

MIDLAND SKI CLUB NEWS

MAY 2009

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Annual General Meeting of Midland Ski Club will be held on Thursday 7th May 2009, starting promptly at 8pm, at the Old Silhillians Club, Warwick Road, Solihull. Nominations for the committee and items for discussion should be notified to the Secretary prior to the meeting.

Apart from the usual business of electing the committee, approving the accounts etc, this year's AGM will see an updated Club Constitution being proposed. The new constitution can be downloaded from the MSC website for examination in advance, and printed copies will be available on the night.

You will find with this newsletter copies of the minutes of last year's AGM which will be approved at the meeting, and audited accounts for 2008-9.

WINTER AND SUMMER RACING UPDATE

Congratulations to all those MSC racers who competed over the winter on snow races.

Benn Hall, Elisabeth Thomas, Emily Dawes, Freya Eaton, Harry Hornsby, Jack Yates, Matthew Waller, Olivia Waller, Owen Johns, Sam Allen, and Victoria Bell, raced across France, Switzerland and Austria in the Anglo Scottish Cup (Les Houches), BARSC Championships (Petzen), British Championships (Meribel), British Schoolboys (Meiringen), British Schoolgirls (Flaine), BUSC (Alpe D'Huez), English Championships (Bormio), Scottish Championships (Courchevel),

and Welsh Championships (Champery).

Well done to you all.

Meanwhile, the summer artificial slope races have already started, with the Club Nationals at Bromley and Manchester Xscape and the British Indoor Championship, also at Xscape. At a slightly less serious level, the Gloucester Summer Race League starts imminently, and will see around 20 MSC racers competing once a month.

Full results for all MSC racers are available at <http://www.midlandski.org.uk/racereults>

MSC CLUB NATIONAL

Saturday, 18th July 2009 will mark a very important occasion in the history of the Midland Ski Club as it proudly hosts its first ever Club National race!

With the MSC now firmly established as a major player on the national artificial surface race circuit, the club is delighted to have been selected by Snowsport England to run one of its nationally-ranked competitions: a fitting reward for the outstanding performances of our athletes and the hard work of their coaches and support team (i.e. parents!).

Given the limitations of The Ackers slope and facilities, we have chosen to run this prestigious event at the

Rossendale Ski Centre - a well-established race venue, just north of Manchester, that always offers exciting racing on a long and fast slope!

We're sure that many (if not all!) of our racers will want to compete and make the day one to remember. We're anticipating up to 180 racers from clubs up and down the country including most of the UK's top performers! So, racers and supporters alike, please get the date in your diaries and give the occasion your full backing.

An information sheet will be issued shortly explaining how to enter, the race format, where to stay, etc. Whilst we

Diary

Mondays @ 7.30pm

Adult Coaching
Bryan Arnott 01827 893243

Tuesdays @ 6.30pm

Instructor Training - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Tuesdays @ 7.30pm

Race Coaching - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Thursdays @ 6/7.30pm

Advanced Race Training - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Fridays @ 6/6.30/7pm

Junior Coaching
Jane Lee 01905 345416

Fridays @ 8.30 pm

Adult Coaching - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

2nd May

Gloucester Summer Race League
Jane Lee, 01905 345416 (also 6th
June, 4th Jul)

7th May

Annual General Meeting, Old
Silhillians Club, Solihull
Diana Horth, 01889 800706

15th July

Summer Walk, Berkswell
Pete & Jill, 01676 534469

18th July

MSC Club National, Rossendale
Guy Hornsby, 01564 779927



have around 40 racers currently registered with their home nation to compete in national competitions, we're very much hoping that a number of our non-registered racers will also want to enter under the day registration scheme - which allows non-registered racers the opportunity to compete in one Club National per season.

In the meantime, if you have any

CLUB HOLIDAY 2009 - WENGEN *Diana Horth*

The holiday started with a 5am meet at Birmingham Airport. An airport management faux pas caused a major queue holdup and a subsequent rush to get on the plane with no time for coffee or duty free shopping. To add insult to injury we'd 'missed our slot' and were delayed for another hour. Apart from that, the journey to Wengen was otherwise to schedule with a pleasant journey via coach to Lauterbrunnen and a final leg with a train journey up to the delightful and mostly traffic free Wengen.

The hotel couldn't have been better situated as it was just across from the station even so they'd sent a trolley for our luggage. It also happened to be very close to the cable car and was very central to shops and bars. We were accommodated in the lovely 4* Silberhorn where the food was plentiful, very good quality and with lots of variety. The rooms were very spacious and we were able to comfortably hold the room parties in style. Brian and Kay Bishop had a balcony large enough to host a ball but the neighbours got a bit uppity when we tried to bag all the chairs for an après ski get together.

Having arrived early into the resort it was easy to get ski hire and lift passes sorted out ready for an early start in the morning. The first day we enjoyed reasonable weather until mid afternoon but what a stunning backdrop we were skiing under the north face of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau. We enjoyed good weather for most of the week although at times it was too warm making for heavy snow in places. All

34 managed to visit Grindewald and Murren ski areas during the week and agreed that Grindewald was a bit too much effort with valuable skiing time lost waiting for transport connections.

Schilthorn in Murren is home to the cable car and rotating restaurant featured in the James Bond movie *On Her Majesty's Secret Service*. It also boasts a fabulous run from the top. A few diehards took the off-piste way down but the black Inferno was worth the trip.

As is so often the case our injuries were non ski related. Linda Lee slipped on some steps and hurt her wrist which required medical treatment and somebody, who we hope won't repeat their mistake, forgot sun block and got quite badly burned - he did however thoroughly enjoy the model railway exhibition laid on that week!

A number of the group did the touristy bit by taking the train to the 'Top of Europe' at Jungfrau Joch. It was a really good trip apparently and I regret not doing it, but the lure of the skiing got to me every day.

Overall it was an excellent choice of venue with enough variety for everyone for the week. The transport system is generally very good with a choice of cable car or train up the Wengen side and train, bus or cable car to get to the Schilthorn area. It was only getting to Grindewald that seemed to be slow and disjointed the return journey was much easier.

It was also good to welcome some new members and some who hadn't been on a club holiday for a while and we hope they will come again.



SUMMER WALKS

With Spring barely upon us we are already planning our Summer events. Peter and Jill Seamen have kindly offered to lead a short walk of 4 miles leaving from The Bear, Berkswell on Wednesday July 15th at 7.00 pm. Meet in the pub car park for just before 7.00 and we should be back by 8.30. Food is available and, obviously, anyone who does not wish to walk would be welcome to join us at the pub for a drink. Please contact Peter and Jill on 01676 534469 to let them know if you are coming along.

GLOUCESTER SUMMER RACE LEAGUE

This year's Summer Race League at Gloucester takes place on the following dates: 2nd May, 6th June, 4th July, 22nd August, 19th September, and 17th October.

Whilst we have an increasing number of racers who are too good to compete at Gloucester (their seed points being too low), the continuing input of younger and less experienced racers mean we are still planning on entering three teams as in previous years.

If you want to race this summer and have not already let her know, please see Jane Lee on a Friday night, or email canal.cottage@btopenworld.com.

FOR SALE

A pair of Volkl skis for sale - carvers, very little used. 184cm with Salomon bindings. Also included are poles and a Ski Tube. £80.00 Contact Mr Burdett on 01564 777682

CROSS COUNTRY SKIING IN THE VOSGES MOUNTAINS

When you think of skiing and France then the resorts that spring to mind first are the well known ones in the Alps or the Pyrenees. However there are other, smaller resorts with fairly reliable snow and one of the most well known of these is in the Vosges mountains. Located in north eastern France, up near the German border, the Vosges area offers downhill and cross country skiing as well as some fine winter walking trails.

The Vosges appeal to us as a family for several reasons but the main one is that only two of us in the family are skiers. The others are happy to come snowshoeing or walking but for complete domestic harmony it's best to have some other activities as well. From the Vosges it's a short drive to the Rhine valley or across into Germany and medieval cities such as Freiburg. The Alsace is famous for its wines and there's plenty of wine tasting on offer - although the euro exchange rate made that a lot less appealing this year.

For a number of years now we've stayed in the area around Gerardmer which has a wide variety of accommodation - mainly chalets - and is close to several cross country (and downhill) centres. The easiest way to book is via the local tourist office's website at <http://www.gerardmer.net/>. The site's search facility is not entirely intuitive and English translations are patchy at best but we've never had any problems booking. Most of the visitors to the area are French with the odd Belgian or Dutch and very few locals speak English so that's one thing to be aware of.

Snow conditions in the Vosges are generally less reliable than the Alps but we've never had a year where we couldn't ski at all. Last year (2008) was a bit dodgy but this year was the best that we've ever seen. I think that every downhill run and every cross country ski track was open all season. For the poorer years the downhill runs at La Bresse and Gerardmer have snow cannons and there's usually a reasonable amount of snow on the highest cross country tracks. Neither of us is a downhill skier so we can't really comment on the quality of those slopes but from what I've read they're more suited to beginners or intermediate skiers.

The cross country areas are generally well maintained with both classic and skating styles possible on all of the tracks. One thing to bear in mind is that some tracks are mixed in with footpaths and it can be disconcerting to come round a corner at a reasonable speed to find a family tobogganing across in front of you! Other areas, like La Bresse are strictly for skiers only.

Being in fairly mountainous terrain even the supposedly easy cross country tracks tend to be quite technical. In fact we've decided that the

green/blue/red method of identifying the track difficulty just refers to its distance! You'd expect a green track of 2.5 km and labelled "Tour du Lac" to be fairly flat and a good warm up. We thought so as well and we were wrong - even that simple circuit had a few sharp climbs and interesting descents.

It's also advisable to read the piste maps quite carefully, making a careful note of the height differences. We didn't do this on one occasion and ended up on a blue track which had a 90m vertical climb in 3 km. Needless to say we had plenty of herringbone technique practice before getting to the top. The descent was fun, if not totally in control all of the time. That's when the summer practice on roller skis and balance boards paid off.

It's not all slogging uphill or mad downhill however. The Vosges were the front line of the Western Front during World War 1 and the French built a supply route - Route des Crêtes - that runs north-south along the top of the mountains. Sections of this are blocked by snow in the winter and are used as cross country tracks. Our favourite track runs north, on the Route des Crêtes from the Col de la Schlucht, starting from the corner of the downhill slope car park. The first 1.5 km is a slightly boring uphill drag through the trees but after that it opens out and there's another 6 km of undulating terrain with fabulous views over the Vosges. It's a round trip of 15 km to the end of the marked track and back but there's a further, unmarked section, which links to the downhill and cross country resort at Le Lac Blanc. Best of all the uphill drag at the start becomes a very pleasant and not too strenuous double poling exercise for the last 1.5 km on the way back!

Getting to the Vosges by air would be difficult but by car is fairly easy. From Calais it's the same autoroute journey as for the Alps until you get to Reims then, instead of turning south, you head east to Metz and then down

past Nancy. To arrive by about 4.30 p.m. means a very early start from the Midlands on the same day. Alternatively Reims is a good place for an overnight stop with plenty of cheap hotels. If you do stop at Reims and you like motorsport then you've got plenty of time for a quick visit to the old Reims Grand Prix circuit at Gueux. It used to be a classic road circuit and the D27 still runs though the grandstand and pits complex which are being restored by local enthusiasts. Despite initial reservations even my wife agreed that it was worth the small detour!

If you're looking for a different off piste slope every day then the Vosges are probably not for you. But if you're looking for something different and a chance to try different types of snow sport then try the Vosges. If you've got any questions then please contact us and we'll try to help.

John Davies - magna5@tiscali.co.uk



HELP PUT SKIING AND SNOWSPORTS ON THE MAP

Help put skiing and snowsports on the map!

We need help from MSC members to raise the profile of skiing and snowsports with Sport England.

One of the key elements of the Sport England Strategy for 2008-2011 is how to keep people engaged in sporting activities

People participate in sports because they enjoy taking part, so if the quality of the overall sporting experience is good, then people will continue to participate.

Sport England has commissioned Ipsos MORI to measure the quality and satisfaction that participants have within their chosen sport.

The survey covers 40 different sports, including skiing, and the information will be used to support improved planning and investment decisions by each of the different governing bodies (in our case, Snowsport England).

This important research study, which is the first of its kind in the UK, will be of great benefit to Snowsport England, and ultimately the Midland Ski Club. The survey will establish what is important to people when they take part in snowsports and how satisfied they are with the quality of their sporting experience.

The purpose is not to try and sell anything; it is purely a research study.

Clubs from across the country and from various sports are taking part as well as general participants and "professional" athletes and competitors.

We need as many Club members as possible to take part in the survey, before the middle of May. We need at least 50 individuals, ideally 100 to take part.

There is no catch with this, it is pure research that will help shape Snowsports in the years ahead, and hopefully lead to greater funding and improvements in facilities, coaching, etc.

All of your personal details will be kept in the strictest confidence by Ipsos MORI and used only for the purpose of this study.

Taking part is simple and straight forward. It will only take 10-15 minutes of your time. It is a simple 'tick a box' survey where you rate things on a scale of 1 to 10.

1) Register for the survey – To do this, click on the link below and enter how often you ski and in which discipline, and your name and contact information.

<http://surveys.globalepanel.com/wix/p286573946.aspx?type=2&Sport=Snowsport>

2) Once you have registered, you will receive an e-mail from Ipsos MORI with a link to the survey itself (usually the same or next day).

3) Complete the survey. This only takes around 15 minutes.

The survey is based on your experience as an active participant, i.e. when you participate in the sport yourself. Don't include your experience as a coach, volunteer, supporter, or official etc.

If you have any questions please visit the page on the Sport England website (http://www.sportengland.org/index/get_resources/research/satisfaction_quality_of_sporting_experience.htm) or email a member of the Ipsos MORI team at SportEnglandSurvey@ipsos-mori.com

If you'd like to speak to someone from the MSC instead, please contact the Chairman, Jeff Elmore (jeffski@blueyonder.co.uk 07958 967709), or Club Secretary, Diana Horth (diana.horth@tesco.net). I do hope you can find a few minutes to take part in this important research survey and help improve your chosen snowsport for the future.

KEEPING IN TOUCH

We've now made it easier for MSC members to keep in touch with each other via email, courtesy of Google. We'll also be using this to send out details of anything going on which is too short notice to put into the newsletter (e.g. The 150-odd FREE tickets we were given for to last year's Birmingham Ski+Board Show).

This is an **opt-in** system, i.e. If you want to communicate this way, you need to sign up for it.

To opt in, go to <http://www.midlandski.org.uk/maillinglist.php> and fill in the form there.

Once opted in, you can email everyone else in the club who is also opted in, by sending the email to the single address: midlandskiclub@googlegroups.com. It's as easy as that!

So far, there are about 90 members signed up for this invaluable service.

The MSC "Wiki"

Midland Ski Club now has its very own Wiki. If you haven't heard of wikis, they are a special type of website to which anyone can contribute - thus it's very easy to keep up-to-date.

So far on the MSC Wiki you'll find details of the Nordic and Alpine Coaching Programmes, Guidance on Ski Preparation and Where to buy, and a start to the "Rough Guide to Race Slopes". But if there is something you feel should be on it, then go ahead and add it! If you can improve on the information held there, then by all means do so.

So, go and look at the MSC Wiki at www.midlandski.org.uk/wiki, and get contributing.