

Report on Club activities, AGM 2012

(an outline which was NOT read verbatim.)

Like last year, it is a pleasure to remind members of our club activities in 2011 and January 2012. As a matter of fact this point of the agenda is there in preparation of an annual report to the Staff associations in VIC, which need to know if clubs are still active, since many that were created a long time ago have since died away. This is no problem with our club, as you all know, ours is still very active.

I would like to share with you now a bit of the excitement and the pleasure of reviewing the reports of the activities after some time of digestion. The aim of my intervention is, as last year, not to provide too many statistics, but to remind us all of the rewarding personal experiences we had, with a view to creating interest to join again in 2012 in as many activities as your energy, time, financial considerations, etc., will permit.

Like last year I will by necessity focus on a few highlights and not name all individual hikes, bicycle rides, etc., or exact statistics, in my presentation. I would like to apologize in advance if I will not mention by name your favourite hike or other activity, since there are so many that this is easily possible.

First, most importantly, our club is not only alive, it has been up and running, or at least for some of us hiking at a moderate pace, for more than 40 years. In June 2011 we celebrated the 40 year anniversary of our club, in the Reichraminger Hintergebirge, ably organized by Christine Colella (midwife and godmother of the club who is missing for the first time in 40 years this AGM). That anniversary celebration included interesting hikes and a slide-show highlighting the developments during the last 40 years. It was great that some old presidents and vice-presidents, Gerard Bishoff and Yvonne Schmidt, Herta Kaschitz, Nancy Wonisch were present, and Valentina Kesperek? from Argentina, who introduced cycling to the Hiking Club back in the 1980s, and at the celebration gave us all a good example on how active some can be when reaching 80. It was a wonderful weekend, we were filled with awe about the previous achievements of the club and we all hope that the club will continue for many years to come in a successful way.

Travelling abroad, seeing other countries and combining this with hiking: that has again been possible last year like in previous years, thanks to the initiatives of Tomas (Umbria, Trentiner Dolomites, Ligurian Coast), and Paul Hesp (Finland), and also Frits hovering between Slovenia and Carinthia. Most of them were a bit challenging, but more important than that was the opportunity to see new landscapes and enjoy the company of friends - all of us who had the opportunity to join any of them, feel very privileged.

For those who have not had the opportunity yet, do not despair, but think of the future: there will be activities outside of Austria also in 2012: Tomas will lead us again to so far unknown areas in Italy (unknown for the hiking club) and the Check Republic, Paul will organize a hiking trip in Norway, and you will hear about some of these plans later in the evening.

Now, as you all know, in 2011 challenging outdoor activities within Austria were also offered and led by some of our hike leaders, in particular by Frits, Tomas and by Christine (Karawanken, Karwendel, Rax Reistalersteig and Weichtalklamm). I even believe that Frits in 2011 has finally been able to reach the summit of Hochschwab which for some strange reasons he could not achieve in the past.

Fortunately for members like me who want to go to the mountains without much risk yet do some real hiking, there were many activities where medium stamina, strength and only a bit of surefootedness were required: for example, snow shoeing was possible at different levels in Maria Waldrast and Tauplitz, we had longer weekends in Carinthia (Hochrindl and Saualpe), we could go to Stuhleck and Schneealpe, etc.....

Valentina would have been delighted to know that cycling has been particularly popular in 2011, as many rewarding tours were offered. Frank Potter led a few challenging tours before he left us in August, and he learned us to be better bikers and hikers; he led several challenging tours, for example to Melk and more. Paul did a bit of cycling in Finland (although less than expected), Christine Collela led a few interesting rides (Narzissenfest in the Styrian Salzkammergut, cycling in Czech Republic), Friedl White the Biedrmeier radweg and Norbert Plhak led a Dampfross Drahtesel – bicycle ride.

It is well documented, hiking is addictive, and as is known to you since I mentioned it already last year, among members of our club some hike destinations and hike leaders tend to be addictive. In 2011, as in previous years, we had many of these “recurrent activities” due to popular demand for them. I believe you can name them already, cross country skiing by Christine and Friedl, snowshoeing in Maria Waldrast, Kieneck spring weekend, Hochschwab and Christmas in Bratislava by Frits, Martini Gansl hikes, the Stadtumwanderung by Norbert, botanic excursions by Peter Jirak, Anninger, Hoher Lindkogel, the Flatzer Wand for which Peter Vacek is the specialist, compass and map reading by Paul, etc. Many of us may have seen that some of them are already again in the program for 2012 and we hope that most if not all of the “missing favourites” will come later in the year.

Any one day hike in the proximity of Vienna is what most hike members liked to join in 2011, as in previous years, with varying difficulty from very easy hikes to more strenuous hikes or from hikes within the city boundaries to areas that are no more that close to Vienna. For the latter one has to get up a bit early, but you are then rewarded landscapes a bit different from the Vienna woods.

Again similar to previous years, our hike leaders were able to find new interesting destinations or trails in 2011, or “unearthed” long-forgotten destinations that the club had visited last several years or even more than a decade ago (e.g., Christine’s Reistalersteig and the Weichtalklamm, the Reichraminger Hintergebirge where we had our anniversary, maybe also the Saualpe which was previously done in 2004). Thanks to that, some of us had the opportunity to go to areas or on trails they had not been before (that is true even for some Austrians, but of course in particular for the international members of the club).

Easy and short hikes, such as our evening hikes, usually followed by a Heuriger or restaurant, also continued in 2011, and were much appreciated. In this regard the cultural walks in Vienna, led by Rotraud Turancic, added a very distinct experience, thanks to her in-depth professional expertise.

Update a few statistics:

Day hikes: 51

Cross-country – 3

Snow-shoeing- 3

12 Weekend hikes (including long weekends)

2 hiking trips of at least 1 week

18 Evening and other short hikes-

12 Bicycle trips (day or longer, maybe more with biking learning exercises)-

Total: 100 With a probability approaching certainty the above figures are wrong, a bit less than in 2010

(Guenter, knee problem- no hike at all???), other cancellations

In summary, in 2011, as in previous years, there were about one hundred activities, to let us get out of our known trails in Vienna, forget about the job and similar stressful experiences, enjoy company, get to know nature, new areas inside and outside of Austria, cultural highlights such as churches, cathedrals, castles, monasteries, - and different culinary traditions; learned more about flora, fauna - and about our fellow human beings; we made new friends and had a lot of fun.

All these activities thanks to the club, and in particular, our hike-leaders, their ideas, resourcefulness and patience in the face of difficult circumstances of whatever nature.

It is good to note that there were no serious accidents that I am aware of since the last AGM in February 2011. 2011 was therefore a very successful year for the club and its members (under the leadership of Maria Hofmann.) We hope to have similar good experiences in 2012 and on behalf of the outgoing?? committee I invite you all to join as much as possible.

Query: hike leaders

At this point I ask again for more persons to volunteer leading hikes, since Friedl White and Nancy have decided to stop be hike leaders, Frank Potter has left, and we have also to think of the future – if you know someone, or you yourself consider becoming a hike leader: can be one hike only, can be easy hikes as there is great demand for easy hikes, can be on a known trail (it is always different anyway, despite of déjà vue experiences, and there are always some who could not make it the first or second time) – you can even steal ideas from some hike leaders (there is no hike attached definitely to a hike-leader) and some hike leaders are prepared to assist you in such cases. Can be your favourite area for hiking with friends or family, what you always wanted to share with us, or something you never were able to achieve in the past with your family – please come forward, try it once, **if needed we will assist**