on the Sunday. The race routes were changed (due to losing the first day), the organisers decided to do the race over two days (64km on day 1 and 59km on day 2). I gave it my best shot, but the extra mileage was a few K's too far for me and my basic technique.

The route on the first day travelled from the town, through various fuel stops, to the camp then beyond by another 24km loop and back to camp. I covered 40km

Ed: *Although a novice to ski racing Louise is no novice to Polar travel having taken part in several expeditions to the Arctic Circle – visit her website at www.osuch.com.*



(from the start to the camp) - through amazing landscape...some undulating, some very hilly and across lakes. I would have needed to squeeze in another 24km to have covered the required mileage for the "big" race. I decided, upon reaching the camp, to remain there and to complete the mileage for the "shorter" race. On the Sunday I skied back to the town via a slightly different route, approx 35km, including a hill that went on for ever and ever, up, up, up 1500m. The last 5km was my favourite stretch, and crossing the finishing line was superb.

So I completed the race, albeit the shorter one. It was a fantastic experience and (as always) I've learnt much along the way. Would I do it again? You bet I would....only with a bit more time built in for training and preparation! On reflection, I would score myself low on technique and experience but give myself credit for stamina and determination....and for having the courage to go and do this own my own. I have returned without any injury, strains or frost bite....although I am sporting a few black and blue bruises here and there due to a few controlled and some uncontrolled falls! There were many people going home with various degrees of frost bit on fingers, ear lobes and cheeks.

I recommend this event to anybody that wants to challenge themselves physically and mentally to the limit. The organisers were fantastic and I met some fantastic co-competitors. The race in 2010 will run on 9 – 11 April – for more information visit www.acr.gl where there are photos from this years race.

New Members

Malcolm, Kay, Duncan and Callum Cooper join us & have been making regular journeys from Peterhead to practise their rollerskiing.

Final Bits & Pieces.

- Thursday Club Nights continue at the Ski Centre – 7:30pm-9pm.
- Do I have your correct email address? Are you receiving emails? If not please let me know.
- Have you signed up to the Snowsport Scotland Nordicscotland Yahoo Group? If you want an invitation to join this group please let me know. It has information further afield from Huntly.
- Roger Homyer of Highland Nordic SC is organising a Snowsport Scotland Level 1 Nordic Coaching course on Mon/Tues 20/21 July at Glenmore Lodge (cost £50). If anyone is interested please contact myself or Roger.
- The next newsletter will be our pre-season/pre-Olympic issue (Nov/Dec) & I welcome contributions.

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Callum Cooper heads home with his haul of medals.