

HUNTLY NORDIC SKI CLUB

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Most of the British Elite ski team are club members, so it has been wonderful to see them performing so well at the World Championships, World Cups where Andrew Musgrave has been pretty consistently in the top 10 in his races and Andrew Young has had some good Sprint results including in the team sprint with James Clugnet at Dresden, as well as 3rd in the last World Cup race of the season. (FIS has officially reviewed and revised the results.) They have also raced in Scandinavian Cup and Nordic cup as well as the Birkenbeiner where Annika Taylor was 1st in the skate race and Nichole Bathe 11th in the classic race. Together the ladies have also had some good team sprint results. Our younger club members, Oliver Newman, Hamish Wolfe, Cameron Cruickshank, Kieren Forth and Logan Duncan, who are part of BNDS or the GB Junior team have also been racing in Norway, Sweden, Austria, OPA youth champs in Switzerland and the World Juniors in Finland.



Meanwhile closer to home the club has been very active in what has been an average snow season.

Seefeld 2019

The World Championships come along every 2 years and were in Seefeld this year. The sun shone, the venue was great and the scenery fantastic for the spectators (and volunteers, see later), but the snow was a little soft and so hard going at times for the competitors. It would appear that there was no one left in Norway as the town was awash with Norwegian supporters all in traditional jumpers bearing flags and celebrating in the bar next to our apartment. There were also the Cologne supporters with their massive cow bells clanging their way past us on their way from the station to the tracks. The Swedes with great big flags on fishing poles, Italian bands, Finns all in blue and white. There were also one or two Union jacks and the lady with the special nails. As with all big competitions there were highs and lows for the parents



watching and the athletes taking part. Muzzy had great results but had hoped for more, Youngy was frustrated by broken poles and the snow conditions, the most difficult situation being in the team sprint where he had posted the fastest leg in the whole race and James was in a fantastic position only to be stepped on by the Austrian skier which led to him being spun round and a pole breaking and having to ski several 100 meters before he got a replacement pole. They missed qualification by less than 3 secs, far less time than the time loss due to the incident. The news a day or two later, that the Austrians had been part of the blood doping scandal deeply shocked the whole team and made the disappointment of not reaching the team sprint finals a little harder.

Eileen Cosgrove

Volunteer at the World Nordic Ski Championships. Seefeld 2019.

Last summer I came across the website for the World Nordic Ski Championships 2019. I was drawn to a link which was asking for volunteers to register their interest in working at the Championships. I had not really thought about becoming a volunteer until I saw the link but I decided to fill in the application there and then and sent it off electronically. There were many questions on the application about

education, skills, profession, languages spoken and so on and a section asking for sizes and measurements for clothing. At the end there was a free text box asking why I wanted to be a volunteer and why I thought I would be an excellent candidate for the job. Amongst other things I wrote about my time as a member of the British Nordic Ski Team and explained that I had skied three races at the World Championships in Seefeld, way back in 1985. To be honest I did not expect to get a reply but in the middle of October 2018. I received an email saying that my application was accepted and if I still wanted to, I could work as a volunteer. At that stage I was not allocated a job and it wasn't until late November I was told that I was going to work with the Course Control Team and again I had no idea what the meant. I thought I was controlling people and stopping them from entering onto the track but on arrival I was shocked to find out that I was actually working for FIS, filming the athletes as they skied past my position on the track using a mobile phone. I had a partner who had a radio and if we saw any infringement of the rules for example skating in a classic race then the clip would be sent to the jury immediately for examination. I did the same job for every cross country race. Most of the people I was working with were ex Austrian skiers and coaches who I recognised from my skiing days in the 1980s. The Course Control team also had members from Russia, Germany and Bulgaria.



I volunteered to work the whole two weeks of the Championships and decided that I would sort my own accommodation out. I managed to find a guest house just outside of Seefeld which was cheaper. I have to say that finding a hotel or guest house close to the venue was not easy as most of the accommodation was booked up well in advance. I was staying near to the Championship park and ride service at Giesenbach and the railway station so I had no real problems getting to the venue. All transport was free using my accreditation card and a free breakfast or lunch was also provided. I had a free track permit so after the races I managed to get a ski session in up at Leutasch or at Giesenbach itself on most days. Plus all the volunteers Lofer uniform I got to keep .

I had a great two weeks working at the Championships and I have no regrets on making the decision to volunteer. It was a fabulous experience, I met and worked

with interesting people. Met up with friends, British team members , old and new and the sun was out for most of the two weeks which from a volunteers prospective was great.

Martin Watkins.

The Clash Season 2018/19

As of 20th March 2019 we have seen 45 ski days (27 good, 18 marginal) on the Clash trails slightly down on the average of 57 days (based on the last 16 seasons). Skiing started on the 26th Oct when there was a week of marginal skiing. But this promising start was followed by a drought until mid-January when we had nearly 5 weeks of mostly good skiing. The trails were busy and there was a great example of communal effort when skiers mucked in to clear the car park of a foot of overnight snow. A system developed where as a car arrived they cleared a space next to them for the next vehicle. More skiers seem to becoming aware of these trails on our doorstep.

Regular top ups over this 5 week period meant the snowmobile was used frequently and is now fully “run-in” – only taken 4 years! Elizabeth Massie has joined the list of snowmobile drivers and successfully completed her inaugural grooming of the trails despite a slight navigational error near Herringbome Hill but I promised her that I wouldn’t mention that.



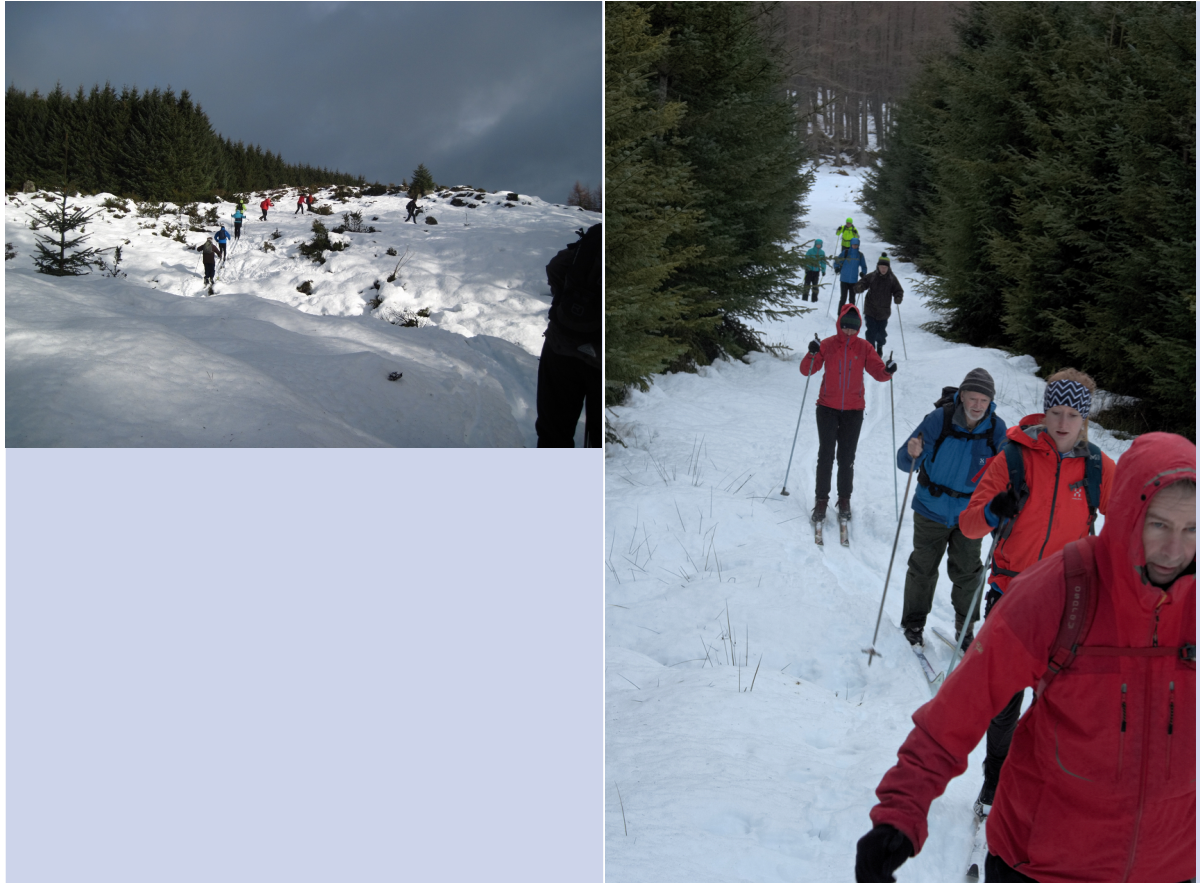
Unfortunately there was insufficient snow on any of our race dates which means that the Clashindarroch Cup & Quaich will be awarded to the first Huntly skier home at the Clash Rollerski Hill Climb in May. However on a more positive note there was a well attended, including one non-skiing dog, Full Moon Stomp on a cold evening in January when freezing fog gave very atmospheric skiing.

Snow conditions were perfect for the Secret Clash in February. After visiting the Mountains of the Moon and Lunar landing we made the mistake of heading onto the open high moor to be battered by very strong winds. Admitting defeat the party made an entertaining retreat through deep snow into the shelter of the trees. Some unusual styles of skiing were observed during the retreat – it wasn’t elegant (read Nick May’s view on the day).

Pete Thorn

Extract from Nick May's Diary

Friday, 8th Feb; Jam Making: Made 9 jars of very nice coarse marmalade (coarse as haven't the patience to slice the peel thinly). Took one hour of boiling to get it to the set point - the recipe said 15 mins -very annoying!



Saturday: 9th Feb; Secret Clash: It started so well; we ten souls gathered at the Clash Hytti in the morning and skied around the biathlon range to keep warm while waiting for the 10:30 start. We then entered the forest and skied leisurely upwards through the trees, the only problem was avoiding getting the end of my ski's caught in the tree roots. We worked our way upwards for a time and then after a discussion between Peter & Colin it all suddenly changed. We left the safety of the forest and crossed something called Timberline into bare open hillside with howling gale force winds, deep soft snow and no tracks. It was like passing through the wardrobe and instead of entering Narnia entering hell – a special place of Donald Tusk hell. Spectres of Boris Johnson and Jacob Rees Mogg appeared and disappeared in the gloom while we were trying to keep afloat and stay upright. We fell over on our backs like unseated riders at Aintree. One time I was blown over and pinned down with one pole buried deep in the snow and my outstretched hand caught tight in the strap like a drowning sailor desperately waving for help. Then like Shackleton abandoning his

ship in the ice I had to abandon my skis and struggle on by foot. Eventually we reached the safety of the forest again and the welcoming sight of the Haute Route, after a pause for food we skied safely back to the car park without incident. No one was lost. Rachel didn't fall once, she says I exaggerate. I will make some more jam tomorrow; maybe this time adding crushed coriander seeds and rose water.

Why That Name? – The Names of the Clashindarroch Ski Trails.

If you have wondered where the ski trail names come from then read on. There are two sets of names. The official ones that appear on the trail maps and then there are the less formal names that have developed from the need to identify areas amongst ourselves and also from stories that grow in the telling.



Back in the mid-1990s I was responsible for drafting the first ski trails map for the Clashindarroch forest. A simple line map traced from an OS sheet that was laminated and pinned to makeshift boards. Although there were one or two obvious names in use by skiers, for example what other name could you use for the challenge of *Rollercoaster*? And *Rollercoaster* is the earliest documented name appearing in Angela Oakley's 1991 book "Ski Touring in Scotland". But I did not know any "official" names. Peter Collins, the first manager of the Ski Centre, came up with a list. I thought they had come from some historic source either from the days when the Army used the forest for their championships in the early 1980s or names that the forestry workers used. But no, most of the names were decided by Peter himself. He recalls consulting skiers that used the forest at the time such as Grampian Outdoor Education and a few came from Forestry Commission workers.

Peter chose names based on obvious geographic or terrain features such as the already mentioned *Rollercoaster* and also *Sheepfolds* – the long disused stone-walled circular sheep pens which can still be found in this secretive part of the forest. *The Grotto* and *Secret Passage* maintain the theme in this area. The naming of *The Lair*, by Sandy and I had to wait for a second, much more professionally produced map with contours

It does not take too much imagination to understand that the *Haute Route* was an obvious nod towards a slightly more famous ski route in the Alps. *Short Cut* was just that, a short cut onto the higher trails. *The Biathlon Range* still had its warning flag poles and signs up in the 90s but nowadays we tend just to call it *The Range*. or Stadium. At least one of the signs is still there. *Biathlon Way* heading back to the car



park has always been an entertaining exit for tired novice skiers at the end of the day and *Range Way* even more of a challenge. I am sure deer have made use of *Deer Track* and *Cabrach Corner* looks out to The Buck of the Cabrach.

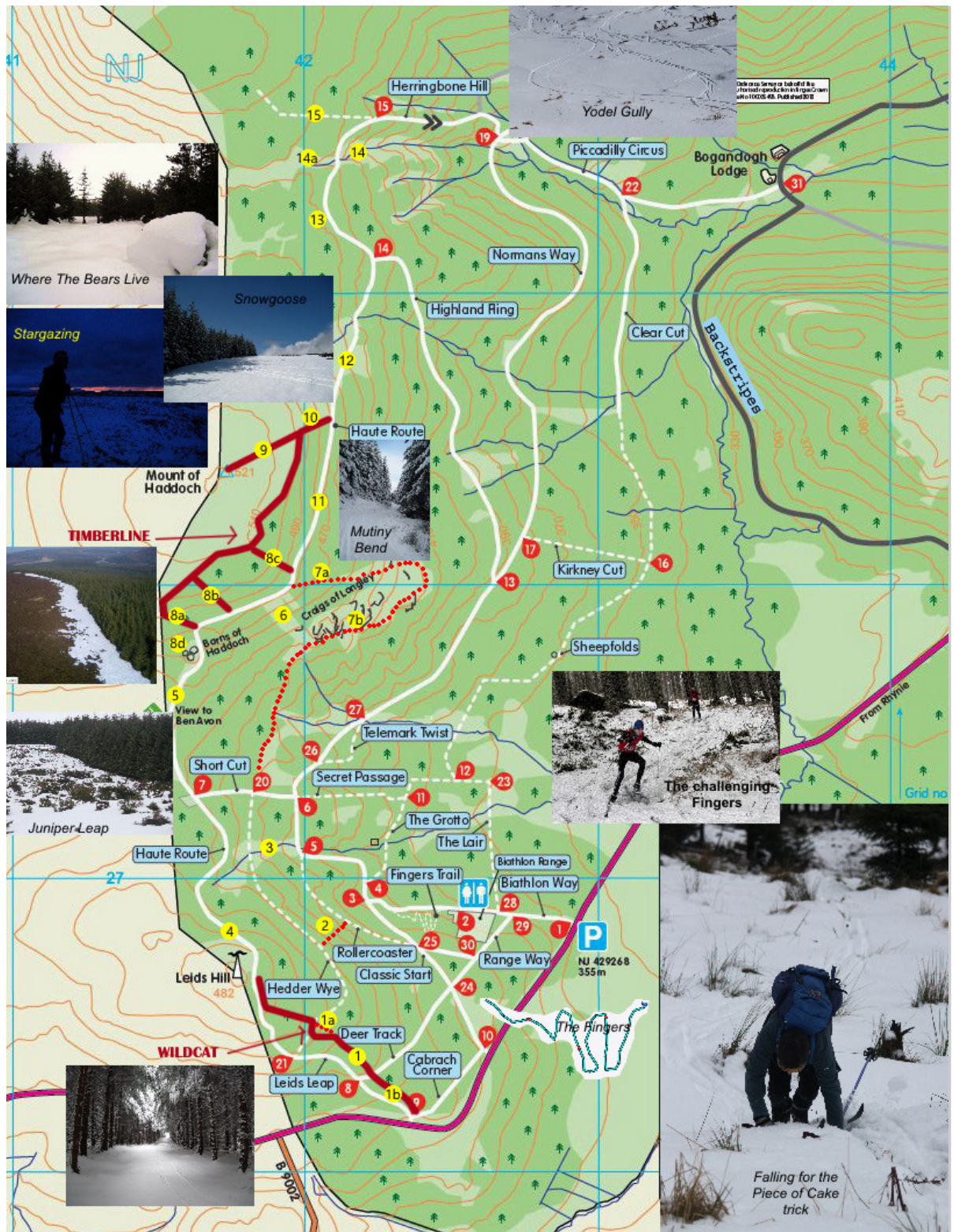
The best downhill in the forest, *Leids Leap*, may have had a festive 12 Lords a'leaping origin. At the other end of the *Haute Route*, the aptly called *Herringbone Hill* if going up could be called the Cresta Run if you decide to ski down. At the bottom is *Piccadilly Circus* - a junction of several forest roads. Norman Davidson, a former Forest Manager, believes the name Piccadilly Junction was in use by forestry workers to describe this meeting of the ways. It was changed to Circus because there is a roundabout there. Norman was an enthusiastic supporter at the Forestry Commission for setting up the ski trails and Peter Collins named *Norman's Way* to acknowledge his support. *Norman's Way* and *Highland Fling* divide at a Y-junction. (Although people also call the junction of Classic start and Biathlon way the Y junction although it is more of a T junction) *Telemark Twist* came after a sunny day skiing round the triangle and trying to perfect telemark turns at the bottom corner. The stretch of trail between *Telemark Twist* and the Y-junction seems to be nameless but we tend to call it the *Main Drag*.

A few names derive from geographic features such as some derelict buildings called *Backstripes*. *Kirkney Cut* from Kirkney Water which drains these hills and may be an old forestry name. When the first map was produced, the Forestry Commission had just clear felled below *Norman's Way* probably why Peter named *Clear Cut*. Though the name doesn't make much sense these days now the trees have re-grown.

A few extra names were required for later maps. I consulted a Doric dictionary for *Hedder Wye* (Heather Way) an apt name for this heathery firebreak. The Forestry Commission found some funding in 2005 which resulted in the first dedicated ski trails - *The Fingers*, along with the ramps which were put into *The Range*. In trying to describe how the new trail should be Roy used the description of fingers of a hand albeit with only four digits a bit like the Simpson's characters on TV, and the name *The Fingers* stuck.. The final official trail in the forest and so recent (2016/17) it doesn't appear on the map is *Wildcat*. The upper part of this trail was known as *Wildcat Alley* by Colin Miller, not because as I had thought, that a wildcat had been seen there but because as it became more overgrown it became very scratchy when trying to ski through a bit like it must feel after being savaged by a wildcat.

For the unofficial names – see accompanying map for locations. Some have stories behind them while most of the others are a result of Colin Miller's poetic imagination. Numbers refer to yellow background numbers on accompanying map.

1. (1a) ***The Slide*** (CM), ***Colin's Bypass*** (PT) or ***Chicken Run*** (TJ) on *Wildcat*. As 2018 came to an end Colin single-handedly engineered a potential bypass to the tricky bend on *Wildcat*. (But he has since discovered it's not as easy as he thought!). The final name is still to be decided but ***Chicken Run*** is the favourite. (1b) Along the bottom section of *Wildcat* is a rather large boulder in a jink in the track. It looks more threatening than it actually is and has been given the name ***Muckle Stane*** (EM).
2. ***The Wall***: A short-lived, wide but very steep downhill from Hedder Wye to Rollercoaster that was only skied a few times before fallen trees blocked it again.
3. ***Piece of Cake*** (PT): Alan Telford was tricked into taking part in a Secret Clash trip by the promise of cake. In the spirit of these club tours we forgo the groomed trails. Alan obliged the photographer by stumbling over a hummock giving rise to a photo entitled "Alan falling for the piece of cake trick".
4. ***La Glace de Clash*** (RY): Colin one day was reflecting to Roy that if the average temperature here just dropped a couple of degrees you could have a permanent glacier. It is noticeably cooler here and regularly is the last place the snow melts - a distinctive micro-climate.
5. ***Barton's Fall*** (PT): Following in the wake of Chris Barton in a club race your secretary saw Chris take the most specular crash down this tricky & fast



downhill – arms, legs, glasses flying in all directions as he tumbled down the hill. To your secretary’s everlasting shame, he sped past Chris as the red mist descended and he saw the opportunity to beat a far more talented skier. I’m sure I enquired that he was OK as I passed by.

6. **Juniper Leap** (CM): an open area of hill filled with juniper, below the Haute Route’s viewpoint. When skiable, wide sweeping ski tracks led to its alternative name of **Zorro** (JW).

7. (7a) **Lunar Landing** (CM): A challenging descent off the Haute Route, made extra tricky by fallen trees, leads down to (7b) **Mountains of the Moon**: Colin was at his poetic best when he re-named the rocky Craigs of Longley. An interesting route from Short Cut to this secret clearing in the heart of the ski trails is shown by a dotted line on the map.
8. **Timberline**: (8a) **Sundance**, (8b) **White Hare**, (8c) **Juniper** (CM): I'm hoping by now you are all aware of the snowfield that is Timberline. The snow can bank up against the trees here to depths of over 3m. Nearby (8d) **Barndance** (CM) in deep snow offers an entertaining short loop behind the Barns of Haddoch (and avoiding the tricky bend on the Haute Route!)
9. **Stargazer** (CM): turn left at the northern end of Timberline and you head up to Mount of Haddoch, a great place to, er... gaze at stars.
10. **Snowgoose** (CM): turning right at the north end of Timberline and you have the wide expanse of Snowgoose for those perfect linked turns. Watch out! It has a sting in its tail...
11. **Mutiny Bend** (CM): So named after a club work party that downed tools despite the enthusiasm of CM to continue working and the nautical threats of the cat'o nine tails and keelhauling from PT. I know now how Captain Bligh must have felt.
12. **Poledance** (CM): Suggested name for the long Haute Route descent towards Highland Fling, a name inspired by a solitary sitka spruce on the left.
13. **Where The Bears Live** (originator forgotten or eaten): I can't claim to have seen any but I am reliably informed they do live here.
14. **Yodel Gully**: while on the memorable 100th day ski (13 Mar 2013) young Peter Gibb displayed his musical talents and echo valley became **Yodel Gully**. The final name was a collaboration between the Gibb & Thorn family. Test the echo for yourselves. Once you tire in your efforts to recreate the Sound of Music about face and head into the glacial valley Three Burnshead How (14a) and an alternative route to the windfarm.
15. **Wilderness** or **Windfarm Way** (CM): Originally known as Wilderness Way it became Windfarm Way after the windfarm was built. The usual route to the windfarm roads it also gives access to a network of wide, heathery gaps between the tree plantings – a great place to explore.

CM = Colin Miller; EM = Elizabeth Massie; JW = Jason Williamson; PT = Peter Thorn; RY = Roy Young; TJ = Tony Jannetta.

by Peter Thorn with help from Colin Miller

Future dates for your diary

Sat 25 May: Huntly Sprints.

Sun 26th May: Clash Hill Climb.

Sat 1st Jun: Summer Ming.

Sat 10th Aug Fife 1.6/3.2/6.4/9.6 km mass start - FT

Sat 14th Sep: Huntly Rollerski Champs.

Sun 15th Sep: Cairngorm Hill Climb (am) / Glenmore Time Trial (pm).

Other Club News

Several club members have received or been nominated for awards. Frank Musgrave received 2018 Snow Sport Volunteer of the Year award in recognition of all the work he has done not only at club level and coaching, but also governance of the sport & management of the British Nordic Team's finances for so many years.



Pete Thorn, Logan Duncan and Oliver Newman were all nominated for awards from Aberdeenshire Sports Council and received certificates in recognition of their nominations

The club recognised the contributions of Frank Musgrave and Roy Young to British Cross Country Skiing with a presentation at club night last October. Roy started coaching at the club and supporting Bob Lacy who had resurrected the BNDS. After Bob's untimely death Roy tried to fill the gap, initially as a volunteer in his holidays, then working part time, taking a 6 month sabbatical and eventually in 2010 becoming a full time coach. Back in 2005 he felt there must be more than the British Championships the youngsters could race at and started searching finding races in Norway and this championship called the European Youth Olympics. Unbeknown to

Roy one of the Norwegian races he selected was the National championships and after much debate the Norwegian Ski federation allowed the youngsters to be entered. By the end of the race the Norwegians were so impressed that a friendship was forged and they put Roy in contact with various coaches who over the years have supported our athletes and come over to Scotland to present at the coaching conference. Inspired by the idea of racing at the EYO, the youngsters including Sarah Young, Andrew Musgrave, Alex Standen and PJ Barron buckled down to training hard and making flying long weekend visits to OPA races. Meanwhile Roy and co were on a steep learning curve on writing training programmes, waxing skis, the internal workings of FIS, organising flights,



transport and accommodation. After the first EYO in 2007, the next target in the headlights was World Cup qualification, followed by 2010 Olympics in Vancouver. The early success attracted more of our young skiers onto the competitive pathway. Along the way Roy was garnering more and more support from others like the Olympic Institute and then the Scottish Institute for Sport, expert waxers, technical specialist coaches, even a bit of funding. Thus ensuring the British programme was evidence based and up to date. The results over the years have steadily improved and this small non snow nation has produced some truly first class performances. After promises of finishing after the Olympics, but not saying which, Roy finally retired from his post as GBR XC team manager after PyeonChang 2018. Meanwhile

in the background, Frank Musgrave has filled up hundreds of little black books with facts and figures, ensuring that nearly everything the team wanted to achieve was financially possible, provided a sounding board for Roy's ideas and provided insightful feedback on how to achieve them. He has been a champion for cross country skiing at governing body level. Frank's astute money management has definitely contributed to the success story. He too stepped down from his role with the Elite team at the end of the 2018 season.

Eileen Cosgrove