

ASC NEWS

Autumn 2009



President's Introduction

Dear Members,

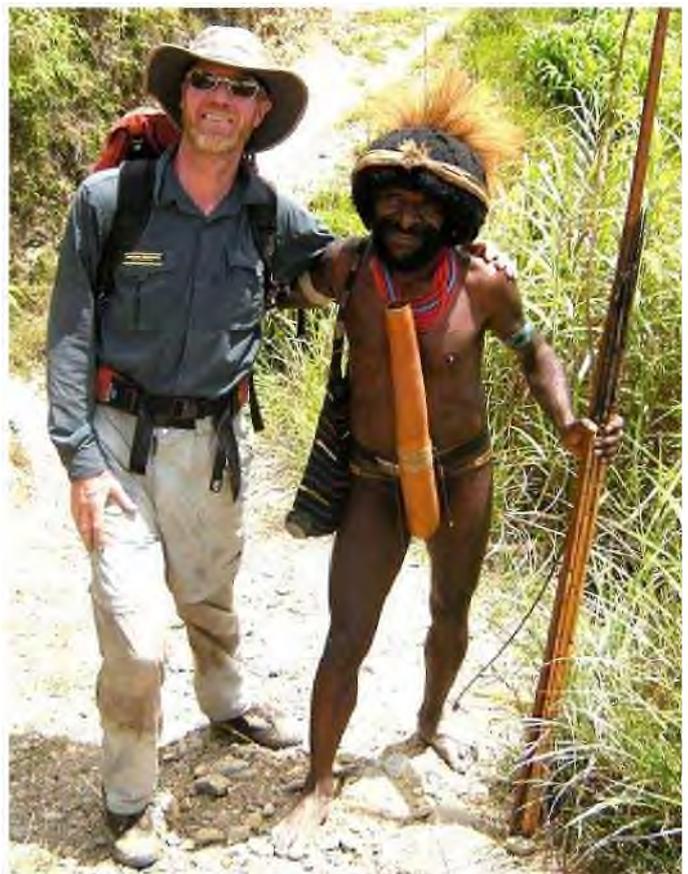
Winter is upon us again and I am sure that we are all looking forward to a season of good snow and weather conditions for our ski adventures. I had a very poor year for skiing in 2009. I just managed to squeeze a two-week trip to Switzerland in between long-haul work trips. Resort conditions were distinctly average in Wengen, where I spent a week with a Swiss friend. We then moved on to a hotel at the top of the Simplon Pass for a week of short tours. After a few days of tentative skiing in the mist we bailed out early and narrowly avoided getting stuck on top of the pass when the road was blocked by heavy snow.

I am sure that the weather in the Alps was better 10 or 20 years ago, but perhaps this is just wishful thinking. The rest of my year was spent in various mountain ranges with too many people (Nepal), too much snow (Pakistan) and far too much mud (West Papua).

I intend to cut down on long overseas work trips during the first part of 2010. This will give me a chance to catch up on some European skiing for the first time in a few years. In March I shall be in Norway leading two different week-long projects: a sail/ski trip in Northern Lyngen and alpine touring in Southern Lyngen. In April I shall be spending a few weeks at Vallouise in the Ecrins hopefully improving both my skiing and my French.

ASC events during 2009 have been very well attended and I am looking forward to seeing as many members at club events, both outdoors and indoors, during 2010.

David Hamilton



Making friends
in West Papua

The High Tatras ASC meeting March 2009

Report: Alexander Hood

People arrived in dribs and drabs with most of the advance party taking a SkyEurope flight directly to Poprad and then transferring to the incredibly well situated Pension Tatra in Starý Smokovec (Old Smokovec) and one more arriving overland the following day. Starý Smokovec is the oldest Tatras settlement - founded in 1793 - and also happens to be the home of the Mountain Rescue Service.



Friday March 20

The day before the remainder of the party arrived was spent resort skiing at Štrbské Pleso, a small ski area with four lifts nestled by a lake (pleso in Slovak) and just a short and panoramic journey to the west using the well-appointed local trains. Most of the party bought a two-hour ski pass and then managed to time things perfectly so that as the two hours ran out they were at the top of the main chairlift and therefore by the hut (chata in Slovak) Chata pod Soliskom (named after the mountain Predné Solisko, 2,093m), on which the ski slopes are located. After lashings of goulash soup and other hearty Eastern European dishes all were persuaded to ski down the freshly covered and steeper eastern slopes of the resort that some had been busy exploring before lunch.



Saturday March 21

This was our first day skiing with our Slovak head guide, Jaro Michalko, and involved taking the funicular up to Hrebienok (2,273m) through the elevation band devastated by the infamous 2004 storm; on November 19, 2004 13,000 hectares, or almost one third of the forest in the High Tatras National Park, was devastated by winds averaging 55-70mph. The party skinned up in a northwesterly direction, past the stationary drag lifts,

past a woman and her dog sitting on the slopes, to a point not far below Kráľovský nos (2,278m). We then enjoyed skiing the lovely and open slope down to the top of the drag lifts, the sun affected slope down to Hrebienok and the relaxing glide down a track from Hrebienok to Starý Smokovec. Some among our party also enjoyed the lycra-clad Slovakian university student who raced past us on our ascent, put most of us to shame on his descent and once at the bottom proceeded to repeat this process.

That evening, with the arrival of the final members of the team, we were up to full strength and after having to get a replacement van due to



starter motor problems with one of ours we transferred to the Hotel Skopje, just north-east of Žiar in the Západné Tatry (West Tatras). We arrived to find a prize giving and after-party for the Polish and Slovakian mountain rescue teams in full swing so we joined in with the dancing and sausage eating.

Sunday March 22

We awoke in the West Tatras. Our route took us through some very tight trees up to Baranec (2,184m) with Jaro and a second guide, Marek. Once we appeared out of the trees,

the ridge narrowed, the wind picked up and the visibility got worse. The rime encrusted summit monument was the only indication we had reached the



top. The descent was challenging although skiing the sastrugi and crusty snow was almost easier than skiing through the tight trees that we had ascended. The trees ended up taking their toll on the knees of one of our party though but Jaro came to the rescue and managed to get us all down, if not in one piece at least in safely.

Monday March 23

There were still ridiculous amounts of snow around. The car park that we had parked in yesterday was empty and covered in fresh snow when we set off. Today with we skinned up Žiarskej dolina, the valley to the

west of the ridge line that we had climbed the previous day. Part way up we stopped in a clearing for some



transceiver practice lead by our guides, Jaro and Ero, before continuing up to Žiarska chata (1,325m). The hut was locked and no-one had the keys with them so we ate lunch under cover, outside on the veranda. On our way down we again passed through an open area with avalanche chutes and slopes on both sides, which only a couple of days later released the biggest avalanche in the region in 100 years, completely covering the track and the bottom of the valley with 65-80 ft of debris and seriously damaging the hut where we had lunch. On our return journey to Starý Smokovec we made a slight detour to Tatralandia, a massive thermal hot pool complex between Liptovský Mikuláš and Liptovský Trnovec, with 11 pools and 27 slides, for some well needed muscle relaxation.

Tuesday March 24

We returned to Štrbské Pleso (1,347m), the first visit for those who had arrived on the Saturday, and trees on the train line meant that we had to use a bus for the last part of the journey. This time, before walking all the way to the ski field, we put on our skis and Jaro and Ero lead us off to the right into the trees up towards Patria (2,203m). The trees were magical, the snow was soft and deep and the gradient was gentle- until we popped out of the tree line where both the wind and the gradient increased! We continued up in the blowing snow and increasingly bad visibility until we got a suitable point below Patria where we

stopped, put our skis on and made some fantastic s-shaped turns down the mountain (some with occasional punctuation).



Rather than return the way we came we headed slightly to the right of our ascent track through undulating forest, down a stream bed, up a staircase we constructed of skis and then down a pleasantly familiar path (our return path from the bottom of the steeper slopes back to the lifts from the Friday) to the bottom of the ski field, all in the heaviest snow-fall that we encountered on the trip which just added to the atmosphere. We then managed to bluff our way onto one of the lifts to wrap up the day with one short run of in-bounds skiing.

Wednesday March 25

The first day of our overnight expedition up into the mountains. After a late start and with Jaro and another guide, Tibor, we took a short bus ride to the north-east through Tatranská Lomnica (named after Lomnický štít or Lomnický Shield, the large mountain of 2,634m to the north-west that the cable car from Tatranská Lomnica ascends) and Tatranské Matliare to the bus stop by Biela Voda (White Water, 910m).

From here we wound our way up Dolina Bielej Vody (Valley of White Water) and then veered left up Dolina Zeleného plesa (Valley of the Green Lake) to Chata pri Zelenom plese (Hut by the Green Lake, 1,551m, www.zelenepleso.sk), a total distance of about 4.5

miles. The conditions were very similar to the previous day with lots of fresh snow and little wind below



the tree line but a lot of wind above it. The hut was therefore a welcome sight and we arrived to find the place warm, still serving food and drink and with enough people in it to give the place some atmosphere but not so many that it was overly full.

The weather cleared later in the day, although it still remained cold at about -10°C, so some of us went outside and headed a short way to the southwest towards Vel'ká Zmrzlá dolina, the valley that we would have descended had there not been too much snow and we had been able to keep our original plans. A few ski runs and a bit of transceiver practice later (including Jaro burying a transceiver that was actually off) and it was time to head back inside again for delicious dinner cooked by the hut wardens.

Thursday March 26

Another day with bad weather but great snow. We ended up playing on the slopes around Žeruchová kopa (1,744m) and enjoying some nice runs on low aspect slopes in varying visibility before making our way back to the hut. The highlight of the day was on our way back to hut when we saw our previously injured (on Sunday) party member being towed behind a snow mobile up to the hut on a stretcher in the prone position, partly for the entertainment value but also because it meant that we were all together again as a group.

Friday March 27

Our last day skiing day on the trip, but luckily it was also the day with the most sun. The avalanche danger was still high so we headed north from the hut in Dolina Zeleného plesa (Valley of the Green Lake), the southernmost of the three main valleys extending off Dolina Bielej Vody (Valley of White Water).

We traversed around Žeruchová kopa (1,744m) and into Dolina Bielych plies (Valley of the White Lakes) and then over the saddle of Predné Kopské sedlo (1778m) into Predné Med'odoly (predné means front in Slovak), the northernmost of the three main valleys. For the first part of the day we were covering the same ground as we had the previous day but this time we could actually see our surroundings, which was nice as the views were stunning.

We ended up having lunch prior to ascending to the saddle on a little raised hillock that was basically in an amphitheatre of snow with the peak of Jahnací štít (Lamb Peak, 2,230m) dominating the skyline and some of the ski lines down it providing plenty of reasons to come back again. After lunch Jaro cautiously put in a beautiful zigzag up to the saddle before we



all followed ensuring that we were suitably and safely spread out. Upon reaching the saddle we had panoramic views westwards into Poland as well as southwards to where we had come from and north to Hlúpy (2,061m) which, had the conditions been better, was to have been our potential objective for the day. We then made a lovely descent down a wide slope with a perfect gradient which made the skiing enjoyable while not being difficult. This took us to the head of the valley of

Predné Med'odoly which we then skied down to complete our circumnavigation of Belianska kopa (1,835m). Then it was back to the hut to gather our things and ski back down to the main road to the Biela Voda bus stop. The ski run back down the track to the road was almost better than any roller-coaster ride and before we knew it we were all back on the bus, even if it did take someone standing half in and half out of the bus judiciously pretending to search for change to ensure that the last four made it in time to the bus.

We rounded the trip off with a fantastic dinner in Zbojnícka koliba (Outlaw Cottage) in Stará Lesná, a traditional Slovak restaurant, where we ate delicious food, were serenaded by traditional musicians and where there was more dancing to continue from the previous Saturday evening.

Saturday March 28

A short drive back down to Poprad so for those who had arrived by air to fly out again. The overland contingency also begin their week-long journey westward back to the UK (via several European ski fields that just happened to be on the way).

We left having enjoyed some wonderful snow but also having seen how much potential the Tatras hold for future trips. The fact that the avalanche danger scale was at level four for all but one day of our trip meant that our plans had to change a lot from our initial itinerary and also that flexibility was key. A big mention must be given to Jaro Michalko of Tatrators (www.tatrators.com) for reorganising everything multiple times and also for his extensive knowledge of the Tatras.

Participants

ASC

Mike Esten
John Fairley
Stuart Gallagher
Alexander Hood
Margaret Kellas
Hywel Lloyd
Ingram Lloyd
Jill Lockett
Gordon Nuttall
Ken Rawlinson
Roger Upton

Guests

Mary Ann Edwards
Bill Stevens

ASC Annual Dinner 2008

After Dinner Walk: Hope Circular via Lose Hill and Mam Tor



Sunday November 16, 2008

This event took place at the climax of what had been an action-packed weekend which, unusually for Derbyshire in November, proved to be very clement with masses of sunshine. The venues for the accommodation, Glendale, and for the dinner, The Rising Sun in Bamford proved successful and this was preceded by an informative photography course, the fruits of which were thankfully put to good use during the Sunday walk.

As the day dawned fine a plan of logistics was worked out to get everyone to the start of the walk, in itself a mild shock for the residents of Hope village. We got underway through initially what must have been the muddiest path that I had ever encountered and despite the increasing sunshine this mud-bath was with us until the somewhat drier summit of Lose Hill was reached within the hour.

Here we had a short rest while Jill Lockett armed with tripod demonstrated the prowess of her photography, no doubt inspired by the rigours of the Saturday course. After a few memorable snaps we were on our way again. The route to Mam Tor took us along the main ridge of the chain via Black Tor and very soon the goal was in sight, albeit about another hour of walking away.

We split the walk into two for the purposes of catching up. The first section was along the ridge as far as Hollin's Cross where we were joined by the paths from both Castleton and Edale. Here a short break was taken to admire the views of both the Vale of Edale and the Hope Valley, both striking in their own way.

The path to the summit was grassy and therefore

a relief to us all. Soon the gaping crater of Mam Tor came into view and the summit was soon reached. After but a brief admiration we descended via the old road to Castleton which had collapsed about twenty years previously, but which still retains much interest. At the hair-pin bend we carried straight on through Mam Farm and contoured to the top of Hollowford Road to make our descent to Castleton. From here we returned to Hope via a pretty path along Peakshole Water, the relaxing part of the walk being left for the climax of the day.

All back safely in Hope, logistics were put into place again to ferry all for a light lunch at the White Hart pub in Bradwell, a nearby village. Results were impressive from Nigel Edward's limo, complete with ski-racks, bemusing the rustics as we entered Bradwell to David Kirton's sister's Audi convertible blazing away from Hope in the November sunshine. With Anne Pinney waving from the rear, it all looked like something from "Derbyshire Life". Soon we were in the White Hart tucking into well-earned sandwiches as another Alpine Ski Club Annual Dinner weekend came to its pleasant conclusion.

Joining us on the walk were:

Mike Esten, Robin Chapman, Roger Upton and his guest, Mike and Val Hendry, Jill Lockett, Jon and Rowena Mellor, David Kirton, Nigel Edwards, Chris Handley, John Fairley, Ingram and Hywel Lloyd, Anne Pinney, Mike Gee, Brenda Edwards and David Wood

I would also like to give thanks for the help of Donald Ashbury of Bradwell who gave us great aid in planning the walk, taxiing and arranging the lunch for us.

ASC Scottish Meet, Weem

February 7-8, 2009 Report: Rupert Hoare



After a week when Britain was battered by blizzards, strangely the Aberfeldy area had less snow than elsewhere! The meet organizer and his wife failed to arrive for the first day as they were snowed-in in Aberdeenshire! On the Saturday, a strong wind made ski-touring a bit of a struggle but Steve, John, Clare and Susan headed up towards Meall Corranaich at the west end of the Ben Lawers range, starting from the main road as the small road past the visitor centre was blocked by snow. They found a good descent to the west from a short distance below the summit. Meanwhile, Douglas Prentice found good skiing on Meall Greigh, the easternmost hill of the Ben Lawers group and Nigel and Catriona tackled Beinn Dearg on foot from Glen Lyon. We all had a very pleasant meal at the Weem Hotel.

The Sunday was a beautiful day for skiing with no wind! Most of the party tackled the two eastern hills in the Glen Lyon group, Cairn Gorm and Meall Garbh, as these appeared to hold the best snow.

We carried skis from Inverar until the top of the wood, but then enjoyed a superb day on skis with excellent visibility from the summits. We could see the Cairngorms in one direction and the hills

around Glencoe and Ben Nevis the other way. It was amazing not to need an anorak!

We were down in good time but unfortunately the day did not end well for some: Steve's flight was cancelled due to snow at Edinburgh and Birmingham and John's boots found their way to Aberdeenshire in the back of our car!

However, I am sure that the memory of a great day on skis in Scotland will remain long after such tribulations are forgotten!

Participants

ASC & ESC
Rupert Hoare
Jay Turner
Steve Baker
John Kentish

ESC
Clare Aldridge
Douglas Prentice

Guests
Susan Houstoun
Nigel Scriven
Catriona Morris

ASC Simplon Meet

March 7-14, Report: Jeremy Whitehead

The previous week some 50cm of fresh snow had fallen, accompanied by strong winds, and this, coupled with previous weather conditions, had a marked effect on the snow conditions. The Simplon affected by winds in any case, and we found that most of the upper slopes had been scoured by the wind, leaving considerable areas of sastrugi interspersed with patches of hard snow, while the snow blown off had accumulated in sheltered areas, and in the lower slopes in general. With the avalanche index a steady 3, and even 4 one day, we had to be pretty circumspect over choice of suitable routes.

Since the Hospice was fully booked, we stayed in the Simplon Kulm dortoir, cooking our own breakfasts but most of us taking the evening meal at the cheerful Hotel Simplon Blick, just down the road. Four of the group, preferring greater comfort, stayed as the only guests at the larger Hotel Bellevue-Kulm, close to the dortoir. Drifting snow meant that the track to the dortoir usually had to be re-trodden every time we used it.

A fine Sunday morning saw the whole party heading for the well known viewpoint of the Spitzhorli, not a little alarmed by the appearance of hordes of others converging on the route from sundry departure points. The countless skiers, snowboarders on raquettes and simple raquetters made for a good track up, though the wind meant only a brief summit stay. The descent taught us much about the snow, with nice schusses in powder usually ending in nose-dives when we hit patches of heavy stuff.

After this two basic groups emerged, with the 200m per hour B team, including several in their eighth decade, numerically the greater. On the Monday wind and poor weather; most of the B team visited Domodossola while the As used the lift at Rothwald, just down the valley, to explore its off-piste possibilities.

Tuesday both groups set off from near Gampisch, a little down the valley. A couple of hours skinning saw us barely higher than our lodging (one of the disadvantages of these easy tours on the W side of the road) and with no visibility above 2200m, both groups turned back. Wednesday the index was 4. Some of us skinned up the local piste a few times for an 8-10 turn descent, then visited Brig. The A team found the lifts at Rosswald more to their liking.

Thursday was a better day. Both teams set off

towards the Magehorn, but some of the B team turned back below the Magelicke. The unnecessary precautions taken by a party that overtook us may have influenced their decision. The southern slope of the mountain had been scoured by the NW winds into waves up to 60 cm high, and was climbed of foot. The A team took skis up and skied this slope, while the B team found the much easier WSW slope only during their foot descent. At least the snow gave a good descent once below the col and the sastrugi.

The forecast for that night was for strong, even tempestuous winds, easing to merely strong the next day. Luckily it was not exactly correct, and while the A team set off for the Breithorn (one of many all over the Alps) the Bs chose the Straffelgrat, which had looked good from the Magehorn. A long ascending traverse from Bielti took us to less steep terrain and long stretches of sastrugi. This and other delays left us a little short on time, so it was decided to forgo the summit and gain a point on the ridge (2543m) up a steepish but firm slope. This gave the best skiing of the week, then through the sastrugi looking for smoother patches, to a last steeper slope of almost powder took us down to the flat at the Altes Hospiz. During the descent we had seen a machine ploughing the track back through Bielti, which eased the 1 hrs skinning back to the Pass.

Once there we learned that the A team had made it to the Breithorn, the only group to do so, other parties having turned back because of the wind. That evening the whole group of 13 plus 3 guests of Sam's celebrated a moderately successful week with a final dinner at the Simplon Blick.

Participants

Nigel Edwards
Mike Esten
Michael Gee
Sam Handley
Don Henderson
John Kentish
Ken Marsden
Jeremy Whitehead
David Wood

Guests from ESC

Alex Hood
John and Helgard How
David Lindsey.

Members' excursions

Valdossola-Simplon (Switzerland-Italy) ASC Tour January 13-29 2009

Report: John Moore

Remembering the experts, two seasons ago, predicting the end of Alpine skiing as we know it, it came as a pleasant surprise to find that November and December 08 produced more snow than had been recorded for a decade in the western Alps. John Moore, Robin Chapman and Brenda Edwards enjoyed a great week (Jan 14-21) in Italian Val Antigorio (Domodossola area on the south side of the Simplon) and Macugnaga, in superb powder snow. We then had three days at the Simplon Hospice - during which a metre more of snow fell. Conditions were much too dangerous

for touring and after a couple of tentative and tiring forays on to steep, dangerous and avalanche prone slopes, we abandoned the monks and moved to our old stamping ground of the Grand St Bernard for 5 nights. Despite continuing avalanche risk level 5, we had a couple of excellent trips on the Col Serena and some excellent off-piste skiing, using seniors' discount lift passes at Pila and Crevacol. All in all, an excellent January trip with some of the best powder snow we have ever experienced in the Alps.

The serious touring will come later.

Brenner - South Tirol - Stubai - Kühtai (Austria-Italy) March 18-Apr 1

Report: John Moore

We experienced more of this year's high snowfall winter on our three-centre trip to the Brenner, Stubai and Kühtai areas. Anticipating unsettled weather, we chose places where good off-piste skiing using lift systems was an alternative when conditions were too dangerous for touring. We began in Gossensass (Colle d'Isarco) an excellent base about 15km south of the Brenner Pass. From there we skied peaks in Ratschingtal (Kleine Kreuzspitze), Ridnauntal (Einachtspitze) and Innerer Plerschtal (Maurerspitze) before moving to Stubaital. In unsettled weather we ascended the Sattelberg and Grubenspitze in Oberbacherntal. Then we drove to Ochsengarten about 8km west of Kühtai with German friends (Martin, Birgitta and Juliane) and en-

joyed an easy outing to the Faltegartenkögele and a great day on the Wetterkreuz. We used the days of unsettled weather and high avalanche risk (4+), which resulted from new snow in several falls amounting to more than two metres total, to get some great off-piste skiing in the woods at Schlick in Stubaital and Ochsengarten-Oetz, on the Stubai-Mutterbergalm ski area and in deep undisturbed wonderful powder at Kühtai. In total we lost only one day in 13 to weather and managed 8 good hills and 4 wonderful off-piste days. We had some great summits and certainly some improvement in deep snow ski technique after following the German wonder team through what appeared to be vertical tracts of forest in thigh deep snow.

Ski Chilterns

Free of the Treasurer's responsibilities, Philip Pinney finds time for a few other activities in the New Year 2009.



Postcards from Lyngen

Report: Rupert Hoare

Three ASC members: myself (Rupert Hoare), Jay Turner and David Seddon participated in an ESC trip to the Lyngen Alps in Arctic Norway in April 2009. We took a direct flight from Gatwick to Tromso with marvellous views of the Norwegian coastal mountains. We were based in great comfort at Lyngen Lodge (www.lyngenlodge.com) with speedboat and minibus for access to the skiing each day. Lyngen Lodge is situated on the east coast of Lyngen Fjord with good views of the Lyngen Alps opposite.



We were lucky to have several days of fine weather with perfect powder snow from summit to sea. Here is a view of Rupert breaking trail towards the summit of Blåtinden (1142m) on Uløya Island, with the Lyngen Alps in the background. We averaged over 1100m climbing on skins each day for six days.



Here is Jay enjoying the wonderful powder snow on the same day, with Kågen Island and the Barents Sea in the background



This is a view of Paul Miller (ESC) descending from Giilavarri (1140m) the following day. Norway is not a cheap holiday destination but the combination of the sun, the powder snow and always the sea made this a magic, unforgettable trip. I'm definitely plotting a return visit to Arctic Norway – maybe to the Lofoten Islands: if you are interested, let me know!



The Highlands - Hors Piste

Report: Ken Marsden

“Ahh didnae expect tae see thaat in Aprul”, my skis A-framed behind me. “The secret is up there,” I replied without stopping. I carried on briskly down the Lost Valley, not wishing to engage in yet another explanation of my activities high up on Bidean nam Bian.

A week with the ASC at Simplon Pass and another week in the Bernese Oberland had left me thinking: “Is that it for touring 2009? March and it’s all over!” Driving back home across Rannoch Moor and through Glencoe I could see there was still a good cover of snow high up in the north facing corries and steep gullies.

Easter weekend was fast approaching and the forecast was good. A few phone calls and the replies ranged from going to South Africa to “just done Point Five and I’m knackered”. Hmm, should I just go it alone? 6.45am on Easter Sunday and the deer were grazing next to the road at the Lost Valley car park. I shouldered my pack, poles in hand and walked the familiar path down to bridge over the Meeting of Three Waters and onwards to Coire Gadhail. Tantalizing glimpses of the slope below Beallach Dearg through the clag, would it clear?

At last I hit the snow line about three hundred feet below the col. The snow was soft and mushy. At least I could put in a track for a few turns until the slope became too steep and my skis continually slipped down hill as the wet snow gave way. I stopped under a small rock buttress, stamped out a stance and performed a delicate ballet swapping from skis to crampons to an audience of nobody. Booting up to the beallach it steepened nicely. This would be a good ski but with the snow line so high, a short lived pleasure after all that effort. I reached the ridge and saw the cornice almost un-broken all the way to the summit of Bidean. With skis back where they belong I skinned up the ridge keeping as close as possible to the boundary between ridge and snow. The summit was clear, of cloud and people. It felt as if I had the whole world to myself. Below in the distance Glencoe Village, Ballachulish Bridge, Glen Etive. Beyond, Stob Coire nan Lochain and a snowy slope towards the Lost Valley. A plan was rapidly taking shape.

I side slipped to a few feet below the summit and then the first turn, and another and another.... A traverse below the lowest rocks descending from the ridge and I stopped below the beallach between Bidean and Stob Coire nan Lochan. That ballet again. Still no one to see my grace, under what was getting to be a sun on the “too hot to be wearing all these clothes and carrying all this gear” side of things. I dropped my sack below the summit and walked the last few feet to the summit of Stob Coire nan Lo-chain. The Easter weekenders were

Back in November with the first dump of snow I’d skied over Beinn Fhada and saw a tempting looking snow slope sweeping from below the summit of Stob Coire nan Lochan towards the Lost Valley. So here I was now, back at the drop point skis on and ready to go. No sweeping turns now. Deep, wet, soggy “ughhh how do I get my skis out of this mush” turns. Thankfully the mush ran out and I meet the first walkers of the day. Were they really going to plod up that slush to the top? I wasn’t hanging around to find out. I set off downhill and soon hit the main path.



Ken Marsden skinning to the top of Tower Gully *Photo: Klas Hyllen*

approaching in waves. I’d had the best of the day for what I wanted and now it was theirs. If I’d a pound for every dumb question or daft comment; I’d still be working on Monday.

Two weeks later “I didnae expect tae” be skinning up the Red Burn on the Ben. Klas and I set off from Achintee in that damp yuk which isn’t cloud, isn’t rain, prevents base layers from wicking and shell layers from breathing. From the Red Burn we could see the cloud below blowing across the Half Way Lochain, the slopes clearing above us, the sun breaking through.

At 900m we hit the snow and could start skinning. A few steps across a few breaks in the snow and it was skinning all the way across the plateau. “Is this the summit?” Flimsy boots, single ski pole, no sack and a jacket from another century. He’d followed us to the very top of Tower Ridge where it plunges on one side down Goodeve’s Route and the other side down Tower Gully. It looked terrifyingly steep, Smiths Route clung to Gardyloo Buttress still fat with ice.

“It’s the big building over there,” Klas said, pointing to the summit shelter. With a grateful wave of his ski pole the ill-equipped gent skittered away.

The summit was a diversion from the days quest. We walked back to where Tower Gully cuts deepest into the plateau, well back from the cornice. We belayed each other to the edge. I looked down. The main cornice had collapsed and lay sagging forming a step. Just below the slope eased off then steepened above Tower Scoop. Below that the snow ran out to near the bottom of Tower Ridge. We dug a snow bollard well back from the edge, tied the ropes together and abseiled into the top of the gully. Facing in we booted down. Klas stopped in a sunny hollow above Tower Scoop, close in to Tower Ridge and swapped from crampons to skis. The slope was still steep and a definite no fall situation. Debris was beginning to fall from the rocks above. Nervously I looked at the cornices above, glinting in the sunlight like rows of sharks teeth. Great White Sharks, real man eaters. Or real knockers of un-rope ski mountaineers from steep snow slopes! I booted down further and traversed out towards a stance beneath Gardyloo Buttress.

From out of sight I heard swooshing. Klas came into view putting in a couple of turns. "Do you want me to wait while you put your skis on?" "You ski on, I'll be a wee while pfaffing up here. Enjoy!"

No second invitation necessary, Klas was gone like a rash. Big turns taking in the whole of the Observatory Gully, whoops and hollars echoing off the Orian

Face and Tower Ridge. Within seconds he was a dot at the bottom of the snow line. I set about the familiar ballet. Stamp out a stance, sack off back, skis off sack, crampons off boots, crampons in sack. Skis on stance,

stance too small, hack out bigger stance. All the time balance and don't drop anything. Sack on back, poles in hands. Uphill boot in downhill ski downhill boot in uphill ski, the reassuring snap of the bindings. Brace with the poles and balance and bring the uphill ski up and forward and uncross my legs. I look down the slope and side slip off my crumbling soggy stance. The snow firms up, I side slip until level with the top of Tower Scoop, still choked with ice. Turn, side slip and turn. The trench left by countless bum sliding climbers limited my corridor, slip and turn, slip and turn. Quads on fire I stop and take a long draw of water. The angle eased off, longer sweeping turns around an obstacle course of icy lumps and rocks. I ski past Klas, his camera trained on me, and stop at the lowest crystals of snow.

The adrenalin ebbed away to leave a feeling of smug euphoria: we'd done it. Walking towards the CIC hut we looked up into Coire na Ciste. I thought about those cornices and the extra hours of sun. "No," I thought. I shared my concerns with Klas. Back up Ledge Route and ski down Number 4 Gully was the original plan, not at this time of day, one for next spring.

We trudged back over the Halfway Lochan and rejoined the hoards on the tourist path. I walked on ahead. They'd see me first, by the time they met Klas they'd thought out their smart quips and dumb questions.

Back at the car we unburdened our shoulders of sacks and feet of ski boots. Over a pint our conversation was of other mountains, other gullies & corries next spring.

Kamchatka - May 2008

Report: Roger Upton

In May 2008, new ASC members John Barnard, Gordon Nuttall, Stu Gallagher, and myself were part of a 12-strong Eagles team that visited the Kamchatka peninsula, on the far eastern shores of Russia. This region lies on the Pacific Ring of Fire and is geologically very active. Our plan was to explore on skis two volcanic areas to the north and to the south of Petropavlosk, the main town sited on the south-eastern coast.

For the first stage, we were based in a rather ramshackle vulcanologist's station in the Paratunka valley. But the highlight of the place was a large pool of hot water, fed from under ground volcanic streams; the perfect end to the many days we spent here. Initially the weather was poor, restricting our forays to climbing the local hills and ascending part way up the dormant Vilyuchinsky volcano. Despite the conditions, we had some great skiing in the couloirs and canyons. Fortunately for us, spring had arrived early and this had opened up access to the southern plateau - a large area

reaching towards the active, smoking Mutnovsky volcano. We approached Mutnovsky in two ways, the first via our 6-wheeler truck that bounced us along a rutted road up onto the plateau. From here we skied across the remote plateau to the foothills of the volcano



and explored the natural hot springs, adjacent to a major geothermal station. In order to penetrate Mutnovsky volcano itself we took a helicopter to the eastern flanks, where a large canyon opened into the side of the mountain. This allowed us to ski up through the various craters, redolent with sulphurous fumes and boiling mud pools amongst the glaciers, and peer down into the abyss of the last and most active of all.

The second area to the north of the town contains two volcanoes which dominate the skyline - Koryaksky and Avachinsky, referred to as Peter and Paul by Captain Cook. Although smaller at 2,741m, the continuous plumes of white steam emanating from the fumeroles of Avacha offered a thrilling objective summit. We accessed the base camp, again an ex-vulcanologist's station, by a combination of van, 6-wheeler vehicle and finally a piste basher. But this time the hut was a smart



new Swiss-built chalet - though minus the hot springs - but we did have the same excellent cook. The weather

for this part of the trip was excellent, allowing us to climb to the rim of the Avachinsky volcano the next morning; albeit with a climb up the final ridge in bruising, icy winds. Once inside the shelter of the crater, the hot, steaming, sulphurous red-brown earth soon warmed us up prior to the long ski back down to the base camp. Our attempt on Koryaksky at 3,456m was limited to reaching a ridge below the steep, icy summit section at about 2,500m which opened into a delightful couloir filled with deep soft snow and guaranteed to bring a smile to all our faces. Following a few more minor excursions we felt we had only touched the surface of this vast and fascinating wilderness.

I would like to thank our hosts from Yelizovo who accommodated and entertained us exceedingly well.

Participants

Bruce Goodlad (guide)
 Andrei Nikiforov (local guide)
 John Barnard
 Ric and Mandy Bartlett
 Dave Carr
 Stu Gallagher
 John Goodwin
 Val Hennelly
 Martin Josten
 Gordon Nuttall
 Harry Salisbury
 Roger Upton



Koryak musician

Peru - June 2008

Report: Roger Upton

In June 2008 I joined an expedition organised by the Chamonix guide Rémy Lécluse to attempt a first ski descent of Yayamari (6,049m) and Jatuñaño Punta, in the remote Cordillera Vilancota range in the south-east of Peru.

This was a delightful journey through the Andean mountains, taking us from the road head at Tinqu around the south of the Ausangate massif. The camping gear and skis were carried by horses, leaving us with just small day packs. Our route involved a gentle acclimatisation program, climbing from 3,800m to the base camp at 5,000m beneath Yayamari over 6 days.

After many days of perfect weather, a major storm struck the moment we reached base camp, pinning us down inside the tents. This storm also put paid to our attempt on Yayamari itself, as significant wind-slab

was deposited on the NW flanks where the only reasonably safe ski route lead to the summit. We had no time available to wait for improvement in conditions.

However all was not lost as our second objective, Jatuñaño Punta, offered us a viable route up to a subsidiary peak, Sorañaño, and then along the western ridge to the summit.

Our first attempt provided ample evidence of



the snow instability as we triggered a small slide within 50m of exploring a direct route. The next day we followed a more cautious and successful line to the summit at 5,812m. This peak on the very edge of Amazonia might have allowed us to see the Atlantic ocean, were it not for the deep banks of threatening clouds.

Our ski descent was truly memorable, down the steep ridge, skirting the crevasses and opening out over the broad lower flanks. The departure from base camp was again tempered by snow storms. Our descent took us a brisk two days to reach the road head at Phinaya.

Participants

Rémy Lécluse (guide)

Jim Fairey

Lorraine Mooney

Roger Upton

Joe Zazzarra

Many thanks to our local team from Tinquí: Filipe Crispin, Daniel Chillihuani (aspirant guide), Rene Crispin and Octavio Crispin.

Obituaries

Michael Lowe 1938-2009

Michael Lowe was Vice-President of the Club 1984-85.

A double-First in Engineering at Cambridge, he had soon made his mark in the commercial world and was able to retire at 40 to devote his time to his other interests.

One of these was the Royal Marines Reserve, in which he specialized in Military Intelligence and Arctic Warfare, eventually commanding the City of London Unit. With his considerable fitness, strength and endurance - and experience of living in the snow - he had a key role in our ski-traverse of Scandinavia. This involved 4 tours of 19-20 days in the period 1973-78 (see the Centenary Journal), on which he made not a single error with his all-important map-reading, in those pre-

GPS times. He also did several other long Nordic ski-journeys.

Among his other great interests, were deer-stalking and appreciation of food and wine. This resulted in some memorable evenings at his flat in Paddington, with liberal supplies of venison - not to mention the wine and malt whisky.

He was Deputy Lieutenant of London and a JP, and also committed his time to several charities. Despite his formidable capacities, he was very friendly and approachable and made a good contribution to the Club, and also to the Eagle Ski Club, before he left to enjoy the ex-pat way of life in Thailand.

Alan Blackshaw

John Noble 1943-2009

John Noble died in Lancaster on October 31st after a short, rare but vicious illness. He was 66.

For many years Johnny was a well-known figure in the interconnected worlds of mountain, ski and adventure travel. Originally from Birmingham, he spent three years in the sixties with the British Antarctic Survey and had many tales to tell of exploratory expeditions in Graham Land in the great days of dog travel. Ever afterwards Johnny retained his enthusiasm for dog-sledging. Subsequently he spent two years instructing outdoor activities at Colorado Outward Bound and then at Prescott College in Arizona along with other British ex-pats such as Des Hadlam, Roy Smith and Rusty Baillie, before taking a diploma in Youth Work at Leicester Poly and joining the staff at Plas y Brenin in 1971.

Here Johnny worked under John Jackson and later Bill March. He was elected to the Alpine Club in 1972,

perfected his skiing technique, got married and in '79 spent a year on the faculty at the United World College in British Columbia. That same year, while leading a Mountain Travel commercial expedition with Dick Isherwood, he made what was probably the first ascent of 6200m Chulu East in Manang, now one of the more notable, so-called Nepalese 'Trekking Peaks'. Thus began a long association with the leading American adventure travel company and in 1980 John started Travellers, his own bespoke operation in the same field. He was elected FRGS the following year.

In due course John and his wife settled in Kendal where in 1984 they opened Moor & Mountain, a very select mountain and outdoor shop at Waterside. Sheila masterminded the shop while John concentrated on Travellers and as a keen and very competent photographer, his associated Wilderness Photo Library. Sadly by 1989 these activities had overtaken both the shop and the marriage and John moved to the Lune valley.

Always smartly turned out both in casual dress and mountain gear, Johnny was slim and exuded fitness and charm. He was an excellent and extremely stylish skier in both alpine and nordic disciplines and a long-time member of the Alpine Ski Club. As an expert ski mountaineer he led touring parties in the Alps every spring and specialised also in dog sledging expeditions in

Scandinavia and rather warmer adventures in Northern Australia with a wide following of loyal clients. At the time of his death he had recently taken over the UK marketing for Mountain Lodges of Peru and had so much to live for. Unfortunately he had no known family but he will be sorely missed by his many friends.

John Cleare

Terry Hartley 1924-2009

Terry joined the ASC in 1966 with a wealth of ski touring experience gained in the Alps, High Atlas and Pyrenees. During his years with the ASC, Terry was very active in the mountains with trips to Demavend, the Alps, Jura and to Northern Scandinavia. In 1967 he climbed the Dom to mark the 60th Anniversary of the ASC and the 50th of Arnold Lunn's first-ever ski ascent of that mountain, and in 1972, he helped set up the British Alpine Ski Traverse with the NSFGB.

Terry also did a great deal for British ski touring in the 1960s and 70s, most especially in bringing together ski mountaineers who started as climbers (Alan Blackshaw and Robin Day spring to mind) with those who started as skiers (like himself and Michael de Pret Roos).

His efforts helped strengthen the traditional ski-touring

clubs, in many of which he held high office for a decade or more. He was Chairman of the SCGB and President of both the ASC and ESC (and an Honorary member of both clubs).

Terry was a practical forward looking leader, who was committed to make progress on ski touring and skiing issues for the benefit of everyone. As a true friend, he was unfailingly courteous, charming and urbane but totally unassuming - an absolute gentleman in the fullest meaning of the word. In his life, he made a very significant contribution to the world of ski mountaineering. We mourn his parting and send our deepest sympathy to his wife Cathie and daughter Katherine

Philip Pinney

News

Italy makes avalanche safety gear mandatory

Italy has decided to make avalanche safety gear (avalanche beacon, shovel and probe) mandatory for all winter sports enthusiasts heading out of marked and secured ski runs. The law will also apply to off piste skiers and ski tourers. The law covers the Piemonte region in the north of Italy and supersedes the national law (L. 24 December 2003, n.363) which obliged ski

tourers to use avalanche beacons if there was a clear risk of avalanche. Fines are up to 250 euros.

British skiers should take careful note of this law as they may find that their insurance is invalid if they ski off piste or tour in the Piemonte without the appropriate gear required by Italian law.

Tracker Upgrade for 2010/11

After 10 years service with the Tracker transceivers, we are planning to upgrade to the three-antenna Tracker-2. The new Trackers are faster and even simpler to use than their predecessors.

In choosing the Tracker-2 over other competing transceivers, some of which have amazing abilities, we have opted for ruggedness and simplicity in use, which for the purposes of hiring (in



many cases to complete novices) are paramount.

The old stock will be available for sale to Members only from Easter until September for £48 each. This is just twice the hire price to non-members and a fraction of the price of the new Tracker-2. In September, this sale will be opened to non-members so hurry and place your orders now with John Fairley to avoid being disappointed ([hires@alpineskiclub.org.uk](mailto: hires@alpineskiclub.org.uk)).

Forthcoming ASC events 2010/11

May 12 Spring Lecture at AC.

Emma Jack who last year skied Manaslu (8156m), the world's 8th highest mountain.

September 24-26 UK meet at Caseg Fraith, N Wales.
Co-ordinator needed.

October 13 Autumn Lecture at AC.

Speaker to be announced.

November 20 AGM and Annual Dinner.

This will be a weekend event at the Old Dungeon Gill hotel, Langdale.

2011, March 12-19 Sail/ski trip to Lyngen Alps.

David Hamilton is organising a ski trip for Alpine Ski Club members to Arctic Norway in Spring 2011. He has arranged to charter the M/V Goxhiem, a 99 foot sailing boat based in Tromso from March 12-19 next year. The boat will be used a floating 'hut' moving

between ski areas on the Lyngen Peninsula and surrounding islands. The boat has space for up to 10 people plus a crew of two. This is an 'Alpine' landscape of fairly steep mountains rising up from the sea. Average daily ascents will be greater than 1000m, and most days will involve 5-7

hours of activity. The final price will depend on the group size and the exchange rate between the Pound and the Norwegian

Krone, but should be around £1,500 per person plus

airfares to Tromso. Please contact David Hamilton if you would like further information about this trip.



New members & changes

Chris Abbott Aspirant
Alex Hood Ordinary

Stephen Kentish Ordinary
Jonty Mills Aspirant
Brenda Winsor- Ordinary
Edwards
John How Ordinary
Helgard How Aspirant
James Ordinary
Colquhoun
Roger Birnstingl Ordinary
Nicholas Danby Ordinary

Alex Cowan Ordinary
Philip Bird Ordinary

Changes

Tim Martin

ASC officers and committee 2010

President: David Hamilton
Vice Presidents: Mike Hendry and Robin Chapman
Treasurer: Roger Upton
Secretary: Ingram Lloyd
Transceiver Manager: John Fairley
Awards Convenor: Ian Steen

Website Manager: David Kirton
Newsletter Editor: Michael Prowse
Committee: Chris Abbott, Robert Borgerhoff Mulder,
Sam Handley, Kim Mason, Tim Martin, John Moore,
Tracey Quine,
Archivists: Hywel & Ingram Lloyd