

Snow Crazy

115 years of British Ski History



Arnie Wilson

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Preface



'Man is perverse', wrote Arnold Lunn in 1920.

He leaves the green valleys with delight, and wanders among the glaciers with joy, only to discover that he is haunted among the snows by the beauty that he has deserted, only to long for the welcome of meadows and streams and flowers and trees scented with the promise of May. A few days later, and he will be looking from those same meadows at the peaks of old adventure, and if three or four days of tantalising fair weather follow, he will scarcely find strength to resist their upward call.

Plagiarism, so the joke goes, is appropriating another author's work – but if you steal the works of more than one author it's called research. In which case, I have done an awful lot of research – mainly, as it happens, into one author's work: Sir Arnold Lunn. But there have been many others, so fortunately I can glory in the title of researcher rather than robber. For an entire year, aided occasionally by young helpers – for whom the skiing annals of yesteryear must seem even more surreal than they do to me – I found myself breathlessly tiptoeing through a remarkable treasure trove of the skiing world, engrossing myself in the priceless records of the Ski Club of Great Britain, which celebrated its centenary in May 2003. These records comprise for the most part the *British Ski Year Book* and *Ski Notes and Queries* – the club's two principal publications, which eventually made way for a ski magazine, *Ski survey*; now *Ski+board* which I was fortunate enough to edit for 13 years.

The anecdotes I was lucky enough to 'rediscover' have been a revelation. Partly because of the times in which they were written – during the 'golden age' of skiing before the First World War, the 'silver age' between the First and Second World Wars, and a 'gothic age' thrown in for good measure. Don't ask me to recite the dates of these ages. They are somewhat arbitrary and loosely defined, but Arnold Lunn gave them substance, at least in his mind and writings. These