

# NORWAY - SKI TOURING

This week-long meet (8-15 February) used DNT self-service huts in the hills north of Lillehammer for a 100km cross-country ski tour. The meet was blessed with good snow and weather with the air temperature starting around -20°C and gradually warming to just below freezing.

## Participating:

Peter Chadwick

Esther Chadwick (G)

Becca Humphreys (PM)

Pete McLeod (G)

Michael Smith

Richard Smith

Richard Taylor

Kjetil Tveranger

Ann-Karin Tveranger (G).

Kjetil Tveranger, being familiar with the area, organised not only the route and travel arrangements but also the provisioning and, for those without their own skis, equipment. Five others also had hut-to-hut ski experience in Norway so the three novices were well supported and in any case were experienced downhill skiers. Kjetil's plans worked out well and this was an excellent introductory/intermediate ski trip 'away from it all' besides being highly sociable. The costs in Norway were about 2,600 NOK (~£260) including a small saving on account of the three DNT members incurring reduced hut fees.

## Getting there

The seven UK-based skiers arrived in Oslo's Gardermoen airport late on the Wednesday afternoon and immediately faced the single hitch in the arrangements – being told by the ticket machine that the Ringebu train was fully-booked. An attendant came up with a solution: the only two remaining normal tickets were supplemented by five in the Komfort carriage at a premium of 90 NOK each. We readily agreed to this rather than have a wait of over two hours.

Meanwhile Kjetil and Ann-Karin had driven over the several hours from Florø stopping for provisions on the way.

Meeting up around 7pm, Kjetil made two ferrying trips from Ringebu station 22km up the snow-covered valley side to 940m and a rented cabin in the southern Rondane at Spidsbergseter.

Inside, Ann-Karin was preparing a meal for everyone and introductions were made as we ate.

We were late to turn in.



### **Thursday, Ringebufjell to Gråhøgdbu (1,135m)**

This was a short day of about 10km skiing across easy terrain to the Gråhøgdbu hut and at this time of the year daylight lasts about nine hours. So we had time to repack our gear and leave any travel clothes in Kjetil's car. A clouded sky but the temperature was -20°C as we started out about 1100 for the two-hour ski to the hut which could be seen from a long way off. Lunch inside the hut after lighting the Jøtul stove then collecting and melting the snow. The Chadwicks then ascended nearby steep-sided Muen (Hay Fell), 1,424m, and returned in the gathering gloom of dusk. Meanwhile Rich tested out his power kite as a potential leg-saver. There was ample pull in the brisk wind but the turbulent flow from the ridge behind makes control difficult.

Two reindeer hunters arrived with pulks but having dogs with them are restricted to using bunks in the wood store so we see no more of them.

Using the hut's stores we prepare a fish stew then fruit salad washed down with a selection of whiskies and sloe gin. It was warm overnight with the stove kept alight.

### **Friday, Gråhøgdbu to Jammerdalsbu (1,130m)**

Early risers heard ptarmigan here before breakfast. Starting at -14°C the temperature rose only a few degrees so we were using green ski gripwax apart from the few on fishscale skis (ribbed soles for traction). The 19km route crossed a small ridge into the unspoilt Dørmyrin valley then descended into Flågåmyrin in deep soft snow with some problematic steeper descents. To the right of the route the Smiths spotted a pair of reindeer antlers projecting from the snow. Rich excavated these and found they were a magnificent pair still attached to the skull and upper mandible. These were hooked onto his sack for carrying. After crossing a stream, lunch was taken on the bank and out of the wind. The afternoon's route undulated before pulling up towards the hut which was hidden behind a rise until we were about 600m away. The hut's name reflects that of the area which translates as wailing or complainers' valley.

The evening meal was soup, reindeer balls with rice and then fruit. This and almost all the cabins and huts had eight beds but we were a party of nine. Here, Pete elected to sleep on the floor using one of the spare mattresses. Elsewhere others chose the padded bench seats as they were longer than the bunk beds.

### **Saturday, Jammerdalsbu to Vetåbua (925m)**

As the previous day's route took until the sun was setting and today's 17km was likely to take longer, an earlier start was made. Porridge was ready soon after 0700. After a slight rise and drop southeast we made a 60m gradual ascent. There followed a series of slight rises and long gentle descents or level runs for 10km to Saubu, a rustic shepherds' hut. We took a lunch break there in comfort: some inside in the dark and others sunning themselves in the lee of the hut. The afternoon's skiing southwards was under blue skies with a light wind and temperatures around -5°C. Several small streams were crossed on snowbridges and a few willow grouse were disturbed as we crossed fairly flat areas heading towards woodland and Vetåbua. Care was needed in places to avoid twigs protruding from the snow – the winter had seen less snowfall than usual though this was one of this year's best areas for snow cover in southern Norway. Our earlier start proved unnecessary as improving skiing skills meant we were moving a little faster and the hut was reached about 1500.

We were surprised to find the traditional lift pump worked which saved time and fuel compared to melting snow. The evening meal started with soup by torchlight – the solar lighting system had failed and there were no candles to be found, presumably to reduce fire risk. As the sky remained clear the temperature plummeted to -18°C.

### **Sunday, Vetåbua to Djupslia (950m)**

From Vetåbua the route took us across snow-covered frozen boggy ground southeast then south on prepared piste tracks. This made Esther's going easier as she was using the narrower Trak skis rather than the usual touring skis. By lunchtime the green wax was failing to give sufficient grip as the temperature rose towards -5°C on this 17km route. Rich tried out the kite again and managed to tow two others a short distance despite failing light winds. By Midt-Goppollen we were among cabins and soon

turning east on a ridge-side traverse towards the Djupslia. The hut being below the track we finished with a tricky short drop through trees to reach it.

Pumped water was also available here and we were soon rehydrating with tea and coffee followed by pancakes before our meal of meatballs, mashed potato and then a warm fruit soup. Here we again created a cosy candlelit atmosphere sheltered from the inhospitable landscape – Hygge as the Danes would call it. Ann-Karin found the DNT songbook and we worked our way through the English-language songs led by Pete and Becca. Two Swedes arrived but occupied the adjacent hut.

### **Monday, Djupslia to Hafjell (770m)**

Porridge and tea were prepared ready for a 0700 breakfast and with the hut cleaned we were off by 0900. The last day of the tour took us about 20 km to Lillehammer Hafjell, a downhill ski resort. Again the route followed pisted tracks through a network of routes on the fjell with the tower-topped hill of Hafjell generally ahead to guide us.

The slightly stronger wind had shifted to the north and was behind us and we skied in sunshine most of the day. The temperature was rising and we tried purple wax but we might have been better with blue as the snow remained cold enough.

This was a day of long mostly gentle glides with short herringboned ascents. A short break was taken at Keiken before the small top of Kjerring Knappen, 1,017m, and its views. Lunch was taken in a sunny glade amid melting snow. Then, on a steeper descent, Kjetil took an unexpected tumble falling awkwardly with his heavy rucksack. He had damaged the soft tissues of his left shoulder and this restricted his mobility. That was the only serious mishap of the trip. A week later, an MRI scan revealed that two of his three supraspinatus muscle's attachment points were ruptured and required some needlework.

Gradually we met more and more skiers until we arrived at the throng surrounding the gondola top station where Richard treated us all to beers before our gondola descent to the valley. After an hour's dusk wait a taxi-minibus took us to our cabin part-way back up the hill. The delay allowed shopping for our evening meal of soup, salmon and broccoli with wine, then more pancakes. Tired, we have turned in by 2200.

### **Tuesday, Hafjell tour**

While the younger element enjoyed a sunny day's skiing over 20km on the fjell above the Hafjell ski slopes, Ann-Karin and Richard went via Lillehammer to Ringebu to collect the car and the others spent the day around the apartment sorting out kit and reading.

**The only member of the party who did not take a single tumble over the six days was Pete.**

**This is Becca hitting the deck.**

**Photo - Kjetil Tveranger**



### **Getting back**

An early start was needed for the first three to be ferried in to Lillehammer for the 7.15 train to Oslo Gardermoen where they found their return Manchester flight was delayed an hour because of freezing fog. Four more followed on a later train and spent either the rest of the day or a couple of days in Oslo seeing the sights.

This was another unusual and well supported meet for which special thanks go to Kjetil for his meticulous organisation. Also, it is pleasing to see the Club further developing its links with Norway.



**Richard & Michael Smith**  
**Photo - Peter Chadwick**



**Jammerdalsbu departure, Photo - Kjetil Tveranger**



**Tracks. Photo - Michael Smith**

**The Group**

**Photo**  
**Peter**  
**Chadwick**



# **DOODLING DEREK?**

Our archivist has found some interesting doodles on paperwork from old meetings. We suspect they are by Derek English although he has no recollection of them. They must have been riveting meetings.

