



The Kootenay Mountaineer

The newsletter for people with year-round pursuits.

Spring Equinox 2017

Request from the Editor

Just a niggling little request...

When you submit a trip report it would be good to have any photos that you include sent to me in their full camera resolution. It is nice to have a Word document with a proposed layout and captions on images, but Word (or any other software) seems to think that it's a good idea to reduce the size of the document, especially when it gets sent via email. Full resolution gives me a lot of leeway when cropping, colour adjusting, and sharpening. Thanks.

Message from the Social Director

Remember to mark your calendars for the Spring Social being held Friday May 26, 2017 at the Taghum Hall. This year's event will include a gear swap in addition to potluck appetizers. Any gear can be bought/sold as long as it is good condition. More details to follow next month.

All those in attendance will have *an opportunity to win one of two \$100 gift certificates* to Roam or Valhalla Pure. The draw will conclude the evening and the winner must be present to claim the prize. See you there!

Laurie Helyer

Contents

Request from the Editor	1
Message from the Social Director	1
Christmas on the Island of Kalymnos.....	2
Kokanee Ski Week 2017.....	6
Trip Reports.....	8
The Turkey Burner.....	8
Blueberry-Paulson XC Ski.....	8
Lepsoe Cabin Snowshoe.....	9
CBC Tower (Almost)	9
Swans.....	10
Backcountry Ski to Mt. Crowe.....	11
White Queen.....	12
Lepsoe Snowshoe	14
View-Mosquito-Chimo Cabin Tour	14
Mt. Neptune	15
Mount Kirkup Ski Tour	17
Windy Ridge	17
Lightning Ridge.....	18

Article submission guidelines:

Plain text is great. No need for PDF or Microsoft Word files. Simply cut and paste your text into an email to

newsletter@kootenarymountaineeringclub.ca.

Attach your full resolution photos to the email. Lots of photos, please.

Publication dates according to the solar seasons

Christmas On The Island Of Kalymnos, Greece

Ken Holmes.

Rita and I went to the Greek island of Kalymnos for a few weeks over Christmas and New Year to visit our son and his family who are wintering there as a break in their year-long bike trip in Europe.

Kalymnos is a very small, hilly and rocky island in the Aegean Sea at the east end of the Mediterranean and located only a few km from Bodrum in Turkey. It is only about 21 km long and about 110 square km with a population of about 16000.



Kalymnos coastline with climbs on all the crags in sight

Its main industry used to be sponge diving, but since its demise the main ‘industry’ has been tourism based on sport rock climbing which started in about 1995. The municipality collaborated with local and foreign climbers to develop and maintain bolted sport climbs and it is now a rock climbing “mecca” with over 3000 climbs described in a detailed guidebook.

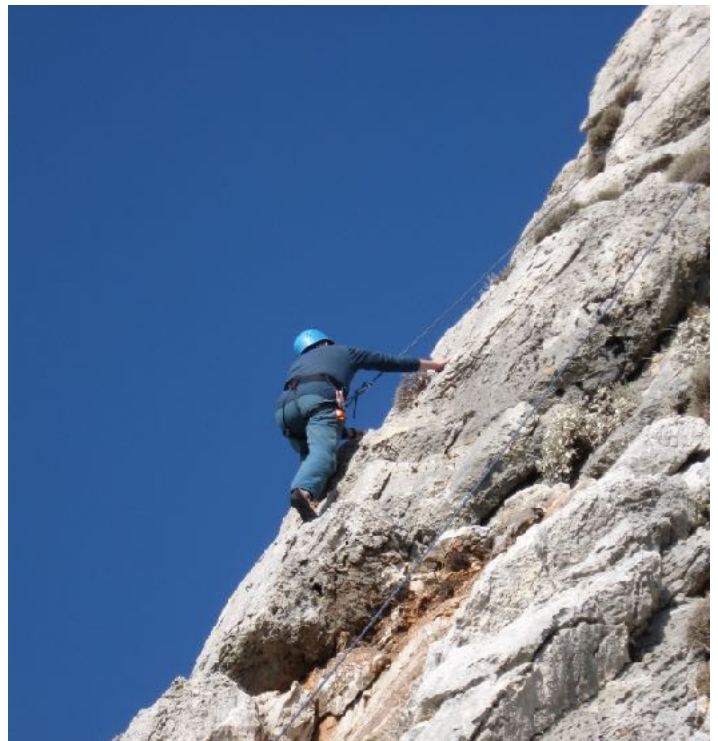


Excellent Kalymnos guidebooks and maps

The rock is limestone with a great variety of rock with walls, slabs, pockets, overhanging cave roofs and stalactites or ‘tufas’. A vast majority of the climbs are single pitch up to 35 or 40 metres in length but with a majority in the 20m to 30m range. The maximum length is dictated by rope available and at least a 60m rope but preferably an 80m rope is required and many quickdraws.



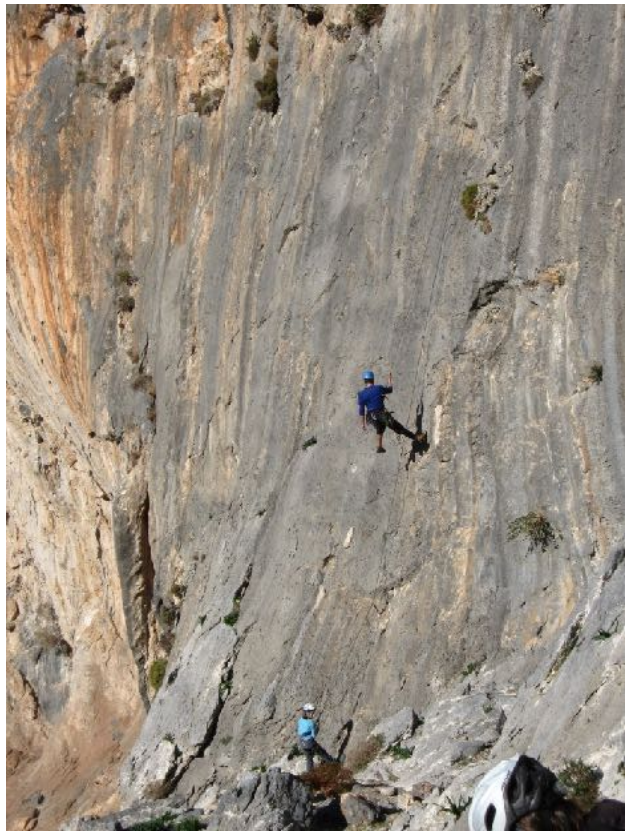
12 year old Lily climbing in style (and shorts)



Me !



Incredible rock formations



Sylvie lowering her dad



14 year old Sylvie belaying her dad, Andrew



"Tufa" climbing

The guidebook lists about 66 climbing “sectors” each often have several crags. I managed to climb at about 9 of these areas despite the unseasonably cold weather (Greece was having its coldest winter in 45 years!). Approaches are usually short hikes but often with stunning scenery.

My joke to folks before I left was “what is the definition of an optimist a 78 year-old guy who gets his rock climbing shoes re-soled” (thanks to a great job by Devito in Nelson).

It was a great experience to rock climb with three generations and seeing the skills of my two granddaughters in climbing and belaying never ceased to impress me. I was not used to the sport climbing “norm” of being lowered from the top of the route and it took a few climbs to become comfortable with this, but with modern belaying gear (Petzl Grigri) even my 12 and 14 year old granddaughters could belay and lower me safely. Sport climbing gear even includes prismatic spectacles which allow you to watch the climber above you without having to tilt your head back.



Wearing prismatic spectacles whilst belaying to avoid neck strain looking up

There are also a number of really nice hikes both coastal and inland. The highest point is about 690 m above sea level. The interior resembles Arizona but the drystone walls are reminiscent of the Yorkshire moors. A guidebook describes a 100 km multiday hike which I’m sure would be very enjoyable as there is a lot of history to take in along the route. Lovingly maintained old churches and monasteries abound everywhere even in small caves, and there are castles and ruins going way back to ancient Roman and Greek times.



Nice coastal hiking!



Church built into the rock



Some of the many religious pictures in the churches

There is even one “via ferrata” which does a rising traverse up one of the crags. This was my first experience of doing a climb equipped with a fixed steel cable along which you slide two slings attached to your harness for protection. It was a lot of fun and even had a few steel rungs bolted in a wall where there were no natural footholds. The slings should really be specially designed “dynamic” slings but we made do with nylon tape slings.



Sylvie on via ferrata steel rungs



Sylvie and I on the via ferrata

Kalymnos is a great place to go for a climbing and hiking vacation. We were there in the off-season so it was very quiet with the many restaurants, tavernas, bars and hotels closed for the season. I'm sure it must be a zoo in the height of the climbing season so probably the best time is at the very beginning or end of the season after many people have left but with the tourist facilities still operating.

It was a beautiful place to visit and great family vacation for us!

KMC KOKANEE SKI WEEK - 2017

Ken Holmes

WoW! What a Week of Wild, Wacky, Winter Weather! We had 150 centimetres of snow during the week. Temperatures varied from minus 23 degrees C to about zero. Some days we had high winds and others were calm and sunny. So the whole week was a crazy mixture of weather and conditions. Climate change ... Eh!

Trail breaking was sometimes brutal with such big dumps of snow. On the other hand we had lots of face-shots in the powder to more than make up for this. Although after a dump of snow on a warmer day the downhill ski was as much work as the uphill!



Face shot supreme! (Picture by Nigel Tuffrey)

We were blessed with a beautiful sunny day on the Tuesday when the powder skiing was superb in Grizzly Trees.



Great tracks in Grizzly Trees (Picture by Peter Jordan)

The next day was not quite as sunny but good enough to entice many of us to try to get up to the glacier. Eight of us made it to a high point at the Giants Kneecap. The ski down the glacier and by the side of the Battleship then down Grizzly bowl was a great run in fantastic snow all the way. Those who didn't make it to the glacier enjoyed great powder skiing in Grizzly trees.



Going back for more in Grizzly trees (Picture by Peter Jordan)



En-Route to the glacier

Areas skied in the week included Beaujolais, Simple Pleasures, Grizzly trees, Griffin Creek, Tanal trees, Generator, Smugglers, Slocan Chief trees and the Glacier.



Skiing down besides the Battleship

We had great food throughout the week and I'm always amazed at the variety of meals even though no attempt is made to coordinate the menu to avoid duplications. Dinners included Butter chicken and rice, Penne all' Arrabiata, Veggie stew, Lasagna, Chili and cornbread, Beef stew and Shepherds pie all accompanied by tasty appetisers and delicious deserts.

For me, the highlight was getting to spend the week ski touring with my grandson Adam who thoroughly enjoyed his first week ever of ski touring out of a cabin and his first helicopter ride.



The group who enjoyed a great week of skiing, good food and friendship included Diane Paolini, Andrea Vowell, Sue Wrigley, Peter Oostlander, Gene Van Dyck, Peter Jordan, Llewellyn Mathews, Zuzana Zach, Nigel Tuffrey, Elena Fulgosi, Chris Chart, Birgit Chart, Eric Norton, Adam Derosa and Ken Holmes

The Turkey Burner

Dec 26, 2016

An outing that could be best described as, "great skiing, limited visibility". The original location was scheduled for Plewman Basin, but the lack of snow below 1700 m resulted in the destination being changed to Kootenay Pass.

By 0845, in a cloud, we were all at the Parking Lot and by 0900 we were on our way to the high point of Cornice Ridge. We de-skinned at the high point and skied north to the Buzz's Ridge/Cornice Ridge col. From this col, in flat light, we skied west in very nice snow down to about 1850 m. The snow was so good, we did 2 more runs in this basin before heading back. On our return, we ascended about half way up the north side of Cornice Ridge, de skinned and skied east into Summit Creek. We skinned up for the last time to gain the eastern end of Cornice Ridge for a final delightful ski down to Bridal Lake reaching the cars shortly after 1500 hrs.

Did we burn the turkey? Using a complex formula based on gender, hours of activity, type of physical activity (low intensity & long duration) and the weight of those involved the calculation came out to about 8500 calories being burned. This calculation did not include an allowance for the cold temperature or basal metabolism. Roasted turkey meat is about 2 calories / gram, so we collectively burned the equivalent of a 4.2 kilo (say 9 pounds) turkey, dressing not included.

The smiling, powder turning, chocolate eating turkey burners were; Scot & Paul Allen, Erin Campbell, Trevor Dinn, Tennille St. John and Fred Thiessen.

Fred Thiessen

Blueberry Paulson XC Ski

Dec. 27, 2016

The Kootenay skies had just released a terrific dump of at least 25 cm of beautiful powder up at the Paulson ski trails, even at the low elevation Viking cabin. Seven of us met, including a non KMC member Dan Shames, my brother from Washington DC area where this kind of skiing just doesn't happen, at the Viking cabin. We were ready to ski our hearts out.

The Castlegar Nordic Ski volunteer fee taker gave us a break, since absolutely no tracking or packing had even

begun, by not charging us at all. The powder was terrific, not too heavy, and breaking trail was a lot of fun. We saw only one other group between Viking and the Ben Shaw cabin.

Once rested, warmed, nourished, we headed out with a plan to ascend the Pine trail, which had also not been tracked except by another skier. On reaching a summit, marked by the intersection of Pine and Seal Creek road, we turned right to join onto the Old Growth trail for a terrific series of short climbs and descents, with the climax descent down Sunshine. Only two of us fell on that one.

On reaching the Ben Shaw trail, three headed back to Viking cabin, while 4 of us decided to re-ascend Pine, and try our hand at heading down (left turn) Seal Creek road. It turned out that although Seal creek to the left is rated black, we had to work hard to get down it, as the snow was knee deep. Ross loves to bushwhack, so he took the lead breaking trail, then I broke trail for a few minutes, but Dave finished off the descent in the lead, all of us sweating at the bottom where Seal Creek joins Ben Shaw, which by this time, was packed but not track set.

We headed to Viking cabin, where we arrived just in time to connect with our other three, feeling invigorated and happy.



We were Sess Sakamoto, Mary Prothro, Ross Bates, Dave Cunningham, Brandon Hughes, P'nina and Dan Shames.

P'Nina Shames

Lepsoe Cabin Snowshoe Trip

Sunday, January 22

With about 6" of beautiful fresh snow overnight it was shaping up to be a gorgeous snowshoe into the Lepsoe cabin. We arrived at the Strawberry Pass parking lot to find it unplowed and a semi truck parked across the majority of the parking lot and in doing so blocking most parking. As trip participants arrived we found parking and I tried to get the semi truck driver to move unsuccessfully.

With all the trip participants signed in, packs and snowshoes on it was time to hit the trail. This is when I discovered that not only had the semi driver buggered up the parking he had also thrown me off my routine. And as those who know me would attest I'm all about routine. When I went to get my pack I could see it on the front seat of my truck all warm and inaccessible behind the locked door, with my keys in it. Luckily I had my snowshoes on and poles out so I turned to the group and said "the trip must go on"! When I explained what had happened there was offers of food, tea and even a pair of gloves, perfect!

Our route up was via the seven summits trail and only one skier had broken trail before us that morning. The conditions were perfect for snowshoeing with all the fresh snow. We stopped lots to enjoy the views and take some photos along the way. It was a lovely morning to enjoy the views that were just that much better with the fresh snow on the trees and no pack on my back. On the way up we went over to the Sun Spot cabin but didn't go in.

Once we got close to the Lepsoe cabin I hurried my pace to get up to it and get the fire started for all to enjoy. I thought this was the least I could do if others were willing to share some lunch with me. We all enjoyed a leisurely lunch with lots of sharing of good food.

After a group photo we descended via the same route. Some enjoyed getting off the main trail here and there to romp around in the deep fun snow. A side trip into the Eagle's Nest was our last stop to enjoy the view before heading out to our cars. Luckily I had found cell reception along the way and had keys delivered while we were enjoying the trip.

As a trip leader I can highly recommend locking your pack in the car as you get to cream the lunches and hiking without your backpack is quite liberating.



We were Simon Lindley, Goody Niosi, P'nina Shames, Wayne Hohn, Cindy Shlakoff, Shelley Richards, Richard Epton, Val Utgaren and Dan Derby (trip leader/reporter, not in photo)

CBC Tower (almost)

February 1

By Goody Niosi

Ben Aubin had posted a most intriguing and perhaps even challenging snowshoe trip: the CBC Tower above Nelson.

Excellent! I'd been eying the tower since I'd moved to the area in the fall. I'd hiked to Pulpit Rock and the Flagpole. A couple of Nelson friends had joined me for a push to the CBC tower one day but fifteen minutes after fighting our way through man-eating shrubs that also had a nasty habit of whacking us in the face with thorny pincer-like claws disguised as branches, we turned back.

Finally – my chance to reach the tower!



The first challenge was the hike to Pulpit Rock with mini-spikes on our feet. Even so, the ice proved challenging in several places. The terrain improved considerably as we made our way up to the flagpole where we donned our snowshoes. Onward!

And upward.

Who knew it was so upward? Have you looked at the CBC tower from the ground? Looks like a pretty straightforward stroll along a fairly flat ridge, doesn't it?

Apparently looks can be deceiving and the hike was pretty much straight up. The snow was as slippery as powdered icing sugar and as we took turns breaking trail, it was often a case of two giant steps up, one slippery-slide down. Still, we persevered, finding our way with no broken trail – not even a faint hint.

Alas, we called it after about four hours after setting out when we arrived at Cherry Street Station – a fine destination in its own right, but not the CBC Tower. We saw it – there it was.

But we estimated it would take another hour to reach it through the ever deepening snow.



Needless to say, we got back to the flagpole in record time, doing a fair bit of ersatz telemark skiing and, my favourite – bum sliding. It was (ahem) a slippery slope. From Pulpit Rock to the trailhead was, as expected, our most challenging section with more than one of us doing a creditable imitation of Fred Astaire at this most creative.

A wonderful trip – but darnitall, looking back up at the tower from town, I could swear it's just a stroll from the flagpole.

Swans

February 12



On Slocan Rail Trail



Sess Sakamoto, Gayle Buckner, Helen Foulger, Ross Bates, Marilyn Miller (leader), Katie Weir, Dawn Powell, Alan McCuaig, Hamish Mutch, Chris Cowan

Back Country Ski to Mt Crowe

February 22

Valley rain and mountain snow on Monday, followed by a cold front and clearing skies, made for stellar ski conditions for our Mt Crowe trip Wednesday.



Surprisingly, given the excellent winter weather only 3 people signed up, one of whom couldn't get the day off work and sadly had to drop out. We were greeted by sunny skies and sparkling powder snow as we set off through the trees from the Nancy Green Summit parking lot. Temperature about minus 6, no wind at all. A fresh skin track made for easy travel through the White Owl Pass when we left the FORR trails, and we decided to follow the trail, which didn't quite go the way of my planned route, but eventually took us to the North shoulder of Crowe. At this point we parted company with whomever set the trail that morning... it seems they had other things on their mind than Crowe.



We hoofed it up the Big Red Cats Cat track up the remaining distance to the summit.



Lack of wind and sun made for a nice lunch on the summit, despite the cold temperatures, about minus 10 by this time.

Then it was time for a lovely descent through the virgin untracked powder on the glades west of the summit.

Surprisingly, we managed to come out right at the Crowe's Nest Cabin, even though I didn't have a way point for it. You don't really want to end up below the cabin even though it's tempting, because you will just have to climb back up again to find a good descent route. I did have a way point for our exit to the clearcut above the Mosquito cabin, and after some more glade skiing and one or two arguments with errant trees, we came out at the appropriate spot....

Then the Kootenay slalom down to the trail and below. Everyone agreed that was so much fun we had to do at least some of it again. This time we skinned up to the site of the old “Lost” Cabin. Andre, who had laboured up with some pretty heavy skis and boots, displayed some fine skiing on the way down, frequently catching a few feet of air. Erin also made short work and elegant turns doing the “Kootenay Slalom” through the trees on the cutblock which get bigger every year. My two new young friends had to wait a couple of minutes for me but didn’t seem to mind that. We descended to the Mosquito Luxury cabin for a short break, and were down at the road in another half hour or so.

We got back to Castlegar around 5 PM and we all agreed it had been a picture perfect day.

*Participants. Erin Campbell, Andre Schwartz (guest),
Chris Cowan (co-ordinator)*

White Queen

February 22

By Goody Niosi

As we neared the end of our day snowshoeing to the top of White Queen, our group of nine decided pretty much unanimously, that P’nina has an inside line to the weather gods.



She and Ben had been up carving out a track a few days previously. She’d informed us that we’d have to get an early start because the snow was pretty heavy. We expected the worst: possibly rain and certainly heavy, slushy chunks of ice sticking to the bottoms of our “shoes.”

Instead, we had bluebird skies with the occasional cloud drifting by to give our photos a nice sparkle. The

rain on lower levels in the past couple of days and created a perfect dusting of powder at our elevations and the track set by Ben and P’nina earlier was a fine switchback route that led us seamlessly to the top.



Now – about the top: approaching the summit from the north side was a new experience that inspired me to suggest an alternate name for the mountain: “Queen of False Summits.” In fact, a group of skiers we met at the top gaped at us when they saw our direction of approach. “You came from the lower parking area!?” Clearly, they saw a good deal of merit in lopping off a couple of hundred metres ascent by parking at the actual lodge.



No matter – I don’t think any of us would have missed a single step on that glorious day with trees looking like magical beings dropped out of a Hans Christina Anderson fairy tale.







After lunch at the top where we admired the 360-degree views, Ben had the brilliant idea of taking a different route back that would take us in the direction of Mount Beattie but skirt the “bumps” and take us around the flank of the mountain. Of course there was no track. The snow was deep. The slope was steep. You know where I’m going with this, right?



Can you say slipping, sliding and, at one memorable point, bum skiing with enough shrieking going on to cause a minor avalanche? (Oops – maybe not such a good idea!)

Fun? You bet! A one hundred per cent perfect day, in fact.

Lepsoe Snowshoe

February 24

Nine members came out to snowshoe to the Lepsoe Basin Cabin on Friday, Feb. 24/17. There was a good trail with soft snow as we followed the Seven Summits Trail from Strawberry Pass parking lot, past the new Sunspot cabin (shown in the picture) and up to the Lepsoe Basin Cabin. Travel time was 2 hours, elevation gain 300 metres, distance 4 km. each way. Lunch was in the cabin, cheese sandwiches cooked on the stove for many. We came down via the old road below Sunspot cabin. At the gravel pit, we met the JL Crowe Outdoor Rec class building igloos, a very interesting process.



We were, Jill Watson, Al and Pat Sheppard, Pat Bruce, Don Harasym, Reneta Zaal (took this photo), Tina Baldwin, Janis Gilbert and coordinator, Diane Paolini.

View-Mosquito-Chimo Cabin Tour

February 25

Four of us met on a cold and clear morning to tour the View, Mosquito and Chimo Cabins. There was a trace of new powder that made for perfect ski conditions. The route was a bit of a figure 8 taking the low road access to the View cabin. This is a beautiful trail with a new route through the trees. There were rabbit tracks everywhere in the new snow. Along the way we started to see lynx tracks as well. The lynx had used the trail as his path darting off here and there. While we didn’t see the lynx it was interesting to follow his tracks. With the sun at our backs it was a lot warmer than anticipated. We were the first to arrive at the View and it was so nice out that we left the door open while we lit the fire, had a snack and some laughs. It was during this conversation about organic food and ethical meats that

we determined why Chris likes grass fed meat so much – “for medicinal purposes”.



Chris Cowan, Ross Bates & Dan Derby Photo by Cindy Kozk-Campbell

On route to the Mosquito cabin the lynx tracks were on the trail again. We stopped a couple times along the way to talk about alpine touring and some lines that were calling to be skied with such perfect conditions. The Mosquito was busy with families and dogs. We all enjoyed these two beautiful Bernese Mountain dogs they were so gentle and fun.



Photo by Dan Derby

From the Mosquito cabin we skied down past the Red Dog to the Chimo. Arriving at the Chimo cabin to find a group that was just finishing off the last of their libations, sharing some brownies with us before heading out. From the front porch of the Chimo we could see both the Sunspot and Lepsoe cabins and the snow starting to fall a little higher up.

This 14 km route has a nice mix of skiing on old roads and through trees. Light touring gear is best for this trip as Ross would attest after fighting his cross country

The Kootenay Mountaineer

gear down a few of the hills. Our trip was about 5-1/2 hours with lots of leisurely breaks.

Trip participants were Chris Cowan, Ross Bates, Cindy Kozk-Campbell and Dan Derby (trip leader/reporter).

Mount Neptune

March 1

By Goody Niosi

“You’re going where? To Mount Neptune? You’ll never make it!”

With that statement, the skiers at the trailhead at Strawberry Pass threw down the gauntlet. Seven intrepid (Naive? Addled?) KMC snowshoers took it up and set off, determined to arrive at the top, no matter what the weather gods chose to throw at them.



Of course, it must be admitted that at one point, which must have been partway up what was surely a 90-degree slope, a couple of us wondered what our turnaround time would be. Having no idea where Mount Neptune actually was, although we assumed it was somewhere far above the clouds, we wanted to make sure that brave leader Ben Aubin had factored lunch in his plans.

We set off at nine and headed up. An hour later we continued to head up. Mount Crowe was straight ahead. We continued up and then, sadly, Ben informed us we would have to go down, only to continue back up. Every hiker’s favourite challenge: lose a ton of elevation just gained in order to regain it and then add even more. (NOT!)

As P’nina said on the push to the top, “This is the longest, steepest thing I have ever done.” It was also one of the windiest. Sure, we were almost blown off the top but looking at the bright side, the gales pushed the clouds away and we had magnificent, heart-stopping 360-degree views. For closer-in scenics, we had the magnificence of trees covered in thick white

ice and snow, transforming them into fairy-tale monsters.



And then the fun began: down through amazing powder. Oh sure, there were a few tumbles but generally, we showed amazing skill in turning our snowshoes into touring skis.

Brilliant Ben (a new nickname?) brought us to tiny Bear Hollow cabin where he lit a fire and squeezed us in for a late much-deserved lunch.

After lunch, we had to do what we'd been dreading – go back up. Yes, like most good full-day hikes, this one was predictably uphill in both directions. And did I mention that Ben's estimate for elevation gain at nearly 700 metres was calculated from trailhead to top? And that he didn't mention the uphill grind on the way back?



At the end of our almost-seven hour trek he mentioned posting another full-day snowshoe soon. The fact that we were deliriously happy about it is testimony to the madness of hikers and snowshoers. Aches, pains and uphill grunts? Heck sure – bring 'em on!



MOUNT KIRKUP SKI TOUR

March 4

We were fortunate to have a sunny day for the trip up Mount Kirkup in the Rossland range. We climbed up the north side to the summit on variable snow... some powder, some wind packed, some wind crust. It's about a 2100 foot climb which we did in about two hours.



Approaching the summit of Mt Kirkup

On our ascent, the rate at which clouds were moving suggested that it would be windy on the summit. We were pleasantly surprised when we arrived to no wind.



On the summit of Mt Kirkup

After a short break we de-skinned and skied down the south side with the snow improving to decent powder about 900 feet down where we stopped to have lunch in the sunshine.



Skiing down the south side of Mt Kirkup

After lunch we punched a track back to the summit and skied back down the North slopes to the cars. It turned out to be an excellent trip in great company. Ten people signed up for the trip but two dropped out on Friday evening too late for the coordinator to pass their spots to others.

We were Peter Oostlander, Frank Fodor, Gene van Dyck, Diane Paolini, Dave Grant, Terry Simpson, Adam Derosa and Ken Holmes (Coordinator)

(Photos by Peter Oostlander)

Windy Ridge Ski Tour

March 5



Jocelyne Martin, Larry Doell, Llewellyn Mathews and Tom Braumandl had a pleasant day on Sunday March 5. We left the truck at the chain up area on the east side of Kootenay Pass in moderate snowfall and were pleased to see an uptrack already put in, thinking we might have been in for some strenuous trail breaking with considerable snow in the previous few days.

To our chagrin the up track didn't turn out to be going our way after about 200, but the deep trail breaking I had envisaged didn't materialize as we climbed on suncrust or boot top deep powder and tried to keep up with Larry's delightful trail-breaking. We were filled with fear and loathing in the anticipation of unskiable breakable crust caressing our faces on our descent.

Thanks to Larry's speedy trail-breaking, we were on the ridge in short order. After lunch in the sun on the ridge, we dug a pit and got an easy shear under the storm snow and decided to forgo a short run on the north aspect. Our descent on the south-facing aspect was remarkably enjoyable with just the occasional tree being snagged due to the crust. The tree skiing was so enjoyable I had to vocalize my delight whilst descending. Larry was as speedy on the descent as on the up track, but graciously waited for the rest of us at the bottom of the run.

Lightening Ridge

March 16

Goody Niosi

Eight of us tackled Lightning Ridge (or maybe Ripple Ridge) on March 16 – me and seven men or, as we



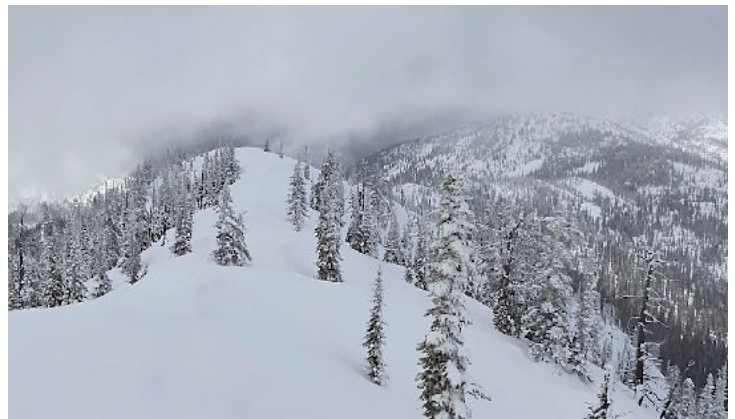
chose to put it, Snow White and the Seven Dweebs. Ben Aubin, our glorious leader, had a plan. He'd emailed the plan to all of us. Most complained they hadn't been able to open the attachment, the rest of us (me) noted that we didn't know there would be a test "How much elevation gain did I promise?" Ben asked. Was "Too much" the correct answer?

We strapped on our snowshoes and hit the trail at 9 a.m., surging up the road until veering right to the ridge. Weather – well we had some: there was snow



going up, then clearing skies, then clouds, a dash of sun and gusty winds. Excellent variety! Oh yes – hail later in the day, which is really just hard snow that hurts – otherwise known in our little group as "snouch."

As a newcomer to the area, I'd have to say that Lightning Ridge (or Ripple Ridge) is one of those perfect treks: a wide ridge with 360 views the entire way and lots of ups and downs. Yes, a perfect trek always involves going uphill both ways, right? Right? In our case it also involved Ben keeping us perfectly on track, even though I was given to a moment of doubt when he briefly held his map upside-down, which may account for the fact that a few of us thought we were on Lightning Ridge reaching Ripple Mountain at the top. Others (Ben) said it was Ripple Ridge topping out at Lightning Strike.



We arrived at the top – Ripple Mountain (Or Lightning Strike) - at 11.30 for a quick snack before heading down to Lightning Strike Cabin. At least I think it was Lightning Strike. The sign outside said "Ripple Ridge Cabin" as opposed to the indoor sign. Confusing? Heck no. Take your pick – just like the names of the ridges and mountains.

As for the elevation gain: it was about 700 metres to the top, as promised. What was not promised, of

course, was the elevation we climbed going back.
Hmmm.



In the cabin, we built a roaring fire, had a lovely lunch and headed back out. Ben and David decided on a side trip up Baldy Rocks while the rest of us fought our way through the aforementioned snouch to the car park.

As always, Ben put together a sensational trip. What's more, the Dweebs tended to behave themselves – as least, they did as well as could be expected.

Ben says there will be a test (place names?) before the next trip and answering the quiz correctly will be a pre-requisite.

