

HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

www.nordicski.org.uk

NEWSLETTER No. 35

November 2010

PRE-SEASON



Clash snow days = 0

Editorial

Another busy summer of rollerski racing passes & we expectantly look forward to the coming winter. Another like last year would do the job nicely.

Our recent AGM saw little change to your committee & you will have by now received the minutes, accounts & the Secretary's summary of the year's activities. We welcome onboard Claudia Zeiske who takes over as the Press/Public Relations Officer. Ian Cooper stands down & is thanked for his work, especially his notable coup of getting a radio interview for Andrew Musgrave.



The last patch of snow 5 June 10

The past year was quite a momentous one with record snowfall & Olympic skiers & cross-country skiing in general can be pretty pleased with itself on the way it is progressing at grassroots & international levels. However there are darkening clouds we need to be aware of. The governing body situation is yet to fully resolve itself & this may take some time even if it ever does. Closer to home cuts in local government spending will have an impact on the Ski Centre – how big an effect we don't know. The snowmobile needs replacing & the old Clash Hut is no more. These are all challenges the Club has to face up to. But don't get too despondent - there is a lot to look forward to. As you will read below our young skiers will be competing at the highest levels this coming season. The Club will seek funding for a new snowmobile which we will own & be responsible for running & maintaining so if you have any skills that might help here, make yourself known.

We await the first snow & more importantly who will win the coveted "Golden Boot" for the first tour of the Clash Haute Route?

THE ROLLERSKI SEASON

The British Rollerski Series expanded to 12 races this summer & Huntly staged three of these. Surprisingly, in light of it being an Olympic year, overall numbers taking part were down but still a very healthy 158 skiers took part in one or more races. Although Huntly did not win any of the British Series titles, we had more success in the 6-race Scottish Series with Beth Maclean winning the U14 Girls & Dave Horsley being 1st Vet & 2nd Senior overall. Although Huntly skiers may not have been winning the Series titles we were having far more success in the main Championships. Callum Smith (course record) & Andrew Young were 1st & 2nd in the British Rollerski Championships at the Cairngorm Hill Climb in June. Sarah Young & Posy Musgrave repeated this gold/silver combination in the Ladies race.

Moving on to the Scottish Rollerski Championships, the Cairngorm Classic Hill Climb in September, Olwen Thorn took the Senior Ladies title while Stuart Gray, Harry Nicholls & Angus Maclean did a 1-2-3 in the U14 Boys race &, not to be outdone, Beth Maclean & Lynne Gray were 1st & 2nd in the U14 Girls.

Huntly Sprints & Clash Hill Climb, 29/30 May

Flood damage to the track required a revised sprints course & a wet weekend meant a tough time for all the officials. The skiers had the racing to take their minds off the rain. A good turnout from the RAF swelled the numbers. Andrew Young & Alex Standen won the Men's race with Sarah Young winning the Ladies. Beth Maclean was 1st U12/U14 Girl. William King won the novice U10 race.

If Saturday was wet, the Sunday was a deluge, which probably accounted for reduced numbers taking part. Dave Horsley, while setting out the course, came close to cancelling but it seemed that conditions were getting better. At least until the race actually started, when the heavens really opened. Not much that could be done then.



Men's K.O.
Sprint Final

Exposure for skiers & officials alike was a serious worry but the Maclean family came to rescue with their marvellous tepee with wood burning stove. And the bedraggled skiers that battled wind & rain were VERY grateful for its shelter. No course records this year! Andrew Young won the Men's race with William Newman in a very good 2nd place while Sarah Young was 1st Lady. Harry Nicholls won a small, but competitive U14 Boys climb.



The Tepee



Warmth!



Soggy officials await finishers

Huntly Rollerski Championships, 11 Sept

A bit like the Commonwealth Games there was a real worry that the facilities would not be ready in time for our rollerski championships. Fortunately, with just a few days to spare, the track was repaired & we could revert to the traditional course. On the day, the slick Huntly team went into action & I don't think there was one hiccup all day. Thanks guys you did a great job.

Army & RAF skiers once again descended in force but were unable to stop Callum Smith romping home nearly two minutes ahead of his nearest rival. For the first few laps the Ladies race looked like it was going to be a lot closer but Posy Musgrave had more in the tank in the second half of the race opened a 50 sec gap over Olwen Thorn. There were also convincing wins in the U18 Men's race by Ruaridh Newman, the U14 Boys race by Stuart Gray & by Oliver Newman U12. The U12/U14 Girls race was a bit different with Lynne Gray coming home 15 seconds in front of Beth Maclean – remember that time. It was a pleasure to watch the Novice race between Callum Cooper & Jack Maclean, Callum won, but both had the biggest smiles imaginable, I think they enjoyed it. The day was of course rounded off by the usual chaotic relay which as always produced a lot of noise & banter.

On the Sunday a team of Huntly skiers headed over to Aviemore for the Cairngorm Classic Hill Climb. Olwen Thorn took the Senior Ladies title, I must admit to being a little perturbed when my daughter stormed past me early on in the race. Stuart Gray, Harry Nicholls & Angus Maclean did a 1-2-3 in the U14 Boys race while in the U14/U12 Girls race Beth Maclean gained a little revenge for the Saturday by coming home 1st just 13 seconds ahead of Lynne Gray. All this is very healthy with three closely matched U14 boys & two U12 girls in the club.

TO FINLAND IN SEARCH OF A SKI COACH by Hilary Musgrave

Last month I was chosen by the Ski Club to go with a group from Huntly to Juankoski in eastern Finland with the aim of exploring the possibility of setting up joint projects through an EU funded trans-national arrangement. I should say that by "chosen" I really mean that I was the only person who was available to go – so thank you very much to all those who were better qualified than me but busier! The liaison with Finland had been initiated by Juankoski after a group from the town visited Huntly last winter and instantly thought "this is the place we want to work with" – which was very flattering!

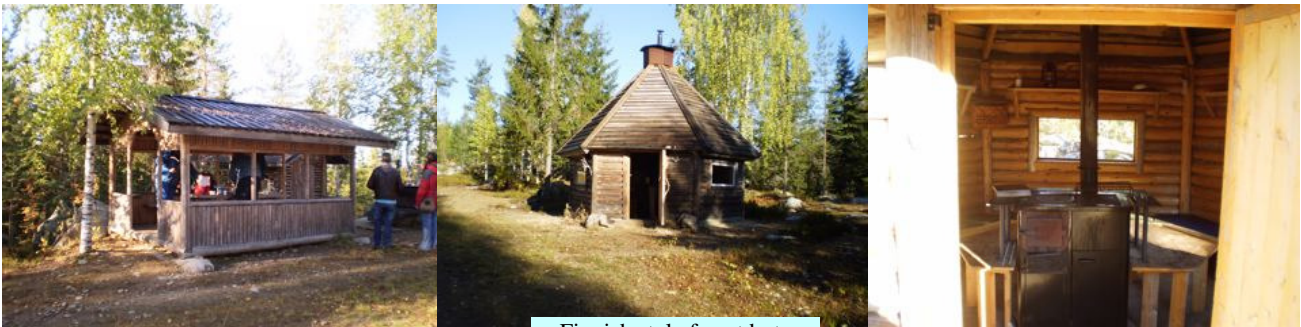
There were six of us in the group – Donald Boyd and Jane Lockyer from the Huntly Development Trust (who liaised with Juankoski and organised the journey), Maria from the Huntly Mental Health Trust and Community Garden scheme, Anna from Deveron Arts Trust, Sandy from the Youth Centre and myself. We had two days in Juankoski but it took a day to get there and another back, flying via Amsterdam, Helsinki and Kuopio. On the way over we had 4 hours to spare in Helsinki and the Finnish organiser had volunteered a friend of hers who lives there to meet us and take us on a quick tour of the city. This was a good taste of what was to come as all the Finns we met were incredibly hospitable and put themselves out to make sure we were enjoying their country.

Juankoski is in the Lake District of Finland. Considerably larger than the English Lake District but with much smaller hills, it is a beautiful area of rolling forested hills and lakes – there seems more water than land. The town has about the same size population as Huntly but is very spread out and with trees everywhere it actually appeared to be about the size of Oyne (ie not big at all). It originally came into existence about 200 years ago because of the discovery of a supply of iron ore in the lakes. The smelter which they built then gradually grew in size but in the 20th century it was closed in the face of Swedish competition (quite a bit of Scandinavian rivalry became apparent!). Latterly the economy has depended on a large paper mill, but this went bankrupt in the current recession – unemployment in the town is now

13%. But Finland has an amazing social care system and to us there was no apparent poverty. And we did have a very comprehensive visit – the first day was completely taken up with visits to the town hall, primary school (with concert), secondary school, craft centre, community garden (under construction), church, youth centre, cultural centre and museum (in the old iron works), mental health centre, brass band meeting house, a Nordic walking lesson (identical technique to the Huntly taught version), then dinner (of reindeer casserole, naturally) and a concert given by 3 local bands of decreasing age and increasing volume (the oldest included the nursery school headmaster and the middle aged one had the secondary school headmaster on bass guitar and looking as if he'd have been at home in Status Quo). I'm sorry to say that I didn't do at all well in upholding the honour of the ski club at the last event of the day – a karaoke competition in the local pub which stayed open beyond normal licensing hours especially for us (most of the town council spent the day with us after all) – I went to bed.

Our Finnish hosts knew what each member of the group were hoping to achieve on this visit – in my case to investigate the possibility of someone from the area with xc ski coaching qualifications coming over to Huntly to be a 'coach in residence'. Very early on the first day my hopes of achieving anything were somewhat dampened. On our first school visit someone asked about sports facilities and from about 4 of our guides we got the same story of skiing being compulsory at school "and so we all hate it"....not a good start! However the town has many kilometres of ski tracks going out into the surrounding forest, with several km illuminated at night, so someone there must like skiing! Because none of the organisers were skiers they had arranged for me to visit a large holiday resort about 20 miles north of Juankoski on the second day. So while the other Huntlyites were having intensive meetings at the town hall I was taken for a walk in the forest around the ski trails on a beautifully sunny, crisp autumn day – I think I had the best of it! But although I had a great afternoon it was not very helpful in the search for a coach. My guides were extremely kind and showed me the resort (3 golf courses, riding stables, downhill ski slopes as well as xc trails, Russian oligarch holiday houses, marina on the lake) but there are no xc ski clubs there so not full of young coaches itching to come to Scotland and show us how to ski.

There are two things that the Finns seem to be passionate about. The first is the forests. These are of course very important for their economy but they also spend lots of time out in the forest and by the lakes in their country cabins. On the second day we were taken for "coffee in the forest". We had a short walk up a forest trail and then stopped at a picnic area where there were two shelters – one an octagonal cabin with a huge stove in the middle, the other an open-sided shelter with large table and benches – as well as a rustic loo and a wood store. These areas are very common all round the walking/skiing trails throughout the country, with the cabins built from wood found on site. Our guides produced flasks of the usual very strong Finnish coffee and some kalakukko – a local speciality consisting of a fish wrapped in beef fat and then in bread dough, then cooked long and slow....surprisingly tasty!



Finnish style forest huts

The second – really the consuming – passion of the Finns is the sauna. Even the town hall had its own sauna where apparently meetings are sometimes held. On our last evening we stayed at a hotel on the lakeside and after the meal were expected to have a sauna (fine) and jump in the lake (maybe not quite so fine!). We didn't have to break any ice but it was very, very cold! Definitely invigorating.

Our two days went very fast and I would happily have stayed longer. I'm sorry I didn't achieve very much for the ski club, although there is a possibility that a youth exchange might be organised and which could include a Huntly/Finland work party to build a Finnish style cabin in the Clash. But I was impressed by how warm and friendly the people are, and how keen they are to forge links with Huntly. I do hope that more comes out of the visit and I'll look forward then to us showing the Finns how to really enjoy skiing!

THE RACING SEASON AHEAD

Even as the Vancouver Olympics closed, planning had already started for Sochi 2014. Behind the scenes men in grey suits (well not actually in grey suits) were working out targets & what resources were needed to get a British skier/s into the top 30 by 2014 & top 10 by 2018. We already have skiers competitive with the best in the world at junior level, we've just got to repeat this at senior level. Recently a big boost came when funding was found for a fulltime Head Coach to the British Team & Roy Young was appointed & we wish Roy the best of luck & success. Several British skiers are in fulltime training in Norway at various clubs & schools. Having several skiers living together or fairly close by will help keep the team spirit that has made such a contribution to our success in recent years. Teams will be sent to World Junior, U23 (Otepää, January) & World Senior Championships (Oslo, Feb/Mar) & for the younger skiers there is the European Olympic Youth Festival in Liberec in February. Up to date news of the British Squad will be on their website: www.bnds.org.uk

In Biathlon Olwen Thorn will be attempting to re-qualify for the British Biathlon Team this November after a summer back training (& earning) in Huntly.

The British Cross-Country Ski Championships are once again being organised by the Army Winter Sports Association in Ruhpolding in Bavaria & there should be some Huntly skiers challenging for British titles there. If you are interested in going & want to find out more, please ask.

Closer to home, Huntly has its usual winter calendar of events but note the Ski Orienteering is moved a week later to avoid the clash with New Year. The usual Ming's Xmas Bash should happen in December – a great way to build an appetite for mince pies.

END OF SSGB & NEW GOVERNING BODY

After the collapse of Snowsport GB a new governing body for skiing in the UK was constituted in February 2010 – British Ski & Snowboard (BSS). It was an emergency response by the British Olympic Association (BOA) to enable British skiers to compete at the Vancouver Olympics. The driving force behind it & current Chair of BSS is Lord Moynihan (Chairman of the BOA). Dave Edwards was appointed Chief Executive Officer & a board formed which includes Roy Young & Simon Platt to represent cross-country. The old SSGB Nordic Executive continued to function during the turmoil & now has been officially recognised as the BSS Nordic Discipline Committee – new name but same people doing a similar job as before. The early promise of a more equitable governing body hasn't materialised & the desire to have a fully functioning organisation by the end of the year was probably too ambitious. There are too many deep seated problems in the governance of British skiing to be resolved quickly & there are already anomalies in the way different disciplines are run. So really it is a work in progress & only time will tell if it will be successful.

Its new website is <http://www.teambss.org.uk>.

New Members

We welcome new members Simon Deadman who decided after last winter he could do with improving his skiing skills & Freddie Starkey who made his racing debut in rollerski racing this summer.

Final Bits & Pieces.

- HNOG Open Day – Sun 7th Nov – 10am – 4pm.
- Thursday Club Nights continue at the Ski Centre – 7:30pm-9pm
- Be sure to visit the club website www.nordicski.org.uk. You can now sign up to get news updates emailed automatically.

Correspondence to: Peter Thorn
West Craigton Cottage,
Kennethmont,
Huntly,
Aberdeenshire AB54 4QP.
Tel: 01464 831429

Email: huntlynordicsc@yahoo.co.uk

Sponsors of the Huntly Youth Ski Club

