

# HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

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## NEWSLETTER No. 47

April 2015

**END of SEASON ISSUE**



**Clash snow days 2014/15 = 57 (28 good, 29 marginal)**

### Editorial

*In decidedly dodgy conditions the Golden Boot 2014/15 was won by the trio of Jason Williamson, Claudia Zeiske & Nick May who mounted a meticulously planned joint operation to claim the prize on the 7<sup>th</sup> December. Although better than last season it wasn't a particularly good winter in the Clash. Half the 57 ski days were marginal & those good ski days were generally spread around in dribs & drabs with no long period of abundant snow cover. And the good days never fell on our planned race dates, so another season passes with no on-snow races. The last snow in the Clash was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> April & I doubt if there will be anymore now.*



JDS at the Hytti

*With no on-snow races the Clashindarroch Cup & Quaich will be awarded to the winners of the Huntly four-race rollerski series – same rules as last year. I put out my usual appeal for volunteers to help with these races especially for the Clash Hill Climb on the 31<sup>st</sup> May.*

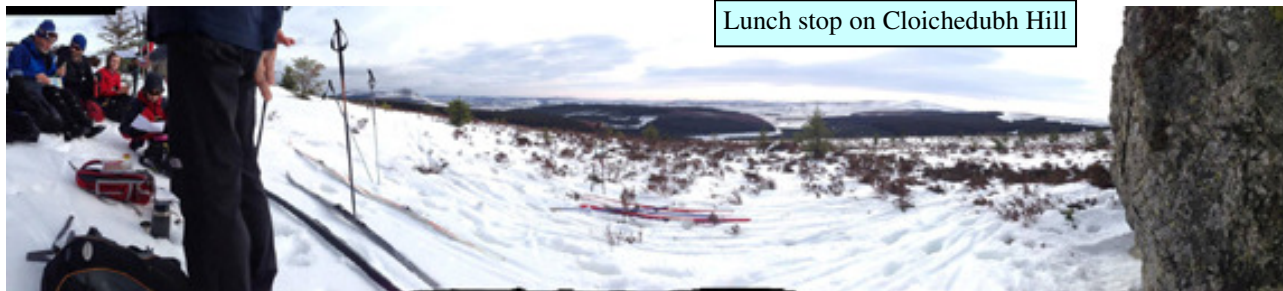
*Thank you to all the contributors to this varied newsletter. The next one will be due out in the autumn so please send me articles/news for inclusion in that issue.*

### NEWS FROM THE FOREST

The Clash wind farm has certainly changed the forest & without getting into an argument on the rights & wrongs of wind farms all I can say is there is a whole bunch of new, high level & very skiable roads. There is a trail at the top of Herringbone Hill that connects to these wind farm roads & in early February a large group of Huntly skiers joined me & Colin Miller for the Secret Clash-New Adventures 2015 trip. Interestingly several of the group (the largest numbers we've ever had on a Secret Clash) had never left the waymarked ski trails before so this really was a new adventure for them. I don't know how Vattenfall will manage the roads in the winter but the potential for longer distance races up here, or even Huntly to Clash tours, was obvious to all.



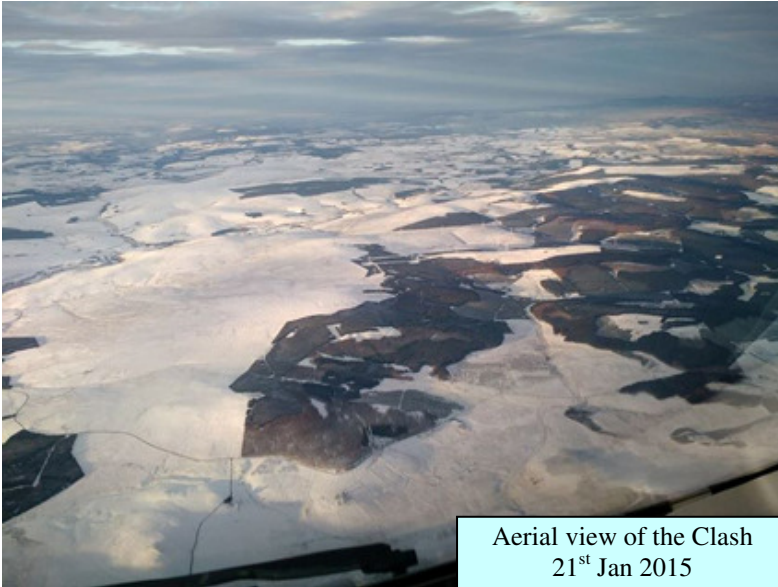
Lunch stop on Cloichedubh Hill



Last season the snowmobile suffered overheating problems while towing the roller. Basically it isn't being driven fast enough to cool the engine. A second radiator was fitted during the Summer, which may have improved things. I say

may, because it didn't get many outings this winter & it hasn't been fully tested. Thank you to Rick & Colin for helping to operate the machine.

In discussions with the Forestry Commission, one of the major topics raised was that of vehicles driving onto the snow. There are two separate problems here. One, Forestry vehicles, in theory should not be a problem most years as the Forestry workers know to keep clear of the trails in winter. There was a breakdown in communications this year & apologies were received from the FC. The second issue is with vehicles accessing the mobile mast. When the mast was first built Orange/EE agreed not to drive on the trails when there was snow and this was the case for a number of years. Recently the mast has been upgraded to be used by the emergency services & that is the reason why your mobile phone now works in the forest. We have been told that the mast operators will access the trails every three weeks regardless of snow. However I still don't think they fully appreciate how much snow there can be & they their attempts to get a fuel tanker up this the hill one day this winter was a laughable failure. The only long-term solution is for a by-pass trail to be constructed for skiing. Before we criticise FC too much it must be remembered that they do a lot of work on the trails each year making them ready for the ski season.



Aerial view of the Clash  
21<sup>st</sup> Jan 2015

The Clashindarroch Wind Farm Community Fund is now operational & worth £180,000 per annum. I can already think of the possible Leids Leap by-pass trail as one project. Another is webcam/weather stations on the trails. Do any of you have ideas?

## **RACING**

It has been a busy & eventful season for club skiers at senior, junior & recreational levels. There isn't space to go through all the numerous races so I'll just briefly mention some highlights.

### **EUROPEAN YOUTH OLYMPICS – Steg, Liechtenstein, Jan 2015**

*Lynne Gray, Beth MacLean & Duncan Gibb represented Britain at the European Youth Olympics in Liechtenstein. For all of them this was their first major championships. Duncan had the added responsibility of carrying the flag at the opening ceremony. Lynne gives an account of her experience....*

Going to EYOF has definitely been one of the best experiences of my life so far. I enjoyed every second of it- including the severe pain felt during racing- and it has most certainly become a memory to never forget.

Our holding camp was held in Ramsau, Austria where we stayed with downhill ski team, Team Evolution, which gave us an insight into how the other half lives. The location was perfect as it was home to an incredible ski track, which was more than enjoyable to train on thanks to the beautiful scenery and perfect snow conditions. During one of our sessions we met the Czech rowing team who invited us to row with them in Vienna during the summer which I believe is an offer that cannot be refused or forgotten. This and Dave Riding demolishing the last of the fajitas Duncan and I had prepared (despite none of us realising who he was until after Alex told us) were, for me, the highlights of the week.



After this we travelled back to London for the kitting out and team building events. This consisted of getting to know the rest of the team, discovering the horrifying fact that we may be urine sampled and receiving a bag that Alex could've fitted into that was filled to the brim with clothes and shoes. The next day we travelled back to Austria.



Our first real experience of the festival was the opening ceremony. I'm not entirely sure that anyone truly understood what was going as it consisted of a group of people running around in onesies and bibs with the odd cross country skier flashing past in a tin foil suit which I believe has high potential to become our next race suit. The closing ceremony was more like a concert where I saw very little due to rather tall athletes towering over me, but the 9:15pm curfew meant I didn't miss much anyhow.

The races themselves were incredible. The atmosphere was definitely the best I've ever witnessed due to the spectators willingness to cheer for any competitor and the good sportsmanship shown by the majority of athletes. The track was extremely challenging and pushed every competitor to his or her limits and often made me feel like I'd go faster on my stomach- hence the purposeful belly flop of course. Having our families watching our races and giving lots of vocal support was a positive aspect and added a lot more determination for us during races.

After our races were completed we managed to go watch an ice hockey match, where many of us struggled to keep our eyes open- some failed at doing so- which showed we had all been truly put through our paces and were desperately tired. The hill up to our chalet became a mountain but somehow I managed to persuade Alex or Duncan to piggyback me up it, after Beth's refusals- can't think why.

Overall the experience is one I'm never going to forget and had an amazing time! Alex and Fiona were so supportive and I'm so thankful for all they did to help us, along with our families who came out to support the team! Thank you!

#### **BRITISH CHAMPIONSHIPS** – Ruhpolding, January 2015-04-01

Posy Musgrave secured both the ladies 7.5km free & 10km classic races, while Roy Young was slightly further down the order in the Men's 10km free.

#### **WORLD JUNIOR CHAMPIONSHIPS** – Almaty, Kazakhstan, February 2015.

Gregor Young & Andrew Young made the very long journey to Almaty for the World Junior & U23 Championships. The best results came from Andrew Young with 12<sup>th</sup> & 16<sup>th</sup> places in a very competitive U23 category.

#### **TOUR DE SKI** - January 2015.

Andrew Musgrave & Andrew Young both started this year's Tour. Young, as planned, only completed the first three stages where he achieved one of his best ever results with a 15<sup>th</sup> place in the Val Mustair sprints coming ahead of Musgrave (17<sup>th</sup>). It would probably take a huge meteor strike on the Earth to stop Musgrave completing the Tour but he doesn't race to make up numbers, he is a serious contender in the World Cup & he proved this with an amazing stage win in the Toblach 25km FT Pursuit. And for those of you who understand the FIS points system he scored 0, & you can't do any better than that. So on that day he was the fastest cross-country skier in the World. This put him in 11<sup>th</sup> place in the Tour. He lost ground in the following 15km CT stage dropping down to 35<sup>th</sup> but in the final Alpe Chemis climb he pulled back to finish overall 20<sup>th</sup> in the Tour de Ski.

#### **WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS** – Falun, Sweden, February/March 2015.

The next major championships were in Falun & Posy Musgrave, Andrew Musgrave & Andrew Young were selected as part of the British Team. Andrew M had a fantastic 12<sup>th</sup> place in the men's Skiathlon. Expectations were high for his favoured event the 15km FT a few days later & in difficult snow conditions he came home in 16<sup>th</sup> place. It shows you how far British skiing has come in the last few years when we could be slightly disappointed that a British skier has achieved his second top 20 result at a World Championships. Andrew Y had a great sprint competition coming 40<sup>th</sup> just 2 ½ seconds from qualifying for the quarter-finals. I might be wrong but I think Posy may have achieved the best ever result for a British lady at a World Championships in both sprint (44<sup>th</sup>) & distance (49<sup>th</sup>). But more importantly, teaming up with Sarah Hale, the girls beat the Australians in the Team Sprints, coming 16<sup>th</sup> out of 19 teams. It is rumoured that some skis were burnt & the ashes placed in a small urn.



Muzzy gate-crashing the Norwegian party – 3<sup>rd</sup> 10km CT

#### **NORWEGIAN CHAMPIONSHIPS** – Harstad, March 2015.

British skiers were still competing in various late season events. The two Andrews headed back to their base in Norway to take part in the Norwegian Championships. Muzzy once again worried the Norwegians with a 3<sup>rd</sup> in the 10km classic & 5<sup>th</sup> in the 50km classic – obviously no one reminded Andrew that classic isn't his favoured technique!



Posy at the British Champs



Roy racing hard

*While the two Andrews do a good impersonation of Norwegians, we do have the genuine article in the club. The Bohle's made a trip back home & Arne describes their racing...*

## **BOHLE RACE REPORT FROM NORWAY. 5<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> February 2015**

Zander, a member of the British Nordic Development Squad, and Oliver, a member of the Scottish Performance Squad in kayaking, went over to Norway to compete in two races, and also to take the opportunity to get some good training done on proper snow.

We chose February as it traditionally has the best snow with dry conditions (normally no "klister"), snow is normally plentiful and you seldom have really cold weather.

Travelling to Norway is easy from where we live, with Ryanair flying direct to Rygge, Oslo, from Edinburgh. The ski bag was full to the brim of both new and what Norwegians probably think of antiquarian equipment, but for once Ryanair was happy with the slightly heavy bags.

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> February was spent in various sports shops in Majorstua, Oslo, to get some new equipment. It is not cheap in Norway, but there are always offers on, like last years models, so still worth a visit if you are thinking of upgrading your equipment. Bull Ski & Kayak is one of the expert cross country ski stores and has a great selection of racing equipment and the staff has very good knowledge, but it comes at a price. XXL is more of a sport supermarket with more offers on, but they still have a good selection of both competition and more recreational equipment, and the staff are fairly knowledgeable.

The afternoon was spent in Nordmarka, just outside Oslo, and a quick layer of "Blå Extra" for grip wax and the hills in Nordmarka were easy to conquer. A friend, Eyvind, from Zander's stay in Norway winter 2014, joined us. Although the aim of the trip was an easy classic ski trip to adjust from rollerskis to proper skis, for some reason the pace kept increasing! Boys will be boys!!

On Saturday 7<sup>th</sup> we travelled to Hokksund (home town of Tor Haakon and Geir Holte; Norwegian Olympic skiers in the 1980s), an hour west of Oslo, for the first of two races; the 3km classic +3km skate skiathlon races. After inspection of the 3km loop, Oliver decided to do the first 3km classic with his skate skis and rely on double poling. Zander opted for some wax. The transition between classic and skate was a new experience, Oliver gaining quite a few seconds on the change over (which the jury thought was on the limit of what they could allow as he was suppose to have stopped at his "box" before skating on!). They both finished the race in style; Oliver in 17<sup>th</sup> and Zander in 12<sup>th</sup>. 350 racers in total on the Saturday, so a good turnout.

Hokksund was also the venue for the classic 5km competition on Sunday 8<sup>th</sup> February. With interval start, it is you against the clock, so you need to pace yourself. Both Oliver and Alexander did well; Oliver borrowing his Dad's Kneissl skis from 1980s which have competed both in Wasaloppet and Falun. The Kneissl skis still worked well, although probably a little hard to push down to get good grip! Zander's new Atomic skis from Oslo worked perfectly. Not as many competitors on the Sunday, but still 232 in total. Zander ending in 8<sup>th</sup> and Oliver in 11<sup>th</sup>.

Oliver was happy to see another "retro" skier in his race; Kristen Mikkelsplass (son of Paal Gunnar Mikkelsplass). He wore the same ski suit and hat as his father did in the Oslo 1982 World Championships when he took the 4x10km Gold for Norway (tied with Soviet Union)! Hence, Oliver felt better with his antique Kneissl skis, Swix racing suite and poles. And what a technique Kristen had; similar style to his famous father; just floating over the snow, choosing to do diagonal when others did double poling, running up the hills in small, fast and elegant steps.....

The last days of our trip to Norway was spent in Geilo, the home place to Oliver and Zander's dad. This is a 3 hour drive from Hokksund going even further west. Lovely skate and classic skis around the lake during the day, and in the flood lighted tracks in the evenings. Great snow in Geilo; it is around 800m above sea level, so plenty of the white stuff.

So what did we learn from our trip to Norway?

- Ryanair charge more for the ski bag and luggage than the tickets themselves
- "Blå Extra" grip wax is no longer; everyone now talking in "V" and "VR" language, e.g. "V50" and "VR50"
- If you opt to do your classic race without grip wax, choose your classic poles
- Don't worry if you have some retro equipment; it probably still works well





## **GLENCOE, 21/22 March 2015.**

While the East of Scotland has not had much snow, the West Coast has had tons of the stuff. Frank Musgrave, in his role as the Chair of the Snowsport Scotland Nordic Committee, arranged for the Glencoe Mountain Ski Centre to groom some cross-country skate tracks on the plateau area of the resort. Many years ago, Western Track SC ran skate sprints on the plateau near the current café. This is ideal Nordic terrain, but unfortunately there was insufficient snow for skiing, so a 2.2km skate track was groomed higher up the mountain a kilometre or so to the south on the eastern shoulder of Meall a' Bhuiridh. Frank, Hilary, Posy Musgrave & Peter Thorn went across on the Saturday to set things & the Glencoe Mountain staff couldn't have been more helpful & they even offered to groom a further 3 or 4 kilometers – there was a lot of snow. PT enviously coveted the big snow groomer, which took only 30 minutes to groom a 2.2km skate loop.



On the Sunday the groomer quickly freshened up the trail & we expectantly waited for some Nordic skiers to turn up. In the end there were about 20 skiers, which wasn't too bad considering the short notice given for the event. A large group of Huntly juniors arrived & also skiers from Glasgow & Edinburgh. In fact one of the Western Track skiers used to help organise the races there 20 years ago. We had sort of planned to have some sprint races but in the end people were more interested in taking advantage of the fantastic weather & extensive snow cover rather than racing, & hopefully the photos capture some of the fun that was had. With the warm temperatures the snow did turn soft & sugary but Posy maintained the conditions were better than most of the World Cup courses she has skied this winter.



This was a successful trial run & showed it is perfectly feasible to hold a Nordic event at Glencoe. There is local accommodation ranging from camping to Hobbit bunk-house to numerous nearby hotels & B&B's. The chairlift was used to access the plateau, although it wouldn't take too long to walk/ski up (you could get to within 400m of the bottom station on snow). The plan is to return next year.

A big thank you to Andy Meldrum & his staff for being so welcoming & making this possible.

## **CHILD PROTECTION COURSE by Alan Telford**

The club has a commitment to support its coaches and develop their skills in recognition of the time they devote to developing talent. All Snowsport Scotland performance coaches have to attend a Protecting Vulnerable Groups course to maintain their certification. I had to renew my PVG at the end of last year. Rather than opting for web based training I decided to book myself onto a course with Sport Aberdeen in October. Attending the course was a little bit daunting as I was expecting all sorts of horror stories about

child exploitation. When I turned up I was pleased to see a couple of friendly faces - fellow club coach Emma Cruickshank and Aude Chiban from Fleet Feet Triathlon.

The course was being given by Jan Stander who is a South African cricket coach, and has played cricket for Scotland. Jan impressed me with his natural lecturing style and practical approach to child protection training. He drew together threads from child protection and good coaching practice to demonstrate how one compliments the other. He made me reflect on ways to improve the coaching I deliver to the children at JDS and Sunday Nordic Kids Club. I took away a lot more from the course than I had expected.

When I was asked to organise a PVG course for other coaches at Huntly, Jan seemed the natural choice. With help from Andy Miller and the club committee I organised the course to be delivered from HNOC and through the Huntly Sports Hub we were able to offer the course to other local coaches. In addition to HNSC coaches we had attendees from the Rifle Club and kayaking.

The feedback I received was positive and it would be good to be able to offer other coaching based courses locally in future.

### **BACK COUNTRY SKIING IN NORWAY** *by Andy Jones*

The very week (7-14<sup>th</sup> Feb), I vanished to Hardangervidda plateau, in southern Norway, mid-way between Stavanger and Oslo missing some good snow in Scotland, but hey ho. I stayed at Mosstrond on island of Hovden in a converted small island school - traditional wooden cabin style. Access was via skidoo (lying in sledges) across the frozen lake of Mosvatnet. Location about 4.5 hrs organised coach from Oslo airport. Food is lovely and everything run in a friendly relaxed family way.

Ski trails are just yours and the only noise or traffic a distant skidoo on the lake. Otherwise rolling birch covered landscape, a bit like around Clashindarroch or Banchory areas, with mountain summits accessible all around. Snow that week was wind scoured leaving hard patches with frozen capped crusty old snow and plenty of strastrugi effects. Groups were sociable and between 10am and 4.30pm covered 10-11 miles – on BlueExtra wax. Temperature -5 to 0C during daytime and not much lower overnight. Weather ranged gorgeous sunny calm two days, two days bit grey and cloudy and two days with total cloud down. Sunrises to die for.



Overall, almost as enjoyable as my mid January ski, to Derry Lodge and back one morning.

### **New Members**

The club has gained a lot of new members so welcome to the Taylor family of Kate, Ben, Theo & Joseph. Michael Cook. And Graham Young & Helen McGregor, who have been recruited from the Ski Centre's Tuesday coffee morning ski. I've met one or two of you & hope to see you all at club events or the Thursday evening club sessions.

### **A few reminders.**

- Club Thursday sessions continue through the summer – 7:30pm at the Ski Centre.
- Sat/Sun 30/31 May – Huntly Sprints & Clashindarroch Hill Climb – marshals/helpers wanted.
- Sat 6<sup>th</sup> June – Ming Summer Endurance Event.
- Sat/Sun 5/6 Sept – Huntly Champs & 3-Lap Challenge/Team Sprints.

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