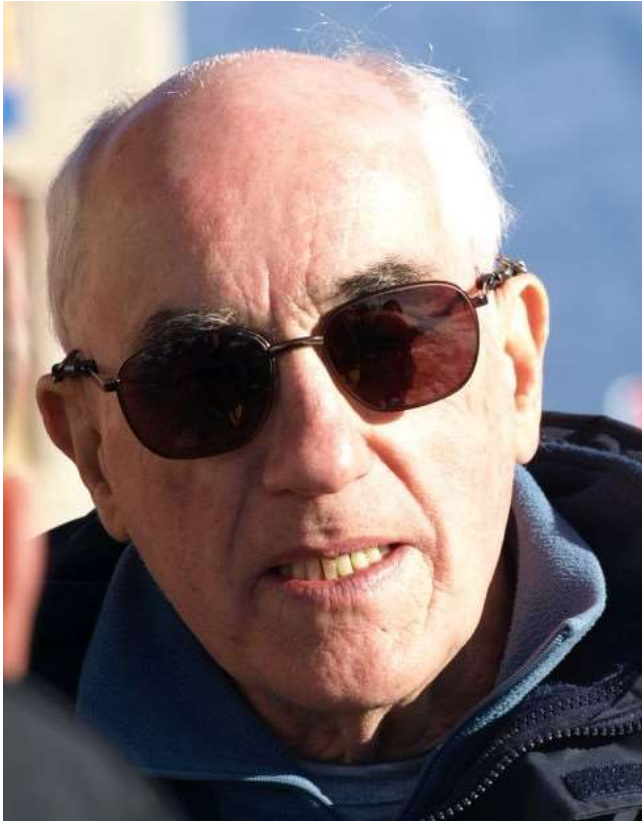


# Midland Ski Club News

Special edition in Memory of John Arnold – February 2020

As many of you are aware our club president John Arnold died while on the first day of the club training week in Champoluc on January 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020. This special edition of the newsletter is a celebration of John's life and his immense contribution to Midland Ski Club. The Club would not be as it is today without the work of John Arnold

*We do not have any funeral details now except that it will be in early March*



## A tribute from Alan Parkin

To say that the news of John's passing was a shock is to underestimate the impact that it had on all of us, most of all his companions on the 2020 Training Week. John was a thoroughly exceptional individual, whose contribution to the success of the Midland Ski Club is immeasurable. John was Club Chairman for three years from 1984-87, edited the Newsletter for 10 years or so, ran the Training Week for over 30 years, qualified as an Artificial Ski Slope Instructor and played his part in the club coaching activities and was, at the time of his death, Club President. Educated at Handsworth Grammar School for Boys, he spent his working life with the Midlands Electricity Board, negotiating wayleaves for pylons with landowners. He was also a keen cricketer and golfer and a regular contributor to Birmingham Hospital Radio, commentating on football and cricket matches and, occasionally, boxing. All this was carried out against a background enlivened by his razor-sharp wit which he employed liberally in his writing for the Newsletter. He undoubtedly could have been a very successful professional writer. Alan Parkin writes: one day he called in to our house for a cup of coffee. Sylvia had polished the tiled floor of our lobby and carefully placed a small mat upon it. As John was leaving, he stepped carefully onto the mat which promptly slid away at high speed from under him. Recovering his balance and composure, he turned towards us and exclaimed: "What was that – the Torvill and Dean Memorial Mat?"

It is not clear exactly how John died, but reports from the Times Newspaper on Jan 21<sup>st</sup> indicate it may have been initially from natural causes

# Ski instructor, 79, found dead on beginner slope

Tom Kington Rome  
Neil Johnston Midlands Correspondent

A qualified ski instructor has died after veering off a slope and into some trees at an Italian mountain resort.

John Arnold, 79, from Great Barr, Birmingham, was found dead on Sunday at the Champoluc ski resort in the Aosta Valley region.

Mr Arnold, president of the Midland Ski Club, was on an annual club trip. He is said to have been skiing alone on a beginner-level blue run when he appeared to lose control at a turn and veer into the trees flanking the piste.

"He either suffered a stroke or heart attack which caused him to lose control and leave the slope, or was fatally injured when he hit a tree," said an official who helped recover Mr Arnold's body.

"The results of the post mortem are not back yet, but there was no sign of injuries to his body," he added.

Mr Arnold's body was found on Sunday afternoon when staff at the resort were checking the slopes before it closed for the day and spotted his bright skiing outfit. He is believed to have been wearing a helmet.

Paolo Comune, the head of the local Alpine rescue team, said the slope was not fenced because it was not considered to be challenging.

Although he was alone at the time of his death, Mr Arnold was visiting Champoluc with a group of British skiers travelling with tour group Inghams.

Founded in 1965, the Midland Ski Club organises coaching during ski trips, as well as at an artificial slope in Birmingham. Mr Arnold was a popular member of the club, having held several roles on its committee. He had organised various trips to Italy and had recently become a life member, having joined the club in 1974 and the commit-

tee six years later. He organised the annual training week at different resorts in the Alps for 30 years and became a qualified ski instructor in 1984, teaching at Ackers Adventures dry ski slope in Birmingham.

Mr Arnold was so popular among club members that during the 30th anniversary celebrations for its annual training week in the Italian alps in 2012 his fellow skiers put on face masks in a tribute to his personality.

"Friday evening was amazing," he wrote in the club's newsletter. "I was led into the lounge to be faced with 40 John Arnolds. Everyone was wearing a mask of my face. I was so stunned that for once I was speechless. Jackie, Equity's excellent rep, produced even more bubbly and a large chocolate cake with 30 candles. I was so overcome that I hadn't the breath to blow them out."

Yesterday a member of the club said: "Everyone is very upset and devastated. We are still trying to find out what has happened. He had been a member of the club for years and was well known, having been on the committee and president."

Neighbours of Mr Arnold, who lived with his step-sister Valerie Armfield, also 79, yesterday told how he was always talking about his skiing.

Stella Nash, 75, a retired secretary, said: "He was a lovely man, absolutely lovely. He was very nice and polite. He was a very private man. He used to come into the opticians and say hello and pass the time. We'd talk about his eyes and skiing. I used to see him load his car up to go skiing, and I think he golfed."

Situated in the Monterosa skiing area, Champoluc attracts off-piste skiers and snowboarders and is advertised as being less crowded than other Italian Alpine resorts.

From the Daily Mirror

## British ski instructor, 79, dies after smashing into trees on beginner slope

Ski instructor John Arnold, from Birmingham, is believed to have suffered 'a heart attack or stroke' before he crashed into trees on the slopes of the Italian Alps

A British ski instructor has died after crashing off a mountain slope in the Italian Alps.

John Arnold, 79, was found dead at the Champoluc ski resort in the Aosta Valley region of the Alps on Sunday, according to reports.

The experienced skier, from Great Barr, Birmingham, is reportedly thought to have lost control while taking a turn on a beginner slope before crashing into trees.

An official who helped recover Mr Arnold's body told the [Times](#) "He either suffered a stroke or a heart attack which caused him to lose control and leave the slope, or was fatally injured when he hit a tree."

The qualified ski instructor had organised annual trips to the Alps, and was president of the Midland Ski Club.

He is believed to have been skiing alone on a beginner-level blue run when he veered into a stand of trees, according to the newspaper.

His body was reportedly found by staff checking the slopes before they closed the ski field for the day.

They spotted Mr Arnold in his brightly-hued ski gear. He was said to have been wearing a helmet.

Mr Arnold had joined the Midland Ski Club in 1974 and had qualified as an instructor in 1984, according to [Mail Online](#).

He taught at Ackers Adventures dry ski slope in Birmingham.

A Midland Ski club member told the Mail his death had come as a shock.

They said: "Everyone is very upset and devastated. We are still trying to find out what has happened.

"He had been a member of the club for years and was well known, having been on the committee and president."

## Other Newspapers have also picked up on this story

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-7909869/Qualified-ski-instructor-79-dies-smashing-trees-beginner-slope-Italian-Alps.html>

<https://www.ibtimes.co.uk/expert-ski-instructor-crashes-dies-while-skiing-beginner-slope-alone-1674793>

<https://www.thescottishsun.co.uk/news/5191933/brit-skier-killed-going-off-piste-and-hitting-a-tree-in-the-italian-alps/>

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/sandwell/great-barr/2020/01/21/ski-instructor-from-great-barr-dies-in-italy-aged-79/>



## PlanetSki reported on John's death and its facebook page contains multiple tributes him

<https://www.planetski.eu/2020/01/21/british-ski-instructor-dies-on-slopes-in-italy/>

### TRIBUTES TO BRITISH SKI INSTRUCTOR WHO DIED ON THE SLOPES

21st January 2020

John Arnold, a long-standing and popular member of a UK ski club, was found dead after apparently veering off a ski run in the Italian resort of Champoluc. Those who knew him have been paying tribute.

The 79-year-old was President of the Midland Ski Club, based in Birmingham, and was on a club trip to the Aosta Valley.

According to newspaper reports, Mr Arnold was found in trees off the side an easy blue run on Sunday by piste patrollers coming down at the end of the ski day.

They are reported to have spotted his bright skiing outfit.

*The Times* says an official who helped recover the body believes Mr Arnold may have been taken ill.

"He either suffered a stroke or heart attack which caused him to lose control and leave the slope, or was fatally injured when he hit a tree," the official said.

"The results of the post mortem are not back yet, but there was no sign of injuries to his body," he added.

John Arnold had many friends and fans.

"A wonderful man, who loved his club and the sport so much and gave of his time to make it possible for others. We will miss you John Arnold," said David Francis.

"A good friend and skiing buddy, also a brilliant wit, keen cricketer and golfer and a long-term officer of the Midland Ski Club. He will be missed," said Alan Parkin. You can read some of the many tributes posted on social media at the end of this article.

Mr Arnold is reported to have travelled to the Aosta Valley with a group of British skiers who booked with Inghams.

He was a stalwart of the Midland Ski Club, which is based at the Ackers Adventure dry slope in Birmingham. It is one of the longest-established ski clubs in Britain.

In 2015 it celebrated its 50th anniversary.

It provides coaching, holidays, racing and social events.

John Arnold joined the club more than 40 years ago, held several posts on the committee and for many years arranged the annual club holiday to the Alps.

He qualified as a ski instructor in 1984.

He was highly regarded as both an instructor and a man, as is clear from the many tributes posted on the [PlanetSKI Facebook](#) page.

### From Frank Baldwin Skier and Snowboarder magazine

So sorry to see the news about the death of John Arnold. Condolences from all of us here at the Skier & Snowboarder magazine

### From Mark Scott of Ackers Adventure

Terrible news about John. My thoughts are with his family, the ski club and all that knew him. He was an absolute gentleman and I was honoured to have the pleasure to work and talk with him.

### People who skied with John have said

#### Bryan Arnott

I believe that John wanted his love of skiing to be enjoyed by people of all ages and backgrounds as shown by his enthusiasm as a coach at Ackers, on our Training Week and his massive contribution to the club as Newsletter editor and President. His friendly banter interspersed with innumerable jokes encapsulated this and he will be fondly remembered for enriching all who met him.

#### Robert Cawte

I remember him on two levels:

Valli and I started to ski in Summer 1989 and our first holiday was the Training Week in La Clusaz 1990. As it was our first week on snow it would have been easy to not accept us through lack of experience, but he enlisted your help (ARP) at Ackers on a Monday night assessment to see if we'd keep up. We never looked back and enjoyed many more excellent Training Weeks with John.

As a committee member I did five years as Treasurer, so enjoyed John's humour on many an occasion, while discussing our ESC membership returns and other exciting topics. One of the expense items was for the club newsletter, edited by John, typed, duplicated and put into envelopes by an enthusiastic team who needed "licking juice" according to John's claim. I later discovered that it was wine!

#### Peter Seamen

On my first Training Week to Valmorel in 1986 I was in a group of near beginners. John was skiing with the 'experts' enjoying the deep powder. I watched in awe. Fast forward a decade or so and, thanks to the training weeks organised by John, my skiing, like that of many club members, had improved significantly. I was now able to enjoy skiing with John both on and off piste. Thank you John – may you enjoy that fluffy powder in the sky!

#### Tony Costin

John joined us for many years on our annual off-piste week in Argentiere-Chamonix. He would tackle any conditions and was always the centre of comedy every evening, recalling the highs and lows (mainly lows!) of the day. My kids found him a constant source of amusement. He was also the group's main photographer and captured numerous action shots – I have many which he framed for me. He narrowly missed first place in a photographic competition with a picture of me skiing powder snow – the given reason was that my arm was hiding my face – personally I thought that in itself made it worthy of first place!

He will be sorely missed on the Alpine slopes.

### **Mike Thomas**

John loved to walk in the mountains, and on one of the early MSC mountain walking weekends we went to North Wales and I led a group up the North Ridge of Tryfan, which in hindsight was not a walk for the faint hearted. For the descent I somewhat unwisely took the group down a steep gully with loose rock and John had some difficulty with this. In the next edition of the newsletter John wrote a most entertaining account of the weekend which he christened "The High Altitude Training Weekend". We've done our best to shed this name for fear that it would put members off going on these weekends, but the name keeps coming back and in the end, maybe in tribute to John, the name HATW has permanently stuck. So there is no way that we can shed it now!

John had an extremely sharp wit. I remember going on a holiday years ago wearing a new one-piece ski suit which was brightly coloured to say the least. John's immediate reaction was to ask if I had planning permission for it. On another occasion my friend Peter Tolworthy flew back from Australia and within a few hours was on the flight for a club holiday. Peter was in something of a ropery state with a diabolical sore throat and went to the local pharmacist who prescribed some pessaries. John immediately queried if they were tackling the problem from the correct end!

John was a great skier in various conditions, but I was always envious at how well he skied off-piste. He was handling challenging conditions very well in Tignes last month.

However, the most wonderful legacy John has given the MSC is the Training Week. The concept of a week ski training in an alpine resort with our own instructors was Alan Parkin's, and John arranged the first of these weeks in La Thuile 38 years ago. From the modest first week, John developed the concept for the following 30 years, and in that time the standard of skiing, and instruction has risen to a very high standard with up to 5 groups. John handed over the running of the Training Week to Bryan Arnott 8 years ago and it's been in his capable hands since then, but John continued to make a positive contribution to the success of the week, for example in recent years he and Bryan have successfully negotiated for our instructors to coach in parts of Italy (at a price); to the relief of our instructors! Those of us who have been on the Training Week for many years have had virtually no instruction other than these weeks, and we are so appreciative not only of the high standard of instruction but for the wonderful comradeship we have enjoyed. Given the numbers of newer members who now enjoy the week, I'm sure that John's legacy will continue for many years. Thanks John.

### **Maureen Cromblehome**

I guess my memories of John are the same as for many others. A true Gentleman who was fun to ski with, mostly at the back of the group so he could stop and take a picture and be the one to make sure that everyone else was safely down. He was also great company socially as well with his laugh getting louder the more red wine he had!

The Midland Ski Club wouldn't be where it is now without him – his passion for the sport, his vision for the club and his friendship. Long live the Training Week!

### **Nigel Dawes**

Very sad news – John contributed so much to the club over many years and supported me during my time on the committee. He was very supportive of developing enjoyment of skiing for the younger members.

I enjoyed our holidays together and John was an enthusiastic, eloquent speaker. It appears that he died on the Training Week, whilst this would have been very troubling for all of you, at least he was surrounded by close friends and doing something that gave him so much pleasure during his long and successful life.

### **Sally Miller**

John played a significant part in my ski journey. I learnt to ski on the dry slope at Ackers and every Monday evening John would be there. As I progressed he became instrumental in the path I took - he was a keen off piste skier and encouraged me along that path. My first off piste experience was with him, patiently waiting whilst I trashed the pristine snow, at that stage completely unaware of what a travesty this was! John was inclusive, encouraging, charming and witty, a pleasure to be on the slopes with. I remember the last time I skied with him, around 4 years ago, when I had a health problem and bailed out at lunchtime. He bailed out too and we spent a lovely afternoon with our cameras enjoying a leisurely ski - a true gentleman and one that I will miss and remember always .

### **Hilary Cox**

John was a good & kind friend & due to living close by, he gave me many lifts to airports, club meetings, & other events. As well as skiing he took part in many of our walking trips with his camera at the ready. These MSC events included evening & walking weekends also New Years day walks both club organised & later those hosted by Jim & Linda Pielow. In recent years John has joined myself & some friends for Christmas lunch & he provided all the wine and he also carved the turkey, I've many happy memories.

### **Jeff Elmore**

I can't really do justice in a few words to the massive the contribution that John made to Midland Ski Club, the sport of skiing, and the people he met over the years. It was a pleasure and a privilege to have known John and to have skied with him, and had the opportunity to work with him on numerous MSC activities and events. I am particularly indebted to him for his help and contribution to organising the hugely successful MSC 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary celebrations. John was always happy to help and support any event the MSC ran. His friendly and affable nature always shone through. As we all know, John always had the right words for any moment, and his razor sharp wit was ever present. I always remember how, on one of the first Training Weeks' I joined, he described how some of the Club members who still had energy left after a hard days skiing were going to go into town to visit "the dens of Beelzebub" - referring to the local nightclub. Where we would probably be led astray by the demon drink and gyrating bodies on the dance floor. Survivors who escaped the "dens" would hopefully appear the next day ready for another great days skiing! That phrase, and that vision of après ski, has always stayed with me – and always will. Not a particularly significant comment given the myriad that John came up with over the years, but it means a lot to me. John was a wonderful person and a true gentleman. He will be sorely missed by many, many people.



### Mike Heard

John was certainly one of the nicest people you could wish to meet and a fine skier. To be in his company was one of the most pleasurable parts of being in the MSC. He helped and supported me when I ran some holidays way back then. We continued to share Christmas Cards, there will be a gap in my Christmas card list and I'll remember him each year I send them - RIP John never to be forgotten.

### Dave Whiting

My memories of John go back as far as 1979:-

#### **The annual weekend trip to Plas Y Brenin:**

Skiing with John on that amazing unique Ski slope where using the Ski lift meant that you departed with your left arm longer than when you arrived - fun weekends.

#### **The 1983 Club trip to Val d' Isere:**

We covered almost every Off-Piste run in the system following two amazing New Zealand guides - John would ski anywhere without fear or question.

#### **The Early Season skiing week in Tignes:**

I joined the group in 1999 and I think I am correct in saying that John never missed a week. December just gone, was the last time that I skied with him. John was usually the first in the Boot room prepared to go - but he would stand there very patiently waiting for everyone else. Inwardly, I guess he was screaming to get onto the snow. He was always keen for one last run at the end of the day - amazing guy !

#### **Skidooing in Yellowstone Park:**

We spent a day being guided around the park and on the final fast lap, John opened the throttle, overtook me, lost control and with both legs in the air, managed to hang on, landed back in the saddle and didn't say a word, just gave me a wry smile!

#### **My happy memories of John are not confined to Skiing with him:**

I spent time with him running around the streets of Tettenhall and Wolverhampton in various Charity Fun runs. He was part of the MSC Team in the annual trip to Hyde Park for the Sunday Times Fun Run where we ran alongside Pro-Athletes and Celebrities - really good fun and a bonus getting the MSC a mention in the Sunday Times.

### Pat Whiting

I have known John since 1974 the year in which we both joined the MSC and I have enjoyed many Ski holidays with him both MSC organised and in small groups of Friends. Always good company with a wonderful sense of humour.

John in the early days was **NOT** an Apres-Skier or a 'late night' but on our first ski holiday to America in 1980 he suddenly became the life and sole of the late nights - explaining the change John said " *I now realise I have been suffering from Jet Lag all my life*"

On another occasion when he mislaid his Helmet in a Mountain Restaurant someone pointed out that it was not a great loss at £7.50 from Lidl - to which he quipped " *I am not worried about the £7.50 Helmet but I am about the £750 Camera inside it*"

Typical John - I will miss him and treasure a Friendship of 40 plus years.

### Jim and Linda Pielow

John always enjoyed the social side of the club and one of the activities, walking. Mike Thomas organised summer walks and New Years Day walks that started, went via, or finished at a pub, as well as the High Altitude Weekends. We (Jim and Linda) then organised New Years Day walks from our house with lunch at the local pub. Bruce and Liz organised walks via a pub ending with a BBQ in their garden. John came along enthusiastically to all of these, with of course his trusty camera and wellies. On another occasion, on a Training Week, with Hilary and Linda sharing a room, early one evening John knocked on their door and (in a suitably fortified state) asked if Linda could tidy up his hair style. Linda, as an accomplished hairstylist, had been hoping to do this for some time! Without hesitation, before he could escape, John was hauled into the room and made to sit on a chair, and he was restyled in an instant and rather painfully, as the only scissors available where those used for trimming nails! The thirtieth training week which John organised, was celebrated in style with a cake and bubbly. John was held back from joining this celebration under a pretext which inevitably involved red wine. When he entered the room we were all wearing John look- alike masks provided by Peter Seamen.



Further tributes, photographs and videos will appear shortly on the club website. <http://midlandski.uk>

In lasting memory of John, the training week will continue to be run and will in future be known as the John Arnold Training Week. 40 places have already been booked for the hotel Champoluc for January 16-23 2021. Details to follow in the next regular Newsletter.