

# Midland Ski Club News

June 2021

## From the Chair - Gerry Elgy

First of all, apologies that it has been so long since the previous newsletter.

We're looking for a new newsletter editor to take over, and we're also in the process of setting up a news team to cover all outlets – newsletter, email, social media, etc. If you would like to help with this, please get in touch! As well as a newsletter editor, we need 2 noticeboard monitors, to create or improve noticeboards at Swadlincote and Ackers.

Our membership at 335, is the highest it's been for several years, even before Covid struck.

Many thanks to all those who have loyally renewed, and to those who have recruited. In particular, Alan Edwards has worked with the Warwick Schools Foundation and 6 extra Swadlincote training days were put on for this group. Alan, thanks for your efforts.

We have taken on 2 new coaches, Bryan Evans and Emma Farrington, to help with these sessions. We hope more of you get a chance to meet them in future. Welcome to both.

As we have come out of the second lockdown, normal service is gradually resuming. We have maintained on-line booking, for all the advantages it has for traceability and the avoidance of cash handling.

*(Continued on page 7)*

## Key people

Gerry Elgy, Club Chair

[Chair@midlandski.uk](mailto:Chair@midlandski.uk)

Roger Crombleholme, Head Coach

[Coach@midlandski.uk](mailto:Coach@midlandski.uk)

Jenni Fennell, Welfare Officer

[welfare@midlandski.uk](mailto:welfare@midlandski.uk)

Paul Johnson, Club Secretary

[honsec@midlandski.uk](mailto:honsec@midlandski.uk)

Bryan Arnott, Treasurer

[treasurer@midlandski.uk](mailto:treasurer@midlandski.uk)

Jeff Elmore, President,

John Elgy, membership

[membership@midlandski.uk](mailto:membership@midlandski.uk)

## Calendar

### Dry Slope Training

Monday 18:00 – 19:30 Swadlincote U12

Monday 19:30– 21:00 Swadlincote Over 12

Wednesday 18:00 – 19:30 Swadlincote U12

Wednesday 19:30 – 21:00 Swadlincote Over 12

Thursday 18:00 – 19:30 Ackers U12 Squad

Thursday 19:30 – 21:00 Ackers Over 12 Squad

Friday 18:00 – 19:30 Ackers U12 development

Friday 19:30 – 21:00 Ackers Adult

See <https://eola.co/w/1107/activities> for booking and more details.

This is subject to change in September, with Ackers Tuesdays being reintroduced, and Swadlincote Thursdays starting.

### Walks

Lake District Oct 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup>

### AGM

Tuesday 6/9/2021 19:30 via Zoom. Please let the Hon Sec, Paul Johnson, [honsec@midlandski.uk](mailto:honsec@midlandski.uk), know if you wish to attend.

### Snowdome session (over 50's)

Thursday Sept 16<sup>th</sup>

Thursday Oct 14<sup>th</sup>

Thursday Nov 11<sup>th</sup>

Thursday Dec 9<sup>th</sup>

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## Skiing at the Snowdome Thursday over 50's club Gillian Pickard

I am pleased to report that this social ski group has proved popular with anyone who has tried it. Dates coming up are

Sept 16th

Oct 14th

Nov 11th

Dec 9th

Whilst in the building you are required to wear a face covering under current restrictions; a buff works well and can be pulled down whilst skiing; hopefully the regulations will ease soon.

**Please book directly with the Snowdome and let me know you are coming.**

The details of the sessions can be found using this link:

-

<https://www.snowdome.co.uk/ski-snowboard/lift-pass-sessions/lift-passes/>

Choose Coaching, then over 50's club

Or Discount Sessions, then Morning Club if you want recreational ski only.

Being a member gives you a reduced price and if you intend to come regularly, I recommend joining – you very quickly get your money back and more.

Prices are: - Adults

Over 50's Morning Club - £39.00 (£27.30 member)

Recreational Morning Club - £34.00 (£23.80 member)

Normal skiwear is necessary, helmets are optional, boots and skis are included in the price or bring your own. If you use their skies ask for the best, newest ones! Remember to bring a buff or mask.

I do hope you will come along and be part of the regular group.



## UK SnowSport coaching qualifications - Gerry Elgy

Snowsport England and Snowsport Wales previously operated under the name UK Snowsports (UKSS). All home nations operated within the UKCP framework which was the combined coaching pathway. In future all coaching awards, whether previously UKSS or UKCP, will fall under the banner of UK Snowsport, which has an updated logo.



## Autumn walking break based in lodges in Great Langdale in the Lake District with walks led by Mike Thomas -Yvonne Gossage

For this year's autumn walking break, since members who participate are now retired and to take advantage of quieter weekdays, we have decided to offer a weekday autumn walking break.

We've found some great accommodation at Greenhowe Luxury Lodges and Caravans situated in the beautiful Great Langdale valley. It's ideally situated with lots of walking from the site itself so we've reserved 6 berth lodges for 3 nights from Monday - Wednesday October 4th to 6th. Excellent catering facilities are available in each lodge and the Dungeon Ghyll Hotel is only a 10 - 15 minute walk away and will give us a 10% discount on food.

See link to this below.

<http://www.greenhowe.com/>

We would hope to be able to offer accommodation in a lodge, in a twin or double room, for around £100 per person for the 3 nights if sufficient members sign up.

Please indicate if you would like to join us by replying to me at [yvonne.gossage@outlook.com](mailto:yvonne.gossage@outlook.com).



## News Snippets

Amber Fennell has been selected for the English U16 Alpine Squad. She has also now been selected for the GB U18 Snowboard B Squad. Well done on both skis and snowboard.

Fern Cates who was an MSC member for several years was appointed Chair of the SSE Nordic committee back in March. Well done Fern.



## Free for a good home - Maurice Miller and Mike Thomas

From Maurice Miller: Long time no see. My son Nick Miller and I were club members in the past. I see that Nick figured on the FB post that Jane Lee put up in February this year of the 2008 summer season. In clearing out the loft I found a pair of skis with Dynastar NX12 rental bindings. The skis are 178cm 116/79/102 20m radius with quite a bit of edge left. The bindings are probably useful for spare parts. Happy to gift them to any club member who wants them for a donation to club funds. Email [admin@midlandski.uk](mailto:admin@midlandski.uk) if interested

Mike Thomas says: I've received my large 1/4 zip navy sweatshirt. Good fit and quality, but I didn't see when ordering that the MSC logo had 'racing' included on it, and I feel a fraud wearing it as a non racer!

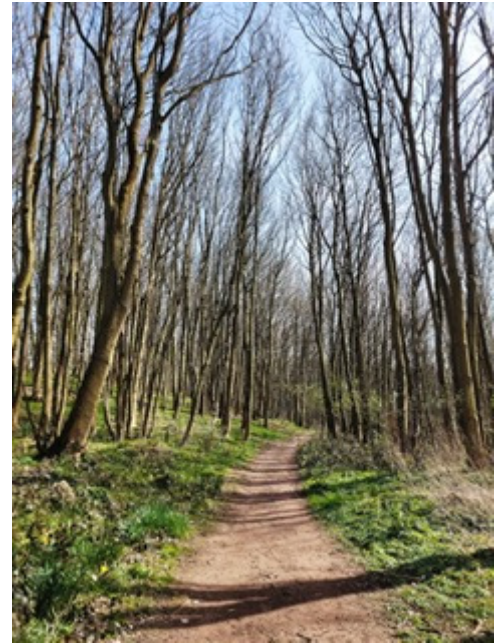
If you are interested in taking it off him, please contact him (email upon request to [admin@midlandski.uk](mailto:admin@midlandski.uk))



New MSC clothing shown off by Marnie. Note that the club badge, like previous versions of club clothing, is 'Midland Ski Club Racing'

## Social walks - Catherine Frankenburg

Tuesday 30 March There was an 8 mile walk around the county parish of Hints, in Staffordshire, led by Catherine Frankenburg, starting in the village of Weeford. The weather was forecast to be sunny that day, and the forecast was spot on, as the temperature rose up to 21 degrees in the afternoon, which was lovely for March!



We took the scenic route around various hills, along country lanes, through woods and beside streams. We all appreciated the extra freedom to meet as an organised sport group finally allowed just the previous day. We had a coffee break under a spreading oak tree, which at that time had no leaves, and we enjoyed our socially distanced lunch in the beautiful graveyard of Hints church amongst the daffodils. We walked alongside some of the devastation caused by HS2, but it was good to see they had planted many saplings which we hope will compensate in the years to come for the trees felled.



## SlopeSide Snowboard Camp - Amber Fennell

Hi everyone,

Just checking in with you all back home in England. For the first time in about 6 years I managed to spend Christmas at home with all my family, which I really enjoyed. After a long drive

With my team mates, we arrived here in Austria just before you went into total lock down in England.

This season has been a bit hit and miss but at least we are training.

One of our new routines for the team is to take Covid tests roughly every 3 days, not good but you get used to them and keep everyone safe. As we have been made official residents of our town, we have the opportunity to train everyday with the locals. There have been no competitions since the last one in Switzerland until this weekend 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> March. The competition was in Gotschen Germany and the Saturday did not go to well as mistakes on both my runs. Sunday we were running late to reach the same destination in Germany, as our Covid tests at the German border took longer than usual. So on arrival at the FIS Big Air competition, just one practice run down the slope. First run also went wrong with a fall doing a 720. Lying about 6<sup>th</sup> place I was determined to make the next run count ( didn't care what position I reached just to have a good run down) and I did. After that second run I had moved to 4<sup>th</sup> place, with just the third run to go. When all points had been added I had won and came first. Just shows never give up.!

Instagram [amberfen23](#)

Now all we have to deal with is Brexit and all the extra problems for all athletes to deal with. I think my season will be cut short by about a month.

So back to England and keep fingers crossed for the skiing and perhaps some wakeboarding and paintballing also.



## "Taking a leap of faith, to follow my dreams, during a pandemic" Ellie Jackson

So 2020/21 – what a 12 months it's been.....

I was already considering a gap year, to think about my next steps, in life - then along came Covid. As for us all, "normality" had to be reviewed and my A-levels were cancelled, bringing uncertainties of how my performance would be assessed, together with the loss of 2 part time job offers of maths tutoring for primary children and working in a restaurant. However, remaining positive, I identified new opportunities, badgering numerous business owners in the village, with my CV, to secure 2 temporary jobs, and much to my parents' euphoric joy – earn some money. And that was the start .... suddenly, I realised that by working extremely long hours, for 6 months, just maybe I could fund my first full winter race season.

Following amazing A-level results, but still not really understanding how the pandemic would impact on uni life, I made the brave decision to defer my offer at Loughborough, to study sports science. During the Autumn, an independent Belgium coach, who I'd briefly met on the FIS race circuit, contacted me and offered a full time winter programme. He'd competed to a very high level, representing his country in the winter Olympics, and over the past couple of years, made the transition into becoming a race coach. Following a successful training camp in Wittenberg, I've since been living just outside Innsbruck, where even during Austrian lockdown, I've been unbelievably lucky to access a variety of training slopes, enabling me to gain confidence and experience on different terrain. I'm having an amazing time, training and racing alongside a small group of international FIS athletes, some of them just venturing onto the WC circuit. Living independently, I'm also developing some decent cooking skills and gaining so many life experiences. I've recently achieved 2 solid Slalom scores, of 89 points and 93 points - massive PBs and testament to my coach's support and knowledge, together with my hard work and determination. The current pandemic, together with Brexit, certainly makes life hard to plan, throwing a number of new challenges with many races being cancelled and covid tests required for each race. However, I'm taking everything in my stride, determined to make the most of these fantastic opportunities and continually strive to be my best.

Hopefully, I'll remain in Austria until March/April, then return to the UK, to complete my UK coaching qualification, continue training with my coach, throughout the summer and represent our club on the UK indoor circuit. Who knows how the next 12 months will evolve, but I'm so happy, that at age 18, I took that leap of faith, to opt for an independent approach and see where life can take me. I have a feeling, that another "gap year" may be on the horizon – meaning my Mom's retirement plans are definitely on hold for now! .... sorry mom!!





## Exercise as a good way to keep fit and socialise with our fellow Skiers

- Catherine Frankenburg

When Social contact was restricted indoors, and we were all feeling fed up with the onset of winter and the lack of snowy ski holidays, what better way was there to improve our spirits than walking, as both a good way to exercise and also to meet up with our fellow skiers! So a large variety of walks were planned.

**18 December 20** around Kingsbury Water Park and Middleton Lakes (RSPB) we did just manage a walk before lockdown number 3! Our group set off full of enthusiasm and we were about to walk around the RSPB bird reserve at Middleton Lakes, when the rain forecast for mid-afternoon started. So we cut the walk short to try to finish the walk in the dry, but heavy rain followed. Luckily we found a structure with a roof so we settled among the pallets and farm equipment to eat a quick lunch finished off with a dash of seasonal warm mulled wine! The rain eased so we continued back, managing our first winter walk successfully

Then after Christmas, the full lockdown was re imposed so we had to postpone the January walk twice! I then planned a full programme of walks through the Covid restrictions period. When the first easing of the lockdown restrictions was announced for the end of March, we were allowed to get out walking again as a group.. Various members have helped by planning and leading walks. We have now completed another 9 walks . This enabled us adults in the Club to discover a varied range of different areas of countryside around the West Midlands conurbation, to maintain our fitness and socialise whilst still following Covid guidance (ie staying local, booking all walks etc).

We've been extremely lucky with the weather for all of our walks this year, although I feel I must be tempting fate by saying this! Even on our March walk it was pleasant sunny walking weather and dry enough to sit on the grass for lunch. It has been warm enough for all 7 of the day walks to fully enjoy our picnic lunches outside, the 2 evening walks were also dry and pleasant, although for the 23 April evening walk, we hoped the dry evening would mean the pub would provide an outdoor table service, but sadly the pub wasn't open.

Most of the walks were 8-9 miles, though of course the evening walks were shorter. The days of the walks were varied to make allowances for different people's commitments. Thursdays seemed to work best, although we had Monday, Tuesday and Friday walks also. A weekend walk planned for those busy in the week was rearranged, as no additional people were able to join us at the weekend set.

**Tuesday 30 March** - we walked around the countryside from the village of Weeford and through Hints, where we had lunch in the sunshine in the churchyard (the N Warwickshire/Staffordshire borders NNE of Birmingham) with very warm sunny weather for that time of year (led by Catherine Frankenburg).

**Thursday 15 April** - we walked around the central area of Cannock Chase (N of Birmingham) through woodlands, and moorlands , led by Mike Thomas, who carefully planned in 2

coffee stops for us - at the start and the end of the walk, when some of us had cakes too, although Covid thwarted the planned lunch cafe stop as the cafe was not open!

**Friday evening walk - 23 April** (led by Catherine again) we visited the woods near Middleton, N Warwickshire for a modest walk of around 3 miles to enjoy the evening bluebells, although the aim of having outdoor refreshments at the pub afterwards was thwarted, when despite the pleasant evening, the pub wasn't open at all!

**Thursday 29 April** - we had a beautiful sunny walk (led by Rolly Winzer) using lesser-known routes across the Waseley and Lickey Hills (SW of Birmingham) seeing a variety of wildlife including Highland cows, rabbits, a kestrel amongst others. We managed to get hot drinks, cakes and some of us even had clotted cream teas mid-afternoon to add to the pleasure of the occasion.

**Thursday 6 May** - we explored the woods and pools of Ryton and Bubbenhall, S of Coventry, led by Mike Thomas again, admiring the ancient woodlands with their extensive bluebells, with coffee stops before and after the walk again, as well as a lovely warm sunny picnic lunch.

**Thursday 13 May** - Shrewley Common (W of Kenilworth and Warwick) Steve and Gill Pickard led a walk around the area where we walked along the Grand Union canal, and through rural landscapes. The rain did actually start before the end of the walk, but it stopped again as we went through the unusual towpath tunnel towards the end of the walk. We were able to enjoy a drink at the pub, using 2 tables (as Guidance required).

**Monday 17 May** - we accessed a walk up onto Kinver Edge via varied scenery including a canal and woodlands, and plenty of views, having lunch near the Kinver Rock houses, the hills helped us work on our fitness, led again by Rolly Winzer. We then took advantage of the increased freedom that day to enjoy post walk pub refreshments.

**Friday evening 11 June** - we walked around the area of Corley Moor, near Coventry, on a beautiful evening via fields, grassland and woodlands, led by Graham and Yvonne Gossage. One of the field's crops was almost head height, to add to our adventure! Yvonne and Graham had organised us all to enjoy a drink and a pub meal at Corley Moor afterwards.

**Friday 9 July** - from the Drawbridge in Shirley, via the Stratford and Avon Canal, Sarehole Mill and Moseley Bog led again by Gill and Steve Pickard. This was a true green spaces walk, which did not feel as if we were in urban Birmingham at all, except when we had to cross a couple of roads. We saw a heron and various moorhens and ducks with their young families, and we enjoyed our picnic lunch just by Sarehole Mill.

With many thanks to all those who organised and led these walks, and to those who supported our walks programme.

# Findings from Survey of members views

The ski club carried out a survey of members views during January/February 2021. The findings have been extensively discussed by both the main committee and the Race Steering Group and a 10 point action plan put in place based upon these findings.

The returns can be found on the club website at [http://midlandski.uk/results/members\\_survey.pdf](http://midlandski.uk/results/members_survey.pdf)

The action plan is:

## 1/ Who was responding

The responses more or less matched the makeup of the membership of the club. A slightly higher proportion of people reporting an interest in racing responded as opposed to the club's membership in general (59% reported an interest in racing). In all we had 88 responses. The club had 251 members when the survey was taken. Rather a lot of parents responded on behalf of their off spring 27%.

**No action proposed except to note that responses form a reasonably representative cross section of the club.**

**Members showing no interest in racing largely abstained from responding about the dry slopes**

## 2/ Why do people join the club?

This is important if we are to develop membership. Many joined the club because of personal recommendations (28%). There was a variety of other reasons including it being the nearest ski slope to their home (25%). What was a bit concerning was that the brochures, social media and web site only bought in 8%.

**Clearly personal recommendations and the schools' involvement is very important and for this to continue we must continue to offer a good product and introduction. We must improve the brochure/website/social media yield.**

## 3/ What do the members want to get out of the club?

It is very hard to draw any specific conclusions from this. It appears many members want many things, but it seems that social interaction and friendship are very important. There were surprisingly few who only wanted to win races.

**Clearly the camps and holidays are very important here. See later in this report, but the popularity, particularly of the holidays needs careful thought. Perhaps we need another alpine training camp.**

## 4/ Quality of coaching.

There is a lot in the questionnaire returns about this and most of it very favourable. Only two people thought the quality of coaching did not meet expectations. However, their comments are important.

A very slight majority (25 to 21) want us to employ more experienced race coaches and pay more.

It is slightly the other way for recreational coaches but if we restrict the question to those who don't mention racing as an interest we get no overall majority either way.

Two other important points from the survey in general are for a more consistent coaching team and a comment on the decline of recreational coaching.

Many respondents want more UK indoor training for both recreational and racing members.

There is general support for one international indoor camp per annum.

The programme we offer is thought to be good in terms of dates, times etc.

**We need to employ another high level coach to work alongside Roger.**

**Sessions should be more ability specific.**

**A little more thought should go into non race training.**

**Advertise holiday camps earlier.**

**We need to introduce some indoor training for both racers and non-racers.**

**Some mentioned working on general fitness levels and complementary multisport.**

## 5/ Facilities

There is little we can do about the facilities other than pass the comments on from the club to the facility managers.

Swadlincote meets more people's expectations than Ackers. 17% of the respondents are disappointed with the Ackers. 12 responses say the Ackers is not big enough and 1 that Swadlincote is too small. The equipment at both slopes is thought to be satisfactory.

A couple of responses commented that the spectator facilities should be improved, especially at Ackers.

**All we can do is put our concerns to the facility management. After all we are big customers.**

## 6/ Competitions

Most respondents felt that racers run by the club were both well run and good value.

## 7/ Camps.

Camps for children were welcome in all school holidays. Some weekend camps would be welcome for adults.

**Continue offering the camps and perhaps consider an adult non race camp along the lines of the high-altitude training weekend.**

## 8/ Socials etc

39 respondents said they were interested in regular social events. Only 9 said they had no interest in social events

**A social programme is important to many of our respondents, and we must continue to offer the programme. We will canvass members as to what they want.**

## 9/ Communications

The majority agreed information was readily available but there is room for improvement – those who strongly agreed were a minority. There was an overwhelming preference for email.

The comments stressed the need for communication via a whole range of channels. Email, whatsapp, notice board, website, social media and less social media were all mentioned.

**Pull together a communication team to put out co-ordinated messages on all media.**

## 10/ Newsletter and web

Respondents overwhelmingly reported that they read the Newsletter. 48 said they would write articles occasionally or regularly for the Newsletter. There was support for more general articles on the area of Snowsport, trip reports, race reports etc. There was no support for a professionally managed website.

**Write to all members asking for contributions to the newsletter. In particular asking for reports on the Alpine race scene and resort reviews.**

## ConcuSSION Roger Crombleholme

Everyone should read this very informative presentation on concussion.

Snowsport England believes that it is vital that as many people who participate in recreational and competitive snowsport are informed of the risks of concussion and has run a free webinar to raise awareness of the seriousness of the injury.

Concussion is a complex and potentially serious injury that must be taken extremely seriously to safeguard the long-term welfare of athletes. People with a concussion are more likely to have a repeat concussion, and a repeat concussion that occurs before the brain recovers from an initial concussion can slow recovery and increase the likelihood of having long-term problems.

Please follow the link below for the presentation written by Dr Jenny Shute, MBE, about the FIS guidelines for management of concussion

[Click here for presentation](#)

All the best

## The CESA Team wins the Interregional Championships

A team of MSC members represented Central England Ski Association and won the inter-regional championships at Swadlincote at the end of July. We have had a number of successes in National races this season which have been largely reported via Whatsapp and Facebook.



The team: Jack Upton, Toby Case, Joe Feiven, Charlie Deem, Hannah Dennison, Amber Fennell, Oli Weeks – all MSC Members

## From the Chair Gerry Elgy (Continued from front page)

The online booking system we use, Eola, mention Midland Ski Club in their blog

<https://eola.co/blog/reasons-to-try-skiing-this-summer> and have been active in supporting the GBR series of artificial surface racing this summer.

The Midland Club National was again held at Stoke with Oliver Weeks being the fastest racer on the day. Hannah Dennison was a very creditable 2<sup>nd</sup> female overall. Because of Covid this day was run as 3 separate races, with all the extra planning and work that entailed, so huge thanks to the organising team. A couple of weeks later we were also heavily involved in the CESA Club National held at Swadlincote, and the Inter regional competition the following day, which CESA 'A' won. These races rely on a small band of very hard working volunteers and we'll be needing others to join their ranks next year. This is the time to start the training so if interested please contact any of the Race Managers.

As reported by Catherine, we have held a walks programme with more to come, and will resume indoor socials later on when we feel we are ready.

This will be my last 'From the Chair' as after 4.5 years, I've decided to step down at the next AGM. It's been an enjoyable and challenging time, but I feel the time is right for the club to bounce back from the pandemic with fresh ideas and energy. Thanks so much to everyone who has supported me – I'm not disappearing but in my turn I will support the new committee and replace my husband as Membership Secretary.

## Congratulations to those selected for National Race Squads for 21/22

### English Alpine Squad

U16 Female

Amber Fennell, Emilia Orzel

U16 Male

George Brown

U21 Female

Ellie Jackson

(Also Ryan and Lauren Bloom, who have joined us to train at Swadlincote)

### Wales

Joe Feiven

Adam Lee, Oli Weeks (Wales elite Team)

### GB FIS Squad

Jack Upton, Oli Weeks

(Also Toby Case who has joined us to train at Swadlincote)



# A Resort Review, well not the full resort - John Elgy

One of the requested topics for the Newsletter in the recent survey of members was for some resort reviews. There are a lot of them out there. In such books as *Where to Ski and Snowboard* they try to be objective but of course they reflect the views of the writer. I do recall one book describing one of my favourite pistes (the then red Malgovert in Les Arcs) as their most hated piste anywhere. I was not impressed.

Anyway, I thought I'd get the ball rolling with a small part of a resort, where we happen to own a small apartment in Arc 1600. (I'll write about for another article)

Arc 1600 was perhaps the first of the purpose-built ski resorts and this is reflected in the architecture of the village: car free, inexpensive apartments, careful design of the buildings to blend in with the environment yet acknowledging that it is purpose built and sitting 1600m up a hillside. The design has won architecture awards and has the French equivalent of protected status. 1600 is the smallest of the Les Arcs complex and is very compact and convenient. Due to its position the views across the Isère valley to Mont Blanc or indeed down to the town of Bourg St Maurice are wonderful. A favourite place of mine is sitting outside the Cairn restaurant having a beer admiring the view at sunset or looking from the apartment window as the rising sun catches the top of Mont Blanc. Talking about views, a short walk from 1600 is another village hidden in the trees, Courbaton, which has its own interesting history (see <http://grangedalice.blogspot.com/2013/> for more details). Apparently, there were artillery batteries stationed there facing across the valley to the Petit St. Bernard pass to protect against the potential of invasion from Italy during both the first and second world wars. Courbaton was the epicentre of Les Arcs skiing before Arc1600 was built with lifts and pistes coming and going. Now it is a very quiet backwater.

The main problem with 1600 is there is nothing to do in the resort but eat, drink, sleep and ski. If you want other activities you have to get the bus around to 1800 for a swimming pool, sauna, tobogganing etc or the funicular down to Bourg St. Maurice for shopping, cinema and a proper municipal swimming pool.



But this an article for a ski club, not an article for an architectural appreciation society, so what's the skiing like? In a word good, but only if you like your skiing a tad on the steep side. Les Arcs 1600 likes to pride itself on being good for families but in reality, that is about the resort rather than the skiing. A few years ago when we were there with a group of friends, some of whom were beginners, the ski school recommended that they took the bus to Arc 1800 where the slopes are more gentle. The picture below shows the Les Arcs Ski Club returning to the village down the red Cachette piste, the main run back from 1800. It tends to be a bit firm and an exciting ski if your edges are not very sharp.

The blue Mont Blanc piste (the only piste I've been blood wagoned off) is 24 degrees in places. Degrees not percent. One look down the huge moguls of the red Clair Blanc piste

convinces most red run skiers that perhaps they should go round. I do that often as well out of consideration of my ski bases and the rock band at the top. Then again with fresh snow on Christmas day it is one of the best runs in the world.



The steepness and the fact that 1600 is at the corner of the resort means that the pistes are usually quiet. Sometimes very quiet. If you like carving at speed then Clocheret or Cachette give fantastic fast runs which even New Year week are almost always empty.

For the newcomer to Arc 1600 I have a couple of recommended runs:

For me the trip starts at the bottom of the Combettes piste – the beginner run in the resort. From the top of the chair lift the very pleasant blue run takes you down to the bottom of the Cachette chair lift – or you can spend some time regaining your ski legs doing a couple of circuits. At the top of the chair a tiny drag lift leads to what in many resorts would be a green run



(Les Arcs has no green classification). Few people ever go there, but after a dump of snow the powder, often thigh deep, remains for days. On the old piste maps the top of the drag is also the top of the Stade de Slalom. The piste is now overgrown and not marked but worth trying if you are the adventurist type. Just turn right at the top and head down.

The top of the Cachette lift has a number of runs – the fast blast down the Cachette piste itself (see picture above). The tree lined Les Arolles; a red piste with some steepish bits and the opportunity for diving into the forest for some near piste exploration. However, on the first ski of the day I ski down to the slow Clocheret lift to the col between the 1600 and 2000 valleys to take the fast Clocheret piste. I worry that the lift may be decommissioned at some point in the future. It has very few customers. You may or may not meet other people on this piste. Later I may take Le Secret down to Pre St. Esprit and the lift up to 2000, but at the start of the trip Clocheret has better snow and is more fun. At the bottom you can either continue back to 1600 or turn left to the Arpette restaurant and the rest of Les Arcs. For those who like off piste skiing you can turn off the top of the piste to the right where there is a large snow bowl.

The top of the Cachette lift also gives rise to the only remaining black run in the 1600 sector, Rouelles. It is not very steep and in fact used to be a red. In good condition it gives a very nice run into the resort, but like almost all blacks in Les Arcs it is never bashed and gets some decent moguls. Late in the season it can also have the odd plaque de terre.

The other big lift leaving Arc 1600 is the Mont Blanc lift, the top of which first of all connects to the rest of Les Arcs via the top of the Cachette lift but also give the long blue Mont Blanc piste. Apart from the steep (for a blue) and narrow top section it gives one of the best intermediate pistes anywhere. It is a brilliant run to do top to bottom, non-stop, practicing your carving technique. There is also the potential to add to the interest by either heading straight off down through the trees to the left of the Les Deux Têtes rock formation or doing the now unmarked Les Deux Têtes black piste immediately after the rocks. This is steep even for a black. There is also a huge range of possibilities through the tree following now discontinued pistes. Sadly, a look at an old piste map of Les Arcs shows that many pistes have been abandoned. There even used to be a piste all the way down to Bourg st. Maurice. You can still find the route in places, but in other places the pistes have been reclaimed by the forest.

Two runs that are in the Arc 1600 sector but are actually reached from 2000 deserve honourable mention: Comborcière and Malgovert. Comborcière was described in a guide to snowboarding in the Alpes as 2km of hell. It is one long mogul field that my son tries to do non stop in under 5 minutes. In my view it is a nicer run than the red Secret piste beside it – if you like moguls that is. Malgovert is another run you either love or hate. It used to be marked as red, but now is black. It is never pisted and consists of narrow chutes, bumps and blind turns. Excellent for those with fast feet and fast brains but a nightmare for others. We would often see “crag fast” barely red run skiers stuck on it terrified. Of course you can turn off it into the Malgovert forest for some tree skiing down to the Mont Blanc piste, but beware the little stream gets to become a deep gorge further down and can be a pain to get back across.

I'll often spend the whole of my first day in the resort on just the local runs. With the exception of the runs off the Aiguille Rouge most of the really good skiing is on the Arc 1600, 1800, Vallandry side of the resort. The crowds are on the 2000 side.



There is a skier park in Arc 1600 which those who know about these things think is quite good – I have no idea, but there is another fun activity- the water splash just above the Altiport bar. This is a 15m or so long water tank about half a metre deep. You hit it at speed, lift the tip of your skis up and water ski across. Well, I don't. I watch the involuntary swimming from the terrace of the bar. There is a picture of one of our club members on the internet, somewhere, less confident than my son James (left) who stripped down to his boots only. Decency prevents me from including this picture.

One tip I can make is when returning to the resort the quietest and easiest piste is to turn off the Arpette piste shortly after the Arpette restaurant and take Gollet back to 1600. This run is rarely done and it is where James, our son, takes us to try and improve our skiing.

Finally, I must mention an evening meal at the Arpette restaurant on a Wednesday night

The restaurant is at about 2100m half way between 1600 and 1800. After the pistes have closed the

restaurant remains open for a fixed price evening meal. For 30€ you get a glass of vin chaud, a starter, a main course of either a fondue, raclette or pierrade with wine. Other drinks are available at the bar. It is common to see people dancing on the tables in the bar area after eating. About 9 pm a pisteur comes around and ask which resort you are returning to: 1800 or 1600. There is usually only about 10 people returning to 1600. When you leave the restaurant you signal to the pisteur who will be on a snowmobile that you are leaving then set off in the star light to ski back to the resort. It is a lovely feeling skiing in the dark with the lights of Bourg St Maurice glittering below. The pisteur follows to ensure everyone gets down safely.

Arc 1600 may be the backwater of the Les Arcs ski area, but it is certainly not without merit. It is compact, easy to get to (there are even direct trains to Bourg St Maurice from London, the funicular from the train station takes you straight to 1600), the locals are friendly and the skiing is pretty good.

We will be in Les Arcs a fair bit this winter so if you fancy some company or someone to show you around then get in touch.