

MIDLAND SKI CLUB NEWS

THE MIDLANDS LEADING SNOWSPORTS CLUB

APRIL 2006

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of the Midland Ski Club will be held at the Old Silhillians Club, Warwick Road, Solihull on Wednesday 26th April 2006, at 7.30 for 8pm.

Nominations for the committee and any special business should be notified to the Club Secretary, Ann Williamson, on 01527 404793 prior to the meeting.

It's important to have good attendance at the meeting to ensure that the club is doing the things that you feel it should be and is heading in the correct direction. But we want to know this even if you can't attend: in which case, please consider filling in the comments form at the back of this newsletter.

Whizz Kids

The Ackers, slope home of the MSC, is once again running its popular school holiday Whizz Kids sessions this Easter.

Running from 10th April to the 24th April 2006, these sessions are open to all 8 - 16 year olds and provide the opportunity to try skiing, climbing, canoeing and archery.

Sessions will show you the basics and help develop your skills whilst giving you the perfect opportunity to make new friends. Each session costs £5 and should be booked in advance by calling 0121 772 5111.

Ski Theatre

From 5th to 24th June 5th the Birmingham Rep is staging the play "On the Piste" by John Godber, which centres around a skiing holiday. It's set to be quite an event with a ski slope being built in the theatre itself.

More information and hopefully a special deal for MSC members nearer the time.



If you are quick..



.. you might be in time to come summer skiing in Tignes with MSC, from 1st to 8th July, and take advantage of the very high standard of ski coaching and excellent company which has become a recognised part of this annual trip.

Coaching is available for boarders as well as skiers, or you could come for the walking, cycling, rafting, or any of the other myriad of activities offered by the mountains in summer.

Flying from Manchester, we're staying in the **Club Hotel Curling in Val Claret**, close to the lifts for getting up on to the glaciers. The hotel is said to place emphasis on comfort and style with well equipped bedrooms and spacious public areas. Rooms have a private bathroom, balcony, cable TV & direct phone.

Meals include a buffet-style breakfast, **afternoon tea** and dinner.

The cost for skiers/boarders is £560, or for non skiers £420 (no ski pass or coaching).

Excluded are: Insurance (see booking form), ski/board carriage £15, activities, cost of lunches & drinks, ski & boot hire (approx. £65)

The date for deposits is very close, so be quick and get in touch with Maureen Crombleholme on 01785 714073 or 07710 511388.

For full details see last month's newsletter.

Diary

Mondays @ 7/8pm

Adult Coaching
Alan Parkin 01902 751288

Tuesdays @ 6.30pm

Instructor Training - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Tuesdays @ 7.30/8pm

Race Coaching - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Fridays @ 6/6.30pm

Junior Coaching
Sarah Yeomans 0121 449 9198

Fridays @ 8/8.30pm

Adult Coaching -Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

2-Apr-06

Birmingham & Area Schools Race, Ackers.
Jane Lee, 01905 345416

7 to 16-Apr-06

Family Holiday, Davos, Switzerland
Nigel Dawes, 0121 445 2594.

26-Apr-06

Annual General Meeting
Old Silhillians, Solihull
Jeff Elmore 07958 967709.

30-Apr-06

WMSA Race League, Telford
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

27-May-06

Summer Race League, Gloucester
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

5 to 24-Jun-06

"On the Piste", Birmingham Rep.

24-Jun-06

Summer Race League, Gloucester
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

1 to 8-Jul-06

Summer Skiing, Tignes, France
Maureen Crombleholme, 01785 714073

22-Jul-06

Summer Race League, Gloucester
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

19-Aug-06

Summer Race League, Gloucester
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

16-Sep-06

Summer Race League, Gloucester
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

14-Oct-06

Summer Race League, Gloucester
Guy Hornsby 01564 779927

Club Holiday - Saalbach

On arriving in Saalbach, the headline news in the Austrian newspapers reported 'chaos caused by endless heavy snowfalls'. Chaos it may have been for some, but for the MSC it meant snow conditions we could only have dreamt about, and the prelude of a week of endless fresh snow.

On the first morning almost the whole group set out together with our Equity guides; Tom, and Lucas who loudly insisted 'We're going to have FUN FUN FUN guys'. Snow and cloud merged to hide 30 of us on a tour where the skiing was far from easy, especially for Andy who we later learned had not skied outside Ackers before!!!

I guess any resort looks good when there's loads of fresh snow, but the Skicircus around Saalbach is a magic place, with charming character totally missing in US and French resorts. Eating out on the mountain was a delight, in beautiful traditional style restaurants with excellent food served with a smile at very reasonable prices. New lifts abound in the resort; the latest chairlifts now even have heated seats!! The only real queue was for the Westgipfel lift; a slow high level link to Hinterglemm, and this is to be replaced by a gondola at a cost of 5.8m euros

Wednesday morning arrived without a cloud in the sky, and Tom, our Equity guide promised the 'ski of our life' on the first morning run in 'powder up to our knees' down the Nordabfahrt - a steep black run towering above the village. After catching the 08.30 lift we arrived at the summit station looking down at Saalbach way below. 'Where's all this powder we asked Tom'; the wretched piste bashers had got there first, so we settled for second best, a perfectly groomed steep black run into the resort. Tom, hotly pursued by Tony Costin and John Ellis must have flown down this fabulous run, which made for very flattering turns. Returning to the summit, we were soon to find loads of fresh snow to make fresh tracks on a high level route to Hinterglemm. Another magic day.

A tour of the Skicircus high above Saalbach and Hinterglemm was a must for our last day, by which time we had adopted other guests from the hotel. Once more we enjoyed a mix of fresh snow and sunshine, and had a great excursion stopping for lunch in Hinterglemm. John Ackerman kindly offered to show some of the slower members the route; it was very sad that at this time John had a fall resulting in knee ligament damage. Let's hope John gets this repaired soon, and we look forward to seeing him on his skis next season.

One of my lasting memories of the holiday was the high standard of skiing of the group, and how so many coped well with fresh snow conditions. I know modern carving skis make life easier, but it really is impressive how MSC members have worked so hard at honing their technique, and how much we have gained from the Training Week and dry skiing. And well done Andy, when the conditions became easier he was skiing great, and covered most of the resort by the end of the trip.

Every cloud must have more than one silver lining. Soon after starting our journey back to Munich, our driver George announced that the Autobahn back to Munich was solid for 20k. No problem to George, who then gave us a wonderful tour of Tyrolean ski resorts with fabulous views, to arrive at Munich well in time for our flight. Thanks again George.

Mike Thomas

Racing News

GLOUCESTER SUMMER RACE LEAGUE

This year's dates are as per the diary on the front page of this newsletter.

WMSA RACE SERIES

On 5th March at Stoke the first race in a series of races comprising the WMSA team competition (Midland v Stoke v Telford). We achieved a number of excellent overall positions, the full list of which is:

Dan Yeomans 2nd	James Hornsby 3rd
Harry Hornsby 5th	Chris May 6th
Freddie Meyer 11th	Olivia Waller 20th
Sophia Phelps 24th	Nicholas Phelps 25th
Sam Lee 27th	Lucy Deller 33rd
Matthew Waller 42nd	

Six racers from each team are nominated with the best four scores to count towards the team score, competitors with fewer than 250 seed points are not eligible. So team points scored were:

Nicholas Phelps	U8	1st place	20 points
Lucy Deller	U10	5th place	16 points
Olivia Waller	U12	5th place	16 points
Sophia Phelps	U12	7th place	14 points
Chris May	U14	1st place	20 points
Freddie Meyer	U14	4th place	17 points

The points scoring uses the same system as that in the Gloucester Summer Race League - 20 points to the winner, 19 points to second place, etc.

Our best four scores accumulated 73 points. Congratulations to Nick and to Chris for winning their age groups!

Stoke also managed to score 73 points - no fix, I've seen their results! Telford didn't score any points as their racers were already committed to racing elsewhere on that day. However, they will also have the chance to catch up when they take on Stoke on 2nd April - we can't compete in this as it clashes with our own Schools' Race. I am hoping, however, that we will be fully represented at the race after this on Sunday, 30th April at Telford.

If any one (from whom I haven't already heard) wishes to race on 30th April can you please let me know.

CLUB NATIONAL RACES

For anyone who's not registered with Snowsport England but would like to try their hand at a Club National race you are allowed to compete in one Club National per year using a Day Registration entry form. Whilst your race timings will count in the overall positions for the day, you will not qualify for seed points. The entry form can be downloaded from the Snowsport England web site (Disciplines - ROTP - Race Forms - Club National Day Registration Race Entry).

At this performance level it's advisable to use a slope that you're familiar with. The Gloucester CN is on 8th July (the Stoke CN is on 1st July and the Hemel CN is on 20th May). This is a particularly good way of introducing racers to the Club National/Grand Prix circuit without the pressure of having to perform for seed points.

Guy Hornsby, 01564 779927

How Many Resorts can you Ski in a Ten Days?

Have you had enough of the crowded Alpine slopes, the lack of snow, the high prices for hotels, meals, and ski passes, and putting up with millions of people who seem to have little or no consideration for one another?

Well, these were some of the questions on my mind, when a friend and I decided to venture into the Pyrenees. We have been going to that area for many years and it has struck us how different skiers seem to behave in that environment.

The resorts themselves are not particularly large, but piste preparation, scenic views, and the so very different behaviour of the friendly skiers, to say nothing of the relative cheapness of all aspects of the holiday have attracted us to venture out.

You will not find many British skiers, if any. Americans, and Germans are also absent. Instead you get a lot of French people who are different to those who go into the Alpine areas. These are the individuals concerned with their environment and who will take a day off to go snow shoeing and enjoy the countryside. You'll also find plenty of Spaniards who share similar characteristics, in fact they would rather be identified as Catalan people, and this makes them very different people in their thinking and their behaviour.

Last year we based ourselves in Encamp, Andorra, where we have a friend with a very cozy Hotel charging about 40 euros per night to include half-board. Each day we traveled to the different resorts. This proved a little tiring and when the "cols" are full of snow makes things a little "interesting". This year we based ourselves in two different locations. First we went to Encamp and then we moved on to the French side and stayed in an "auberge" costing about 50 euros per night for the half board, the cuisine was impeccable with cleanliness to match.

So what about the skiing? Well as per usual we had loads of snow while the Alps were struggling with the lack of it. We flew to Barcelona and picked up our car - not forgetting the snow chains. We arrived in Andorra and there we skied the usual resorts: Pas de la Casa, Grau Roig, Soldeu and Encamp. The place is now known as the Grand Valira. The combined ski pass is about 25 Euros for an adult. Next we traveled to the other side of Andorra and ski Pal, and Arinsal. We then traveled to the French side to our auberge and from there we skied, "Font Romeu" and "Pyrenees 2000". This area is quite large and slope grooming is taken seriously, you will not be short of runs. Next day we traveled down the road and skied "Formigueres 1500-2400", not a very large area but some

interesting skiing and the ski pass is about 22 euros. Next on the list was "Les Angles" 1650-2325. Next on was "Cerdagne Puigmal" a small area but with a highest altitude of 2700meters.

Next day we took a drive into Spain and skied "La Molina" and "Alp 2500" an enormous area which is used for Europa Cup races. A bit of a drive but a very enjoyable and worth while experience.

By the time we finished we had had a lot of fun, loads of skiing and a very economical trip. The experience was also an eye opener when compared with all the big hype about the Alps at very expensive prices, with not all that much snow, and a lot of people competing for the bits that can be skied.

The treatment you get in the Pyrenees is that of a deserving guest, a coffee costs about 70p, and is made with real beans, sorry I can not speak for the tea drinkers. The size of the meals on the mountain are more like a feast and the prices very low. The theft of skis is almost unheard of in the Pyrenees.

Two years on the run we have done this trip at the end of January and I look forward to the next year. Every time you return you see something that you missed last time.

You may wonder why fly to Barcelona when Perpignan is near to these stations. Well, first the car hire is cheaper in Spain, the road is a dual carriageway with fewer bends and even if it snows heavily, which this year it did, you can be sure of getting to your destination if driving with due care and attention.

I have mentioned only a few of the resorts available in that area. You will find signs directing you to a much wider selection, some small others are larger. Our selection of resorts have not been dictated by any scientific principles, it has been more a question of curiosity and considerable luck.

If you want to give it a try get in touch my pal and I will give as much information as possible about this vast area.

N.B. I am most grateful to Steve Lennon who has been my skiing pal, driver, planner, and who keeps an eye on me when I have a "senior" moment. We have yet to fall out which when I think about it seems remarkable. We are both very "positive" thinkers and action led but have been able to accommodate each others idiosyncrasies. And I have now enrolled him into the "CAT" skiers club as a full fledged member on account of his highly skilled performance on skis. This club is a very special one with me as President, Chairman, Treasurer and until now the only member.

Luis Lopes

Going Downhill Fast

Dudley, West Midlands, may seem to be the most unlikely place to start a Ski Club, but it was there in 1965 that the Midland Ski Club was founded and we are still going strong 40 years later with hundreds of members in the Midlands enjoying the most exciting sport of Skiing.

'Going Downhill Fast' tells the fascinating story of how a few optimists, with virtually no knowledge of the sport, set out to show that you did not have to be rich and privileged to go skiing. Read how they made the Lickey and Clent Hills their own 'St. Moritz', how they would drive overnight to snatch a weekend skiing in Scotland and how the arrival of the package holiday finally enabled them to experience the real thing.

The book brings the story up to date relating how MSC grew to be the thriving Club it is today, organizing many holidays and training weeks abroad, skiing several times a week on artificial ski slopes and having a very active group of young people coached to a very high level who are encouraged to race and are given the opportunity to reach Regional and National Squads.

'Going Downhill Fast' is full of amusing stories and packed with photographs and it will be enjoyed by all skiers and anyone who has ever struggled to take up a new sport.

To obtain your copy please send your name and address and a cheque for £15 plus £2.50 p&p to Midland Ski Club, 64 Cheswick Way, Cheswick Green, Shirley, Solihull, B90 4HF.



