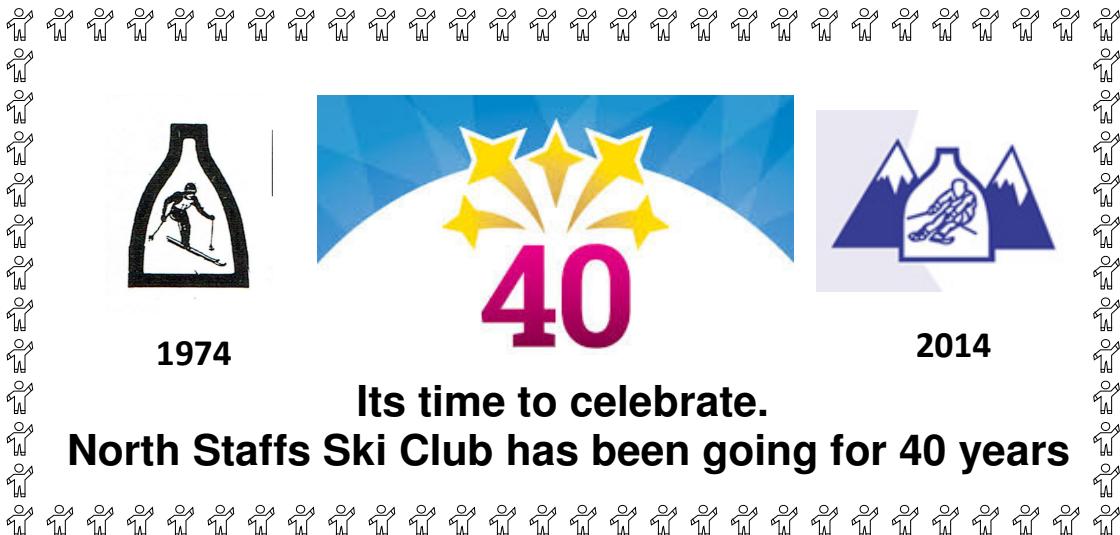




NORTH STAFFS SKI CLUB LTD

Anniversary Special Edition Newsletter June 2014



From little acorns...

In its early years the North Staffs Ski Club was only small, involving a few keen skiers. It was formed on 3rd June 1974 shortly after the opening by the council of the John Cooney Sports Pavilion and Ski Lodge. The site was one of the first artificial ski slopes in Great Britain. The club membership at the end of the first year was a mere 27, the club had a cash balance of £34.51

From that lowly beginning the club gradually increased its membership and income. Although the slope at that time belonged to the council the club played an important role in relaying the drains at the bottom of the slope and were involved in much of the maintenance work. During the 76/77 season the club race team won the West Midlands Regional Trophy in the 'Sport for All' series of events.



North Staffs Ski Team 1975

Do you recognise any of the above who were on the committee in 1988 and can still be found down at the club?



**Snowsport
England**

Member of the British Ski Slope Operators Association

Kidsgrove Ski Centre, Bathpool Park, Kidsgrove,
Stoke on Trent, ST7 4EF Telephone (01782) 784908
www.ski-kidsgrove.co.uk

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Active
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1979

On March 22nd 1979 the club was thrown into crisis by the Council's decision to close the slope because the matting was badly worn. There was now a ski club with nowhere to ski! During that period Derek Poole was elected chairman and Brian Woodcock in 1980, began organising regular coach trips to Telford Ski Centre.



During the summer of 1980, dedicated members of the ski club spent many arduous hours salvaging the good ski matting to piece together a small beginner's slope. The first lessons took place in March 1981 and from that day onwards the club grew in size and stature, with grants from various authorities and local companies donations helping towards the cost. The club gained



enough money to purchase Dendix matting and equipment, extending the slope each season. The Telford ski trips ended in 1984 due to the popularity of the Kidsgrove Ski Slope. Finally, in 1987 the matting reached the steepened top of the slope and the long worked on home-made ski lift became operational in March 1988 (which lasted with a lot of tender care until 2014).



A construction photo from the 1988/89 club magazine showing the bottom platform being built.

The slope was operated under a licence from Newcastle Under Lyme Borough Council which was issued annually. The club continued to flourish and a manager/ski coach was employed. The ski slope was open for recreational skiing from 10am—6pm six days a week with club members having exclusive use on Monday and Wednesday evenings. The club had achieved its objective of providing a good club slope that would be unaffected by proposed developments at the Garden Festival site. The next immediate objective was to extend its activities with young people to produce some effective racers in the near future.

In the first club magazine 1988/1989 the chairman Derek Poole says "The coming season sees us as a club with excellent facilities. An 83m slope with button lift and a good team of workers who have slaved and slogged to see these improvements completed."

In November 1988— 4 x 1 hour lessons cost £18.00 for an adult, £12.00 for juniors, beginners to advanced. if paid separately they were £6 each. On Club nights adult members paid £2.00 to recreational ski. If club members wished to ski at peak times (weekends and evenings) they paid £3.00 a session.





The club's activities were not limited to the ski slope. It also operated a portable tow which was used to good effect on the slopes at Gallows Tree Lane, Keele and the Peak District. The photo shows Alan Walker and fellow skiers in 1981 at Keele.

Other social events were held and during the 1988/89 season there was :-

Ski Bash with barbecue ;
Jo Royale ski show—ski club members modelled the latest ski wear.
Film Show and Gluhwein Evening

1993 In 1993 another crisis - the manager/coach Chris Poole (who was tragically killed in an avalanche in 1997) and others wanted to move the club assets to the Festival Park commercial ski slope site. Club members at an Extraordinary General Meeting decided by majority vote that they would keep the club at Kidsgrove, after an agreement Chris moved to Festival Park and the club committee and members took over the running of the slope at Kidsgrove.

From then on and currently the club has been staffed by volunteer members who give up their time in order to operate the centre for the benefit of all other club members. All revenue generated by the club is used to further improve the slope, facilities and equipment. The aim was and still is to promote the sport of skiing and provide affordable skiing at prices which we believe to be the lowest in the country.

In 1994 Membership was required by all who wished to use the slope for recreational skiing with a Gold membership including free skiing costing £100 (family) £60 (adult) £30 (junior). By 1999 there were 189 members and the club had a bank balance of £29.000. Family membership was increased to £120 per annum.



Volunteer DIY tiling the kitchen

2000 In the mid 90's the angle of the slope was not as it is now. The Dendix bristle matting had a steep section at the top, a shallow section in the middle and then a drop off into a steep section at the bottom. Another issue was the run out area at the bottom which was built on a wooden platform that involved high maintenance each summer. The bottom area was too steep to teach beginners properly and also if anyone doing exercises was a little out of control when they arrived at the bottom section there was no way they would ever regain it.

The senior instructors developed a vision for a slope that would be good for teaching and also provide a challenge for more advanced skiers. It was realised that this would require a major change to the profile of the slope and that this was well out of the club's usual DIY approach.

It was recognised that major funding would be required and David Dick started talks with Sport England and Mike Keating of MK Enterprises to look at likely costs and funding. A small group of members got together in order to see what could be achieved and what was involved in bidding for funds. To limit liability for anyone on the committee the club became North Staffs Ski Club Ltd in 2001 registered at Companies House. The licence issued by the council was changed to a 25 year lease to include part of the building and the ski slope.

The club made a bid for about £73k towards a £150k project, the balance coming from club funds. The work took place from July to October 2004, a particularly rainy summer, and the new slope reopened in November.

So what did we get for the money and was it worthwhile?



The new slope profile gave a teaching area that has a consistent gradient from top to bottom and also we had a new, much safer surface of Playgrass with a full misting system. Acts of vandalism occurring in the previous couple of years had cost the club dearly so it was decided to erect the anti vandal fencing using loans from members of the club.

The result over the following 10 years is that membership has risen from about 350 before the change to about 900 now, with a major reduction in injuries.

The major increase in lessons and membership income has meant that we have squirreled away enough money to develop the slope once again to cater for the future so, a big thank you to all our members and users over the years.

Throughout its history the club also organised social events such as walks, bike rides, BBQ's, and more.



Junior members enjoying an exchange visit with Stanley Pool Sailing Club



We'll get to the top even if it kills us!



Fancy dress competition Club Holiday Valmeinier



Members putting on a display at Trentham Gardens



Les Menuires Club Holiday 2013

2010 - Success continued. In 2011 the club gained Snowsport England CLUBMARK Accreditation until 2015 having met high quality standards in: The playing programme; Duty of Care and Safeguarding and protecting children and young people; Knowing your club and it's community; Club management.



At a committee meeting in 2011 it was recognised that the club was financially very healthy with an embarrassment of riches in the coffers. It was decided to apply for extra land from the council . We couldn't go up or down so we had to try to go out sideways effectively doubling the size of the slope.

It was also recognised that the majority of the members of the committee were no longer spring chickens and the club needed to do something to encourage younger more energetic people to become involved. It was noted that the club lost families as their children became disinterested in the 84 metre rather boring white carpet. After a great deal of negotiating with the council planning permission was given to extend the leased area of land. Decisions were made to provide a Snowpark with jumps and rails for the young freestyle skiers and variety of terrain for those who do not wish to be so adventurous but would benefit from interesting features. Could the club afford such an ambitious project? Not entirely but the National Westminster Bank thinks it is a sound financial organisation and have provided a loan to make up the deficit



Work is underway to create a ski slope not exactly as the picture displayed but it will provide two areas for skiing with a new button lift between the two areas being installed from 21st July. It is hoped to finish the improvements in time to open in September. There will be a celebration event at the club to mark our 40th anniversary and the opening of our new slope. Look out for details in the August Newsletter.

So where is the club today on this our 40th year of existence as a ski club. There is no doubt the club has come a very long way from the humble beginnings in 1974. The club can boast that it has 30 qualified Instructors at varying levels from 1 to 4 coach. This year we will see the opening of the only dedicated fun park on an artificial surface. It has only been possible through many people over the 40 years working very hard to keep the club running. The club should feel very proud of what has been achieved.

DON'T FORGET FOLKS

THE SLOPE MIGHT BE CLOSED FOR SKIING BUT THIS
SUMMER YOUR CLUB NEEDS YOU MORE THAN EVER
BEFORE !

Every Wednesday night from 7pm and other times as
necessary - 1st June until 1st September



This year there is a greater need for volunteers to help with jobs. There are lots of jobs which need doing. You don't have to have specific skills as there are many uncomplicated jobs which need just a willing pair of hands.

At the same time there are jobs which do need specific skills where your expertise would be valued. The more people the better then we can all enjoy the summer and have a club which runs smoothly next season. Even if you can only manage one 2 hour session it is better than nothing. See over for the kinds of jobs needing to be done.

If you can offer any skills or labour at any time please come down to the club on Wednesday evenings or email ann.loton@ntlworld.com

Many thanks for those who have been cleaning boots, servicing skis and working on the slope since the club closed.



Find us on:
facebook®

Check out our page Kidsgrove Ski Centre
for the latest news about what is
happening at the slope.



**Advanced notice - put it on your calendar
Friday 5th December**



To celebrate the clubs 40th anniversary we are arranging a Christmas Meal and Disco at The Rifleman Inn, Acres Nook, Kidsgrove. Numbers are limited to 45 and some are already taken. If you would like to express your interest to attend please email ann.loton@ntlworld.com or leave a message for Ann Loton at the ski club.