



WAYMARK NEWS

Number #7, 5 June 2011

Edited by Colin Saunders

Note the slight rebranding as above! In this bumper issue:

- a new Waymark Holidays
- news from Peter Chapman and former leader Tom Phillips
- Martin Reid's recollection of how he joined Waymark
- Mike Brace's latest exploits on skis.

Further memories that may have escaped 'the Story so far', or any news about yourself for future updates are always welcome (submissions may be edited).

These updates are published from time to time in connection with 'The Waymark Story', which can be downloaded free at:

www.colinsaunders.org.uk/waymark_holidays.html

Colin

colin.saund@btconnect.com

Waymark Holidays lives!

Your editor's Google alert drew attention to Waymark Holidays Pvt. Ltd., which trades in New Delhi, India, under the names Waymark Adventures and Himalaya Adventure – see www.himalayaadventure.com/profile.html. 'Pvt.Ltd.' (Private Limited) is used in India and some other Commonwealth countries to indicate limited companies whose shares can only be bought and sold privately – just like the original Waymark Holidays Ltd!

Former Waymark leader Tom Phillips writes:

I have 'parked' my skiing, via ferrata and walking in the last few years, having rediscovered latent talents as a runner. For the last few years that I was walking and leading for Waymark I was very much burning the candle at both ends, and taking more unpaid leave than I could afford to cover the time needed for running and leading. Something had to give, and I felt that I needed to focus on the running while I still had the ability.

I'm one of that rare breed, a sprinter, in Masters Athletics. I'm now owner of gold medals from European and World Masters championships and currently still going strong. I am

training with the European Masters in Ghent in March 2011 in mind, and then the World Masters in Sacramento, California. I keep promising myself time off to get back to the Dolomites, where I have several unfinished projects, and it would be good to check that I can still ski. I waxed up my skating skis during the recent white stuff, but it rained all night the day before I planned to use them, so I'm waiting again.

Mind you, it's not all sweat. I've spent the last ten Christmases in or around Siena, in Tuscany. These trips are the complete antithesis to leading for Waymark – just my wife and I, out of season, in empty countryside and mostly empty towns. Just brilliant. One thing I don't miss is constantly being asked questions! On some holidays, almost everything said to you could end with a question mark: When? How? Where? How long? How far? How vegetarian? And so on. We've all been there!

Peter Chapman writes:

We were in Dobbiaco in mid February and encountered several Waymark people:

- Leaders Albert Callewaert, David Davies and Gareth Buffett in the Hotel Tschurtschenthaler.
 - Leader Nigel Shervey, twice, out and about – he was the very first Waymark leader at the Tschurtschenthaler in December 1987, following Colin's research in the previous summer.
 - Clients Mr and Mrs Newitt in the Talschlusshütte (at the end of the Fischleintal, who said they never go with Exodus now, just independently to the old Waymark centres. Their daughter Anna worked at Kvitåvatn the same year that my daughter Mary was there.
-

How I joined Waymark – by Martin Read

In 1982 I realised that I was not enjoying my London-based job and wanted to travel. Although I had been several times to Europe, I had never ventured any further, so decided to take a four-month overland trip by truck from London across Europe and Asia to Nepal. This trip had become very popular in the 1970s and was widely known as 'The Hippie Trail', though I would never have described myself as a hippie!

The whole experience was incredible and made me determined to find a new career in travel, though I knew very little about that business. I had already done a fair amount of walking in the UK, but never abroad up to this point; however, I undertook walking trips to Morocco and Greece with Exodus over the next 18 months. At the same time I was writing to different travel companies in the London area to see if they might have office vacancies, but getting no replies. Also I tried applying for a job as an overland truck driver, solely based on my experience of one trip across Asia, but as my knowledge of mechanics could be written on the proverbial postage stamp, this was really a non starter!

Early in 1985 I decided to change tack, and started approaching companies for work as an overseas walking/trekking leader, having noted several of them advertising vacancies in the outdoor magazines. I realised that my experience of walking abroad was pretty limited, so covered this up by listing all the countries that I had visited – without mentioning the fact that I hadn't actually done any walking in them!

I was surprised but delighted to soon get interviews with two companies: Sherpa Expeditions and Waymark Holidays. The Operations Director at Sherpa seemed quite impressed with my long list of countries visited, and never really queried in which areas I had walked. I was offered a month of leading almost immediately in Morocco, and later a longer spell of leading in Nepal. I couldn't believe my luck!

Soon afterwards I attended Waymark's offices in Fulham, where I first met Peter Chapman. Again I was amazed that my CV seemed to impress him, and I was quickly offered leadership of a holiday to the Greek island of Samos, departing within weeks. Talk about being thrown in at the deep end! I was given a copious bundle of walking routes, which appeared to have been cut up and pasted together in a haphazard manner (remember that this was just the dawning of PCs), and maps that seemed to have been scribbled by a two year old! There appeared to be no footpaths marked on the maps – I was praying that they might actually exist!

That year I managed to spend over four months abroad leading trips, but I quickly realised that I was never going to make a lucrative career as a walking leader, given that I was only earning peanuts in expenses! I was at a crossroads: much as I was enjoying the leading, I needed to start earning some money to pay the bills.

In January 1986 I was seriously thinking of retraining in computing as there seemed to be plenty of demand for people at that time, and a shortage of suitably qualified candidates. At the same time I wrote to Peter Chapman asking whether he had any more vacancies for leading in the near future. Within a couple of days I received a call from Peter that was to change my life: was I interested in working full-time for Waymark in Fulham? Naturally I didn't take long to confirm that I was. It then transpired that they were not just looking for a new member of staff, but somebody who could take on a director role.

After putting down the phone I was a bit puzzled as to why I had been approached. Was it the fact that I had good all round business experience? Or my knowledge of travel beyond Europe, which of course had always been the core of Waymark's programme? Or my knowledge of Spanish, which I knew from previous conversations with Peter was lacking among the current staff? Or was I simply just lucky to be in the right place at the right time? I never did find out.

After meeting Peter again I then had to be interviewed by the other directors. First I met Noel Vincent and Peggy Hounslow at Peggy's London home. Vincent (as he liked to be called) had already retired, and Peggy was soon intending to retire, which would leave a vacancy in the office. Vincent quizzed me very closely on certain countries, fortunately they were all places that I now knew very well, such as Morocco and Nepal. He truly had an encyclopaedic knowledge of places.

Later I travelled to Essex to meet Humfrey Chamberlain, who, although a director of Waymark from the outset, had never actually worked full-time for the company. He had a wide experience of business, and questioned me about my background. He told me that his main hobby was piloting a light aircraft, and for a horrible moment I thought that he was going to ask me to accompany him on a death-defying flight as part of the appointment process!

Within a few months I had started working full-time for Waymark, and after about 18 months I was appointed a director of the company. The rest, as they say, is history. I often look back, grateful to have been involved with Waymark for so many happy years, and wonder whether it would ever have happened had I not blagged up my travel experience on my CV at the very start!

The Old Ones Are The Best – from Mike Brace

With a little apprehension and a great deal of excitement I boarded the plane to Oslo on April Fool's Day bound for the annual Beitostolen ski week. I hadn't managed to go cross country skiing for eight years and was wondering how rusty I had got and, more importantly, how fit (or unfit) I had become!

Having been a blind Paralympic skier for nearly 20 years and competed up to 1994, in six Paralympic Winter Games, three World Championships, and two European Championships, I didn't want to let myself down. My first skiing trip ever was with Waymark in the mid 1970s. Rosemary Crosby acted as our guide at Rod Tuck's Kvitåvatn Fjellstue, and the annual ski week at Beitostolen, Norway, was the sporting highlight of my year. So it felt strange this April to be going back to Beitostolen to compete against some of my old adversaries.

The first night we were allocated our guides and I couldn't help grinning from ear to ear when I was allocated a very attractive 22-year-old female student from Oslo. My wife kept telling me to stop smiling and then brought me down to earth with the realisation that the skis I was using were older than my guide!

The snow conditions were poor given the brilliant sunshine that had been a feature across Scandinavia for the previous few weeks. The distances were reduced to 5k instead of 10k and about 8k for the main Ridder Rennet event. The usual 4.5k remained the distance for the ski shooting event. Along with me from Britain on the trip, I had 16 other blind and partially sighted colleagues, and we, together with over 200 skiers from all over the world, were grouped into sight and age categories.

I had a significant birthday last year which meant that I was skiing in the over 60s category for the first time. My first thought was that I might stand a chance if there were no others in the group, it was only downhill, and they had a reliable hour hand on their watches when doing the timing. I then saw that a number of my rivals from our Paralympic days had also

had significant birthdays and at least eight of them were in my age category. This included three Norwegians, none of whom I had managed to beat in the 20 years we raced together.

The first race was the shortened 5k and having got off to a good start my upper body strength training seemed to be paying off. I finished third over-all and had the somewhat surprising experience of standing on the rostrum to receive my medal. My pretty guide came up with me and I presented her with my medal as a keepsake as she was a significant part of my success.

The second race was the biathlon which involved using different guns from those I was used to. In the 'good old days' we used .22 rifles in the prone shooting position, with an oscillator making a different-sounding note in your earphones the closer to, or further away from, the bulls-eye you were pointing the rifle. The new ones were laser guns, which the very conservation-minded Norwegians had introduced in my absence to save lead pollution. I shot well and skied reasonably, but only finished fourth again behind my rivals.

The big race then was the last day, and although normally over 20k, the course constructors still managed to make a challenging 8k event with two laps of a 4k hilly course. One of my arch rivals was starting 30 seconds behind me and I wanted desperately to at least finish in front of him. Needless to say I was bitterly disappointed when he passed me at about 2k just after the first big hill. It spurred me on however and I kicked hard and pushed with a fairly good double pole technique which had been one of my strong points when racing. Imagine my surprise and delight therefore when, just before the big hill on the second loop, I passed my Norwegian colleague and ended up beating him by nearly half a minute to gain my second third place! This was the first time I had beaten this particular individual in 30 years, so the beer was definitely on me that night despite costing about £8 a pint.

I flew back on the Sunday in a bit of a haze and remembered those first days on skis. We were poorly equipped, had limited technique, and needed someone to see the potential for us to enjoy skiing and make it happen. Waymark did that for me and it is something I will be eternally grateful for. I have skied all over the world, have made lifelong friends with my ski guides and those that helped us over the years to fund and support the team. And of course, as a double bronze medallist, I am up to try and do better next year. I have booked my place on the trip and am back in training at the gym to get even fitter. Roll on retirement!