

HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

www.nordicski.org.uk

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OLYMPIC ISSUE



Clash snow days = 49 & counting.

Editorial

Can you have too much of a good thing? In the case of snow it seems you can but what a season this is turning out to be. The most continuous period of snow in the Clash I can remember, even the great "foot & mouth" winter with its 89 skiable days did not have as long a period of continuous snow cover. Too much snow, events cancelled or re-located. Cold enough for those blue waxes. Cold enough to find out that -16°C snow is slower than -5°C. A recent satellite map of the UK showed at one time you could ski anywhere in the UK - Dave Horsley's ski tour in Whitby is one of the more unusual tours undertaken. So if conditions are too difficult to get to the Clash why don't you take advantage of the extensive snow cover to explore new areas on your doorstep. I suppose the only thing that will interfere with the skiing is watching the Vancouver Winter Olympics!



The roofless hut just prior to being filled with snow

LOCAL NEWS

The Clash

It has been a battle to groom the trails with snow depths of over 2m in places & probably an average depth of 1m at times. On many occasions it has only been possible to get the snowmobile around without the roller & track cutter. Then when you do cut some tracks the snow comes & buries your work! However this has produced a deep compacted base. Rick Newman has been doing great work grooming the trails recently & I would like to thank him for that. Also to be thanked is Colin Miller for helping clear trees & sending regular snow reports even if they were of the "you can't get up the road" variety.



Rick cutting perfect tracks
Photo: D. Horsley

A Perigee Full Moon over Dave's shoulder



Ian & Ken Full Moon Stomping

Full Moon Stomp by Ian Cooper

Three participants – Dave Horsley, Ken Thomson and Ian Cooper. Due to dodgy road conditions on the Cabrach Road the 3 skiers departed Huntly for the local 'Bin' forest for a very pleasant 2 hour ski around the un-groomed trails. The wind, which had been blowing quite hard all Saturday abated and the forest was left in a state of peaceful tranquillity under 2010's first and brightest 'Perigee' full moon – Perigee being the moon's orbit when it is closest to the Earth and thus appears bright and large in the sky*. The skiers were extremely lucky as the clouds cleared away leaving a beautiful moonlit landscape.

**Once again an astronomical wonder on a Stomp – ed.*



VANCOUVER OLYMPICS PREVIEW

At the Vancouver Winter Olympics three skiers from the Club will be competing in the cross-country events. What is even more amazing is that there were several other Huntly skiers who narrowly missed out on selection. That so many skiers from one small area should have achieved or nearly achieved the stringent selection criteria is truly remarkable. This has been achieved with very little funding, & I mean very little, it is sometimes difficult to understand how. But with enthusiastic coaches, numerous helpers & most importantly the determination of the athletes themselves the remarkable has been achieved.

Lillehammer, 1994 was the last time a British cross-country skier competed at a Winter Olympics (I think I'm right). In the intervening years funding was cut to pretty much nothing for cross-country. A few dedicated people kept a junior squad alive, a few stalwarts flew the flag at international competitions. As a result there was something to build on. The new British Nordic Development Squad (BNDS) was set up by the late Bob Lacy in 2001. Targets were set & these became progressively more challenging, & the athletes rose to them every time. British Championships, Youth Olympics, Continental Cup & FIS races, World Junior & Senior Championships, World Cups. I have to wind the clock back a couple of years to when the SSGB Nordic Executive were meeting to decide on its targets & goals for the future. Some fool said we should be aiming to get at least one British cross-country skier to the 2010 Olympics & a Team to the 2014 Games. "Far too soon", "our skiers are too young".....

On the 26th January 2010 the British Olympic Association (BOA) announced that **three** British cross-country skiers were selected to represent Britain at the Vancouver Games upsetting our now somewhat restrained ambition. This was no easy task as the BOA set tough selection criteria, harder than those required by the International Olympic Association (IOA). Over the first half of the winter nine skiers (6 from Huntly) actively attempted to achieve Olympic selection, they all had realistic chances but in the end only four met the selection standard. Andrew Musgrave (19), Andrew Young (17) & Callum Smith (17) met the 'A' & Fi Hughes (19) (Yorkshire Dales CCSC) the 'B' criteria. Britain were only allowed to take two men & one women to Vancouver so unfortunately the selectors decided that Callum would miss out this time round. Commiserations to all who tried, & I'm going to use that word again, it is truly remarkable that we have so many young skiers performing at this level. Cross-country skiers don't usually peak until their mid to late 20's. Our skiers go to Vancouver to learn & gain experience for future Games. Their ambition is to be truly competitive with the best. The future looks good & Sochi 2014 is only four years away.

The third Huntly skier heading to Vancouver is PJ Barron who was selected by the Olympic Council of Ireland. Despite several injury problems PJ managed to stay ahead of his Irish rivals. www.olympicsport.ie/News.aspx?pageid=35

Actually there is a fourth Huntly member who has earned a well deserved place on the official GB Team. Roy Young goes as Team Leader Cross-Country. Roy has worked as hard if not harder than his young skiers to ensure that they fulfilled their potential.

The cross-country kicks off the 15th Feb at the Whistler Olympic Park with the Ladies' 10km FT & Men's 15km FT but prior to that the Canmore World Cup event on 5-6th Feb.

BNDS website: www.bnds.org.uk/

Team GB website: <http://vancouver2010.teamgb.com/>

Official Vancouver Olympics website: www.vancouver2010.com/

RACING NEWS

British Championships, Ruhpolding, Germany (23-30 January).

Posy Musgrave dominated the ladies cross-country ski events at the British National Nordic Ski Championships with two emphatic wins. She won the 10km classic by over two minutes from members the British Biathlon Squad & then the following day won the 6km Pursuit by a similar margin. Olwen Thorn managed to exact some revenge by winning the Ladies Meggitt Sprint event from Posy. Dave Lamb (Royal Logistics Corps & HNSC), who has been concentrating on cross-country rather than biathlon this winter, came third in the Men's 15km classic. Posy, Olwen & Iona Gatenby formed three-quarters of a ladies civilian team that came third in the ladies relay & only 18 seconds off the silver medal.

Posy on her way to the Ladies Pursuit title.
Photo: Maj R. Crawford
AWSA





Sandy Snowball
Relay

Iona Gatenby, Stuart Gray & Sandy Snowball raced in the boy's & girls 5km classic & 4km Pursuit races as part of the BNDS. Stuart obtained two third places & Iona a 1st & 2nd.

In the British Biathlon Championships Olwen had mixed fortunes. Third in the ladies 12.5km Individual Biathlon but her shooting let her down in her generally stronger 7.5km Sprint event (4th) & also the 10km Mass Start (5th Brit).

Full results & photos: www.britishbiathlon.com/pages/BritChamps2010.htm

World Junior & U23 Championships, Hinterzarten, Germany (24-31 January).

Six Huntly skiers joined the seven-strong British Team at the World Junior & U23 Championships at Hinterzarten. For William Newman & Callum Smith it was their first World Juniors & along with Andrew Musgrave, Andrew Young & Alex Standen raced in the Junior event while Sarah Young stepped up to the U23. Also out there, in the green of Ireland, was PJ Barron who also moved up to the U23's.

Although he didn't match his 9th place of last Andrew Musgrave was the best placed Brit with an 18th in a very competitive 20km Pursuit. Once again all the skiers demonstrated they belonged at this level of competition. Visit the BNDS website for pictures & news of these & other races they have been at this season.

Austrian National Championships.

While some of the BNDS Squad head to Canada for World Cup & Olympic competition, younger members of the squad & candidates for the European Youth Olympics 2011 will head to the Austrian Championships in February. This competition has proved a happy hunting ground for British juniors in recent years.

Biathlon.

Just before Christmas Olwen Thorn recorded her first biathlon World Cup qualifier at the IBU Sprint in Obertilliach, Austria. Missing only 2 out of 10 targets & 18.4% behind the winner this is enough to allow her to be selected a World Cup race. Currently she hasn't been offered a start place in the British World Team. In the meantime she will continue in IBU Cup races & hopefully go to the European U26 Biathlon Championships in Otepää.

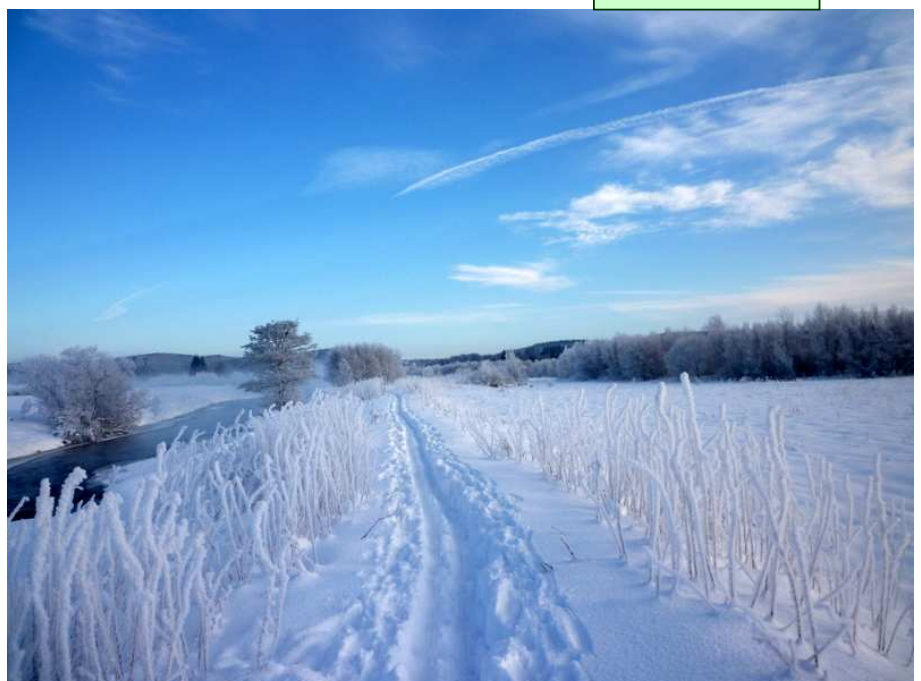
THE HUNTLY CHASE, Sun 10th January.

Forget World Cups! Forget the Olympics! The true test this Winter was the Huntly Chase.

PERFECT!!!

The previous weekend saw me battle up to the Clash to set out the orienteering markers. Four hours later, after trudging through deep snow I was back at the car wondering whether it was a good idea to hold the Ski O. By the time I got home I was convinced it would have to be cancelled. The following afternoon the snow had eased & I concluded that the road closed sign didn't mean me & I drove up to the car park. No sign of any ski trails from the previous day & once again a four-hour slog collecting markers, getting back to the car as it was getting dark. How on earth were we going to groom the deep snow in time for the Clash Dash the following weekend?

But no worries - the Huntly Sidesteppers sprang into action & by dint of towing the weighted ski slope tyre rings & a few hours of diligent sidestepping a course of Olympic quality was produced. Thus the Huntly



Chase was born, Britain's only City Centre Sprint! Not really firm enough or wide enough for a skate race the format was changed to classic technique sprints over accurately measured, challenging 200m, 350m & 900m courses. The skiers had to cope with "The Wall" & now infamous "Drop-off" with its reverse camber & stray piece of marker tape to add an additional trip hazard. If you ignored the maximum -14°C temperature, conditions were perfect with blue skies & no wind. One skier from Belarus said that it reminded him of home.

A truly international field was assembled with skiers claiming allegiance to Belarus, Scotland, Ireland, Malta, Germany, England & some Empire called Ming. The senior men's 900m race was won by William Newman with Deborah May taking the ladies title. Ruaridh Newman was 1st U16 boy & second overall & Iona Gatenby 1st U16 girl. Just three seconds separated Oliver & Fergus Newman in the U12 boy's category while Beth MacLean put in a stunning race debut winning the U12 girls race.

A whole bunch of Huntly JDS skiers made enthusiastic race debuts in the 350m & 200m races. Clyde Williamson won a very competitive boys 350m race & Amy Stewart won the girl's race over the same distance. Jenna Stewart (U8) emulated her sister in the girls 200m race & was also the overall winner by an impressive margin. Josh Taylor was first boy home followed by Sandy Griffin & not far behind was the youngest competitor of the day Alice Telford (U6).

Although we were not able to hold the Clash Dash this year we were rewarded by the most stunning weekend of skiing in Huntly. I must thank all who helped prepare the course & an especial big thanks to the timekeepers Hilary Musgrave, Carys Thorn & Dave Horsley who coped with the cold with no complaints. Although I think I tested their patience to the limit by continually saying there was just one more heat!

SNOW TYRES WORK. by Alan Telford

I'm often asked by work colleagues about the efficacy of snow tyres and whether they are worth it. By accident I have carried out an experiment to prove the hypothesis this week. I didn't manage to get the snow tyres on our Volvo V40 in the autumn for various reasons so I have had the opportunity of driving the car without snow tyres in wintry conditions. Getting the car up our short track to the road with the standard tyres proved impossible and I had to resort to snow chains. After a visit to the garage to swap across the front wheels to snow tyres (Vredstein Snowtracks) the car will go up and down the same track no problems forward and in reverse. It seems to run better with the snow tyres than the chains! So if you want to drive in wintry conditions and don't want to invest in four-wheel drive get some snow tyres, they make a hell of a difference.

As an aside, the garage I got my tyres changed at said they only recommended changing the driving wheels. I usually change all four although I did run for one winter with only two with no problems. My logic is the snow tyre compound is better at braking in cold conditions so four wheels would be better than two. Does anybody have experience on this matter? Update (10th Jan 2009) - Lucy was driving to Aboyne today and noticed the back end of the car (without winter tyres) slipping out on a bend so it seems like snow tyres on the non driving wheels are a good thing.

Talking to Arthur at JDS today, he alerted me to the issue of speed ratings on tyres. He said he has heard of insurance companies refusing to pay out on claims where the party was driving on lower rated winter tyres than the standard summer tyres. If I was an insurance company I'd be happier for my policy holders to drive around on lower rated snow tyres in the winter than hopeless but higher rated summer tyres, but as we know they will try to weasel out of paying out by any means.

Kleber tyres has a note on its website about this matter and the highway code. They suggest you may drive on lower rated tyres, but as a minimum you put a clearly visible notice warning the driver of the speed restriction on any winter tyres. For example if you had T rated tyre. "Warning: When winter tyres fitted speed limited to 118MPH /190KPH". www.klebertyres.co.uk/KleberUK

It's probably best to talk to your insurance company in advance if you are thinking of fitting winter tyres.

** Editor's personal experience on winter tyres: I just put winter tyres on the front drive tyres & find this is all I need. There is an argument you should put on the non-drive rear wheels as well as this will increase your braking effect & there would be less tendency for the rear to drift when cornering. Also I believe snow tyres sold in the UK are designed for use on tarmac as well as snow-covered roads. But if in doubt check your specific tyres.*



T-Rex Tree devouring Colin.
Photo: Claire Newman

THE SECRET CLASH II. by Colin Miller

With others confined to barracks by gales and flooding, your intrepid Chairperson found himself to be the only client for the Club's 2010 Secret Clash, and at risk of having to endure a whole day of his tour leader rabbiting on about Timberline... [Tour leader's note: Naturally, said snowfield only came into condition the day after, when thaw/freeze finally worked its magic]. Nonetheless, the forest welcomed the bold explorers with shelter from the gale and even a gradual change from driving sleet to light snow.

An archaeological diversion to the house and land of Little Blackmiddens [more on this and the nearby house of Longley next year, when the Tour Leader's done his homework...] was followed by a quick introduction to Barndance [Sorry, Peter, precise location deliberately withheld!], which was made skiable by the essential deep snow cover, but lacking in melodic rhythm as the slight thaw made for slow downhill and inhibited the graceful turns which might otherwise have been expected.

Then the doughty duo slogged up *Juniper Leap*, negotiating avalanche debris from the trees, to reach the inevitable *Timberline* at the halfway rocks before striding north with a following wind over the open moor to the top of Highland Fling, much aided latterly by Rick's grooming of the Haute Route.

Under pressure from the entire clientele, a stop was made for lunch, when the clientele exhibited aberrant behaviour, perhaps more in anticipation of water skiing than as a result of hypothermia. It is perhaps pertinent to record that a deep and uncharted river was inadvertently discovered between trail and luncheon bench, lying in wait for those unwary enough to remove their skis.

Lunch is of course an essential in any tour, not least where inner fortification is required to run the gauntlet of *Where The Bears Live* [see the experiences of

"three old men" recorded after the 2008 Secret Clash expedition...]. Under deep snow, and with the trees still snow-burdened, Where the Bears Live is probably one of the best areas in the Clash to get the feeling of skiing in a boreal forest.

Thankfully, the post-prandial pair maintained a demeanour of reverential quiet, and the bears remained asleep and undisturbed by our presence. As the photo shows, if you go down to the woods today you'll find where the bears come out to play – one of the bonniest and most symmetrical trees in the forest, and of a scale appropriate to the bears themselves...



Alan prepares for The Bears

Where The Bears Live leads the skier naturally to the splendid glacial melt-water channel that is Three Burnshedd How, traversed by an ancient road from Strathbogie to Moray. This serpentine glen, with its steep sides and flat bottom, has the potential to give hours of endless fun under the right snow conditions as one swings back down to the Haute Route very near the start of *Where The Bears Live*.

Much impressed, the entire crew journeyed home under brightening skies, with the leader already thinking about next season's Secret Clash.

New Members

I welcome our two newest members **Neil Foulkes & Alex Bowie**.

Final Bits & Pieces.

- HNSC Open Champs – Sun 21 Feb.
- Thursday Club Nights continue at the Ski Centre – 7:30pm-9pm
- Primary After-School Club – Tues P1-3 3-4pm, P4-7 4pm-5pm.
- Huntly Youth Ski Club – Thurs, 6:30-7:30pm – Please encourage secondary age to join this Club
- Be sure to visit the club website www.nordicski.org.uk. You can now sign up to get news updates emailed automatically.

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