

MIDLAND SKI CLUB NEWS

APRIL 2011

Annual General Meeting

The **Annual General Meeting** of Midland Ski Club will be held on Monday 6th June at Land Rover Sports and Social Club, Billsmore Green, Solihull.

Nominations are requests for official and committee members to assist with running the club are now open and should be notified to Diana Horth on 01889 800706 or diana.horth@tesco.net, as should any special items of business.

As part of the evenings proceedings, a **free buffet** will be provided.

What the Club Holiday means to me

Clem Chakki

I recently had the good fortune of joining the club trip to Verbier .It must be at least eleven years since my first trip and five years since my last club holiday.

I think it was my second trip to Saalbach Hinterglemm, where my good friend ,Paul Brown, and I decided we would like to try going off piste .

Which became an unforgettable event !!

Some of the chaps we skied with were instructors .All of the team had the patience of the saints picking me up every 3-4 turns and giving me the motivation and guidance to carry on. Even when I was thoroughly exhausted. we were skiing in a foot of soft snow ,something which I had never encountered before.

The experience culminated in me being awarded the best wipe out they had seen in 20 years . (Still not sure if that was a great achievement.)

Ten years later I am now an instructor .In Verbier although the snow wasn't the best I've had ,the company both on the piste and off was good and made the holiday .I mixed with different groups and skied with people of a varying standards of skiing . The common denominator was that everyone enjoyed their skiing and spent hours chatting about it on the night.

One of the days large group of us entered an itinerary run call the Col de Gentian .A massive field of bumps (which soon became littered with bums), with little snow covering. Just to add interest there was even a spattering of rocks . Definitely a challenge to most skiers. It was good to see more skilled skiers patiently waiting for those that weren't so nimble to complete the run.

We had a white out for a few days, which I perversely love. I find it always sorts the men from the boys .Yvonne Rouse

and Sylvia Bradley joined Catherine Frankenburg and myself and skied all day meeting up with Rolly and Graham on the way and convincing them that skiing in a white out was good for them. Hats off to them they stayed out with us all day.

The most important thing about the trip was it brought home to me the words of wisdom the clubs great John Arnold said to me all those years ago when I kept thanking him for helping me.

He said: "*No need to thank me ,just remember a day will come when it will be your turn to help another just be patient and never forget how you were helped today.*"

I never have.

I was more than pleased to support the group and contribute to keeping the ethos of the club alive .

It was a pleasure to assist those less able than myself and gratifying to return the favour to some that had helped me in the past.

There was even greater satisfaction when a group of six of us set off down the Vallon Derby, (directed by Catherine) and they all agreed the powder field was the best run we'd had all week

Long Live the ethos of the club holiday!

Diary

Mondays - cancelled

Ackers now closed Monday evening

Tuesdays @ 6.00pm

Race Novices - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Tuesdays @ 7.30pm

Race Coaching - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Thursdays @7.30pm

Advanced Race Training - Roger
Crombleholme 01785 714073

Fridays @ 6/6.30/7pm

Junior Coaching
Jane Lee 01905 345416

Fridays @ 8pm

Adult Coaching
Jane Lee 01905 345416

15th May

MSC Club National, Stoke

20th May (to 22nd)

End of Season Weekend, Corris
Wales
Diana Horth, 01889 800706

6th June

Annual General Meeting, LRSC
Solihull
Diana Horth, 01889 800706

Advance Notice

The **High Altitude Training Weekend** will 21st-23rd to Gradbach Farm Derbyshire which is on the same site as Gradbach Youth Hostel, but a separate building with accommodation for 25 and we have exclusive use so should have enough places. Watch for a booking form in the summer.

The **MSC Christmas Party 2011** will be held on Friday 9th December 2011, at LRSC, Solihull.



Proposed Changes to Ackers Slope and Instruction Charges

Some of you will already discovered that The Ackers have increased the current ski rates for MSC members from £10 to £12 for juniors and £13 to £15 for adults.

In anticipation of this year's rises being significantly higher than inflation, due to The Ackers need to replace grant income lost from Birmingham City Council, we have been exploring alternative ways of charging members to access the slope. The driver is not just to keep ski rates down, but also to promote increased uptake - our fear is that rapidly increasing ski rates will lead to rapidly decreasing use, which is not good for the club's future or the viability of The Ackers.

We have tentative agreement with the Ackers to "contract hire" use of the slope. For this, we get:

Tuesdays: 3 hours shared use main slope

Thursdays: 3 hours shared use main slope

Fridays: 3 hours exclusive use main slope

These would apply all year round except on the few occasions when Ackers are closed due to bank holidays and between Christmas and New Year or there are other special circumstances. During these times there would be no limit to the (paying) members who may use the slope during these periods, and the normal coaching groups would apply.

Our proposal on charging is like mobile phones: you can either have a contract or pay-as-you-go package. We anticipate charging members £37.50 per calendar month for unlimited use during any or all of the three sessions (the contract rate), or £15 per ad-hoc session (the pay-as-you-go rate).

Instruction eligibility criteria might need to be more strictly defined and enforced so coaches are not swamped by any extra demand

This allows us to promote greater uptake of the slope, better arrange tuition to suit our members, charge in a way that rewards regular use, and reimburse our club instructors in a more equitable way.

Questions - and Answers

Will adults be charged differently? No, most of our slope users are juniors, keeping the rates the same eases administration and promotes adult uptake

How will you collect the money? Contract users will pay by monthly standing order, with a three-month payment up-front. If you wish to change to pay-as-you-go, you will need to give three months notice and let your deposit run out. If you leave the contract scheme, you will not be allowed to re-join for twelve months. Pay-as-you-go users will need to leave a cheque or advance paid voucher in an honesty box in The Ackers reception. Identification will be controlled by use of helmet stickers bearing the users name and club membership number.

There must be winners and losers? If you are a junior and ski more than 37 sessions a year you will be better off on contract (than the new Ackers rate), Thursday users will reach a break-even point

earlier because they current pay additionally for instruction. The adult's position is neutral as the pay-as-you-go rate and Ackers adult rate are identical, adults skiing more than 30 times a year will benefit from the contract rate. Infrequent users will be the most likely to be disadvantaged by the proposal

I'm likely to be disadvantaged by the proposal, why should I be happy? By selecting the contract rate you will be able to ski longer on the nights you currently use, and contemplate skiing on other nights as well all at no extra cost

Will the additional charge for Thursday instruction remain? No

What provision will you make for adult instruction? There will be an adult training session offered on at least one of the three nights to replace the Monday night sessions which are no longer due to Ackers decision to close the slope on Monday evenings.

Is the club exposing itself to more risk by offering what to date has been offered at no risk by The Ackers? We anticipate that the new arrangements will increase use of the slope and increase membership; if the proposals are not successful, we will revert to the current arrangements.

We want to hear from you!

Do you think this is a good idea, are you likely to be disadvantaged, or can you think of a better way? Please e-mail or speak to our Treasurer, Phil Deller (pictured), with your opinions. You can reach him on treasurer@midlandski.org.uk or 07736 955861 or find him at the Ackers. In particular, he would like to know if we do proceed whether you would opt for a contract or pay-as-you-go arrangement.



MSC on

Courtesy of those nice people at snowHeads, we now have our own online discussion forum. Please use it to discuss any aspect of the club, being aware that the debate is visible to all other members, so keep it civil!

To join in the discussion, you need to register with snowHeads using this link: www.midlandski.org.uk/snowheads, giving your real name so we can check it against membership records. If you are already a registered snowHead, send an email to admin@midlandski.org.uk giving your snowHead username and we'll get you access to the forum.

Of course, once you are registered you are also free to join in with the open discussion areas as well - which cover just about every topic for those interested in winter sports.

See you on snowHeads!

Breckenridge USA - February 2011

Diana Horth

Early in February a small group of 6 went to Breckenridge, Colorado for a 2 week holiday. At an altitude of 9600ft Breckenridge is a small ex-mining town with an out of season population of approximately 2,000. This apparently swells to 80,000 in the height of American holidays.



We had a 3 bed condo in Los Pinos and once we'd worked out where we were in relation to lifts and the town it turned out to be quite conveniently located.



It was a short walk or pole along a path, to the Snowflake lift; or a walk of 5 minutes or so to the Beaver Run chair. Skiing back to the condo was a challenge. I think Mike Thomas eventually got the closest without any poling.

Breckenridge resort is centred on Peaks 7 - 10 of the Ten Mile range running north/south on the pacific side of the Great Divide and about 2 hours out of Denver. It seems Peak 6 will open soon and once the infrastructure is in place it should open a new bowl. The Imperial Express chair on Peak 8 is reportedly the highest chairlift in the States with a top drop off at a very noticeable altitude of 12,840'. For those with a greater sense of adventure a 100m hike to the summit gains access to the lake chutes and the whole bowl!

Some of the group dealt quickly with acclimatising to the altitude. I didn't and was still making a meal of getting upstairs 2 weeks later! For the first few days any difficult terrain seemed to be 3 bumps, stop to breathe, 3 more bumps, stop to breathe etc. The advice is to take it easy for the first few days and drink plenty. Water that is.

Transportation is free and plentiful to a variety of destinations even if the schedules take some working out.

Our holiday started in bad weather with more storms and snow predicted. We were informed by various met forecasts that we wouldn't see the sun until the end of the week. Lucky us then to see it the very next day! And it more or less stayed with us until the middle of the second week. But it was cold for the first few days at -20° and very windy on the tops. These factors combined made getting to the top of the higher lifts quite a miserable experience. And because of high winds and drifting snow using the T-Bar up to Peak 7 Bowl was an absolutely horrible experience.



The snow was excellent and it was only because the resort snow was groomed and bashed down that most of it stayed. But the winds were driving it off the surrounding peaks and at the end of the trip



they were very patchy and bare of snow.

Most of the group pre bought the Colorado Summit Season pass which worked out at about £273 for adults and £218 for seniors. Bearing in mind this is valid from Nov to April it's extremely good value for locals and even for us for 2 weeks. Having the season pass gave us access to Keystone and Arapahoe Basin (A-Basin). Using the excellent free transport we visited Keystone twice, the first day being a fabulous experience because the snow was in better condition. Unfortunately we missed the cat skiing the first trip and it had been cancelled the second time. Keystone (altitude 12, 408ft) has some steep trails both groomed and bumps plus a lot of fun in the trees.



A-Basin boasts the highest altitude 'in terrain' skiing at 13,050ft i.e. all within the bounds of the resort. It is definitely worth the trip out but it needed new snow the day we went. The back bowl was OK but certainly not powder and the cat skiing was off. In the right conditions it would be a dream.

Our visit ended on President's Day weekend which although forecast to be stupidly busy didn't actually seem any worse than the previous Saturday. And that probably only seemed bad because

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Breckenridge (cont.)

during the week we enjoyed virtually empty trails and lift lines were quite rare occasions.

The holiday was booked through Skisafari.com from the Inghams brochure. The local management agents for Los Pinos were attentive and friendly as were most of the people we came across. It's one of



the pleasures of skiing USA and Canada the resort staff whether ski shops or bars are only too happy to help; and, lift lines when they occur are peaceful, easy going affairs.

Mike Thomas - Brian Meads - Steve Price - Graham Gossage - Roland Winzer - Diana Horth.

Telford Fun Race 15th April 2011

The weather was kind and the rain held off just. The race consisted of 2 runs with the fastest run counting.

We had 16 skiers from Midland Ski Club taking part in all age groups and took seven trophies across 4 age categories.

The fastest Midlands skier was Liam Hunt in the Junior section with a great time of 9.67 seconds.

In the Tots category Toby Weeks improved by over 4 seconds on his second run despite the sprinkler spraying him in the face!

Also in the Tots Jack Teague claimed second place in the Male section with a time of 13.48. In the Minis Oliver Weeks was first with a great time of 9.89 seconds, and Ethan Hemming came third with a time of 11.36 seconds. In the CH1 male section James Hodge took second place with a time of 12.70 and Carys Phillips came 3rd in the females in 16.05 seconds. In the CH2 section Aled Phillips was second in the male section with a time of 13.38 and Helena Newbould third in the females with 10.94.

Well done to everyone who took part and good luck for the next CESA fun race in June.

Claire Hodge

Club Holiday 2011 - Verbier

12th-19th March Diana Horth

After an uneventful journey we arrived at Hotel de Verbier to be greeted by several Inghams staff who happily carried luggage, helped with check in and made everything seem quite painless. There was tea & coffee available immediately, soup, tea and cakes laid on from 4pm; the bar offered a happy 2 hours and all in all it seemed a good place to be.

We knew from various websites that snow had been in short supply across the Alps but our first day skiing was quite strange and I think most of us were pleased to learn everyone had found the snow conditions quite challenging. There was enough cover with a lot of artificial snow on the pistes but there were times when some of us wondered when we last skied, the performance was so rusty.

With very high winds that first day the Jumbo teleferique was out of action so we were pretty much stuck in the Médran area. A few of us escaped by bus to Savoleyres which was rough on its south side but actually very skiable on the north face. As we explored further it

became clear that this part of the 4 Valleys was a very varied and fun place to ski. It was only a short bus ride and most groups spent time there.

A lot of the off-piste was in rough condition with rocks and bare patches, but during the week several of the groups did manage to undertake itinerary routes making the best of what there was.



We had a very mixed bag of weather, Monday was warm and sunny, Tuesday started nice but gradually got dull and grey and by Wednesday it was raining in the town! However for those that went out that day they were rewarded with snow and better piste conditions even if they didn't last too long. (Pistes and people)

Thursday was awful with snow and fog creating virtual white outs all day; occasionally the fog would lift but only to tease before it dropped straight back. It certainly made the skiing interesting just route finding and avoiding drops proved quite challenging.

Despite a few events that could have turned into serious incidents we came back injury free. The Mont Fort run is a black run with varied conditions of hard pack and good snow with a very consistent slope angle down the bumps before turning into a pleasant run back to Col de Gentianes. But the consistent angle meant that anyone falling on the steep pitch had a very difficult task to try and stop. Norman and Jonathan both took tumbles here and bounced a long way before stopping. Very worrying to watch.

Another area that caused some difficulties was in the Siviez area and the Greppon Poma lift. With one tow out of action the resort has combined the working parts to create a single tow up towards



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Verbier (cont.)



Greppon Blanc but there was then a short but steep walk/climb up to the piste to enable people to get into the Thyon area.

Unfortunately on the day Peter White's group tried it the conditions at the top of the lift were icy and instead of clearing the landing area before taking skis off some folk were in the way meaning that others coming up the tow had nowhere to go. Bryan Martin fell back a considerable distance and Christine also got into frightening difficulties. It was generally a bad mark against Swiss efficiency because although they'd kept the Greppon lift open they should have ensured there were staff/pisteurs at the top to ensure a safe arrival. It also put quite a few off doing the four Valleys challenge which was a shame because it was all straightforward on the Friday and people were clearing the landing area.

Inghams laid on a Four Valleys challenge so that people could ski right across, have time to fully explore the Thyon area and take a coach back. Several members went in the Thyon direction a few times and skied back, but for those who did take up the offer of the return coach we were rewarded with some fabulous runs, Ethèrolla, the run down into Veysonnaz (which would be brilliant in the right snow with more or less free route picking); and the L'ours race piste. The latter is the ladies downhill - a rolling and quite steep run, and if there are local races approaching, it's watered it to make it even icier. It runs down into Mayens-de-L'ours, where there is a conveniently placed bar and for us, the coach. This trip was scheduled for midweek but bad weather meant that it was Friday when we did it but what a fabulous sunny day!

My group, led by no one in particular that day, climbed up from the top of the Greppon tow to the Greppon Blanc col and took the itinerary route L'Éteygeon down to Evolène. Although at the top of the bowl there was plenty of fresh snow the sun had been at it for a couple of hours and it was somewhat less than light and powdery; it felt like skiing in an oven it was so warm. Lower down it was a little cooler and we enjoyed spring snow conditions.

As we made our way down through heather and snow I managed to ski through a snare a bit of a shock to be pulled up very

short, however no damage done. But the route ended quite abruptly with insufficient snow to keep on heading down the route and we had to take the path down to catch the free bus. Luckily for us there was a snack caravan set up serving cold drinks and food most welcome.

The bus took us to Les Masses in spring like condition with no snow and an antiquated chair to get us back into the Thyon/Les Collons system.

For the few hardy souls that were brave enough to take part in the Monday night quiz there were rich pickings. Teams were asked to make a sculpture beginning with the letter 'A' from a piece of foil and Jonathan's skiing angel won the hire of blades for 4 people for a day.

Our team won overall netting an



afternoon's private ski lesson for four. It was scheduled for the afternoon of the day of fog - which was good in a way he couldn't see us and vice versa. Fortunately he was blessed with a sense of purpose as well as humour and took us below Ruinettes to do most of our lesson. It was a good experience.

The holiday was booked with Inghams through SkiLine.co.uk and we stayed in the Inghams run Hotel de Verbier one of their chalet hotels.

MSC Brochure!

We are now starting to look at next years MSC Brochure.

Articles and photos are needed on all aspects of the club's activities - please do contribute if you can, although check with me first to ensure that someone else has not already written about that. Please send contributions to the address/email at the bottom of this newsletter.



End of Season Weekend - Corris, Wales 20th-22nd May 2011

Once upon a time Midland Ski club members used to get together for weekends outside the ski season. There would be camping, lots of things to do and barbecues too. Following our members' questionnaire last year a number of you said it would be good to try something similar.

So, we have booked 16 places in the Braich Goch bunkhouse which has been thoroughly refurbished and modernized. For those with Internet go to <http://www.braichgoch.co.uk/> to get an idea of what to expect.

The bunkhouse has its own public bar and visitors can choose to self cater or eat at the local Slaters Arms or go further afield e.g. into Macynlleth. It has its own barbecue area in the garden too. Depending on preferences we may book a meal for the Saturday evening

Booking form.....

To: Diana Horth 23 Lockside view, Rugeley, Staffs WS15 1NJ
Tel 01889 800706 or 07806 777049 or diana.horth@ntlworld.com

Please book me _____ places for 2 nights on the End of Season Weekend in Braich Goch Bunkhouse, Corris from 20th to 22nd May 2011. I enclose a cheque for £35 per person, made payable to Midland Ski Club.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____



LAST FEW PLACES!

Club Holiday California February 2012

The dates are 18 Feb – 3 Mar (returning into Heathrow 4 March). We plan to ski Mammoth and Lake Tahoe resorts. We will fly into San Francisco, pick up hire cars and drive to Lake Tahoe staying 7 nights, then on to Mammoth for 5 nights. Accommodation will be in self catering condos.

The last 2 nights we will spend in Las Vegas in a Best Western hotel flying from there back to London.

Costs are subject to numbers going but as a guide it works out at £1400 + lift passes. That is based on 8 and costs should reduce for a larger group. British Airways seat sales may start soon which could bring the costs down but we are arriving in US Presidents weekend (and for some areas UK half term time) so accommodation suitable for a mixed group is likely to go very quickly. I want to secure the condos as soon as possible.

For scheduled flights I have to provide names to secure seats. So, if you are interested please get in touch as soon as you can.

**please note this is NOT the European club holiday which will be in March 2012!

Diana Horth
01889 800706 evening
01213451041 day
07806 777049
Diana.horth@ntlworld.com

Birmingham & South Midlands Schools Race

Sunday 27th March 2011 saw the 6th annual CESA Schools ski race organised by the Midland Ski Club.

30 teams and over 120 skiers entered the event and it turned out to be a great success for all those participating including the large number of eager spectators.

The competition, which this year was co-sponsored by **Snowsport England, Golden Hillock School Sports Partnership, Two Seasons, Edge & Grind** and **Ski Warehouse** had schools competing for team prizes in under 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 19 age groups in addition to male and female individual prizes for each age group and overall male and female individual awards.

With more schools participating for the first time at this year's event, it was great to see many new faces and hopefully discovering a new sport in artificial slope skiing and racing.

The good weather only added to a great days skiing with the competitors taking full advantage of the conditions.

Pride of place for the team with the fastest time on the day went to the Princethorpe College under 16 team: Ed Brotherton, Jack Rigby, Nick Phelps and Sam Doherty with an excellent combined time of 26.73 seconds.

The overall individual prizes for the quickest skiers on the day went to Alasdair Thorley from Heart of England School in the male event and Elizabeth Thomas from Solihull School in the female event.

The award for the best performance from a newly participating school went to Edgbaston High Junior School.

A full list of the results and winners for both the team and individual events can be found at: <http://www.midlandski.org.uk/schoolsrace.php>

The organisers would like to extend a big thank you to the sponsors for their tremendous support of the event.

