

6.2.2 The symbiotic relationship between tourism and winter sports

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Switzerland began its life as a destination for popular tourism in 1863 when Thomas Cook organised his first tour to the country. Mountain villages that welcomed tourists at this time were only open during the summer months. The first winter visitors began to arrive in the Swiss Alps from the mid-1860s although there were few of them at first and these were mostly either mountaineers or health seekers hoping to be cured of tuberculosis.¹ Health seekers stayed in the Alps for months and sometimes years, often accompanied by fit companions. The invalids and convalescents were recommended to take exercise and the healthy needed amusements while their sick companions were resting. Activities to relieve the monotony were essential. The first outdoor pursuits, other than walking and sleigh rides, were ice skating on frozen lakes and then sledging. The cure guests would have seen sledges used by Swiss farmers for carrying heavy loads and small ones for riding downhill or amusing children. These functional toboggans adopted as a means of amusement could provide the moderate exercise required by invalids. With no designated toboggan runs these pioneering winter sports men and women rode down the village streets. The earliest report of sledging on a specially prepared track was a sledge run on the slope near the Kurhaus in Davos Platz in 1872 where there were two tracks, one for riding down and another for dragging the sledges back up.² An ice rink was also created in front of the Kurhaus saving a long walk to the Davos lake. Those patients who were resting could watch the skaters from their chairs or beds.

News of the enjoyment to be had from these winter pastimes in the snow attracted people in good health who came out to the Alps just for outdoor activities and entertainment. By the 1880s winter colonies of sick and sound visitors attracted by winter sport were spending months each year in the Swiss resorts, the majority of them British.

Entertainments in the emerging resorts were organised by the guests themselves who formed committees for indoor and outdoor amusements. For example, at the Belvedere, Kurhaus and Buol in Davos, the Engadiner Kulm in

St Moritz and the Bear in Grindelwald. Potential guests were told in a guide issued by Davos's Belvedere hotel in 1894 that:

*Relaxations offered indoors depend on the guests themselves. The Hotel Belvedere has always been fortunate in the possession of inmates endowed with social talents and accomplishments, this coupled with the support given by the management gives it its leading position at the social centre of Davos.*³

This was also true of outdoor relaxations. The origins of Davos, St Moritz and Grindelwald skating and toboggan clubs lay in these committees. Growing numbers of hotels and guests led to a multiplication of such groups. Teams of guests staying at one hotel would compete against those of other hotels. These inter-hotel competitions gelled into resort-wide clubs to organise individual sports, the earliest of which were skating and curling and then toboggan clubs. Reports of the meetings of the committees of these clubs and their competitions appeared in the local guests' newspapers, such as *The Davos Courier* and the *Alpine Post and Engadin Express*.

A skating club in St Moritz seems to have been established before 1870, with young English visitor Francis Greatheed as president. The club is mentioned in a booklet published in 1870 about the resort by J Burney Yeo which suggests that tourists themselves took responsibility for organising ice skating.⁴ In a letter to the times, the President of the St Moritz Skating Club, described how a beautiful surface had been produced on the lake by using a sluice gate and guiding shoots to divert a stream on to the surface of the ice marked out for skating, which began in late October and continued until March or April. In Davos the Hotel Buol played host to the inaugural meeting of the resort-wide skating club there in 1889. It was chaired by Revd. Harford Battersby, ice skating was popular amongst clergymen. Those present, all visitors to Davos, formed the new club's committee.⁵ Similar clubs were founded in other resorts, notably in Grindelwald, a renowned centre for figure skating in the English style, by guests staying at the Bear who had their own amusements committees.

In 1876 an English guest at the Kulm in St Moritz, Franklin Adams, with the approval of hotel proprietor Johannes Badrutt, improvised a run beside the

hotel based on his experience of tobogganing on a straight slide in St. Petersburg. In Davos a longer slide could be had riding down the main road to lower lying Klosters. In St Moritz sliders could also ride down the road from St Moritz Dorf to Bad. These roads were shared with other traffic and could be hazardous.

In Grindelwald, British guests staying at the Bear, open in winter from 1888, formed the Bear Toboggan Club which organised races for gentlemen, ladies, children, singles, doubles and mixed doubles. Local people and tourists of other nationalities joined in and rode with them.⁶ The main public sledge run was the Village Run but people also used the streets to slide on.

Inter-club and resort competitions, where the clubs of one resort would challenge those of another soon became annual events. In those early days tobogganing was an inclusive sport that could be enjoyed by anyone, whatever their physical capacity, male or female, who had the money for a stay in Switzerland. Thanks to the enthusiasm of public school educated British visitors for sport and for forming clubs, rules were devised and funds raised to maintain the runs and rinks.

Friendly tobogganing contests between guests in different hotels introduced a competitive ethos. The Davos Toboggan Club was founded in 1883 with author John Addington Symonds as its founding president. The club organised its first competitive race in February of that year on the Klosters Road, won in a dead heat by Swiss postman Peter Minsch and Robertson from Australia.⁷ In 1884 a much faster ice run was built in Davos beside the Hotel Buol. The next year the club president inaugurated the Symonds Cup to be competed for on the Klosters road.⁸

As in the public schools where these British visitors had been educated and raised within a sporting culture, these clubs devised their own badges, sashes, regalia and eventually team uniforms. In skating a system of proficiency tests measuring different levels of achievement, each with their own badges and certificates, gave clubs structure and created interest, dedication to practice and to the development of skills among members. It also meant that clubs had to provide training and assessment by experts who passed on their knowledge to beginners in the sports. This system of assessment and organised

competition led to the formalisation of techniques and rules. Through these initiatives and developments, these sports were able to create a sense of camaraderie and identity beyond that of nationality or social status.

British tourists at Davos were at the forefront of winter sports development and showed their supremacy over a team invited over from St Moritz to compete in the newly created International Race. St Moritz riders did not have a run as long as the Klosters road or as fast as the Buol Run on which to practice in similar conditions. In response to this the Outdoor Amusement Committee made up of guests at the Engadiner Kulm, supported by the owner's son, Peter Badrutt, decided they must have their own run to keep up with Davos.⁹ Hoping to attract some of the rival resort's sledging enthusiasts to come to St Moritz, Badrutt commissioned a local mathematician, Peter Bonorand, to design a toboggan run to rival those of Davos. Since the previous year St Moritz sledgers had been welcomed in Davos to take part in toboggan races but had lost because of want of practice. Badrutt was eager to provide a longer and better course to the existing one built by Adams beside the Kulm.¹⁰ For Badrutt, the hotel owner, it would help make St Moritz compete with Davos and so be good for the tourism business. A location was chosen and staked out by the Outdoor Amusements Committee made up of hotel guests to Bonorand's design in 1885.¹¹ They used wooden pegs to mark the line of the track which followed the twists and turns of a steep gully between St Moritz, near the Kulm, and the lower-lying, neighbouring village of Cresta. When it snowed it was built up with banked walls. The Committee comprising George Robertson, Charles Digby Jones, C. Metcalfe, J. Biddulph and W.H. Bulpett, were sure that a track with banks and curves would enable them to achieve much higher speeds than were possible in Davos.¹² These five British men, all hotel guests, created the famous Cresta Run with boots wrapped in bandages, linking arms and trudging the line staked out until the snow was trampled down for the frost to harden. It took nine weeks to complete.¹³

Once the Cresta Run was ready, a challenge was sent out to Davos for a race to be called the Grand National. Three runs down the track would make it a distance similar to the run down the Klosters road. To their disappointment the Davos visitors still beat them. According to Mrs Symonds "the Davos riders were cautious and ran for safety while the Engadiners, confident in their

knowledge of their own course, threw themselves out by the most terrific spills".¹⁴ This was the beginning of the famous Cresta Run.

The Cresta Run and the Grand National race were expensive to run and organise but Badrutt, seeing the potential popularity the run might bring to St Moritz proposed the formation of a Club led by a Committee chosen by visitors and later arranged some labour for its creation and upkeep. The St Moritz Tobogganing Club was founded in 1885, a couple of years after that in Davos. Most of the labour was done by volunteers, mostly tourists who were regular guests, and organised by the Club. In 1899, Thoma Badrutt, another member of Johannes' family, now running his own hotel, took over responsibility for the Cresta's engineering and management in 1899. In 1901 he decided to manage it on new lines, to have the run built and kept in order for a fixed sum of money with at least 14 men regularly working on it.¹⁵ This would allow the run to be ready earlier in the season. The Cresta Run created a multiplier effect, as well as itself being an addition to St Moritz's tourist facilities, down in Cresta where it terminated, the owner of the tea rooms, Patisserie Nuss, enlarged his premises and made a skating rink in front of the restaurant.

New styles of toboggan were designed by visitors to increase their speed on the run. The traditional wooden Swiss Schlitten was soon obsolete in competition as riders discovered that they could go faster in a headfirst position on a lightweight American style of toboggan. The British tourist Captain Bulpett, it is claimed, devised the steel type of sledge now known as a skeleton. He worked with local blacksmith Christian Mathis to make sledges according to his ideas which were soon improved on by H.W. Topham.¹⁶ Mathis then taught other blacksmiths he employed to weld and shape the metal into skeleton sledges, diversifying their trade and allowing them to benefit from the emerging tourism industry.

Bobsleighting was introduced to the winter sports repertoire, soon recognised as a different discipline to tobogganing and in 1897 the St Moritz Bobsleigh Club was formed.¹⁷ The enthusiasm for the new sport was reflected in the names given to the machines, such as Blitz, Royal Flush, Rocket and Trilby. Trilby, steered by an artist from Leicester Laurence Linnell, was the winner of the first Manchester Bowl international race for bobsleighs in Davos in 1900.

Rules for bobsleigh competition evolved as practitioners gained experience and skill.

In 1903 a dedicated bobsleigh run was created from St Moritz down to Celerina beside the Cresta . The support of the hoteliers, the Badrutt family, was important again. The Club raised 5,000 ChF of the 12,000 ChF costs. The Badrutts offered to undertake the construction of the run and allowed the Club to pay off the balance when they were able to do so. In addition to this the first portion of the track ran across land owned by the hotel which did not charge rent for the privilege. The commune of Celerina asked for a rent of 300ChF for the part running over its land with an initial lease of ten years. A list of twenty subscribers was published comprised of sportsmen and two women, mostly English visitors but also including Thoma Badrutt, Christian Mathis and Count Hans Larisch.¹⁸ The *Kurverein*, the tourism office also donated 500 ChF.¹⁹ By the season of 1910/11 there were at least 61 bobsleigh runs in the Alpine region.

Most people hired their sledges for the season or for the time they were on holiday creating another demand to be met by local businesses and manufacturers. Mathis advertised his business as a manufacturer of toboggans, specialising in skeleton, American and Canadian styles and bobsleigh.²⁰ After 1920 Mathis was overtaken by Hartkopf in Davos and Bachmann Brothers in Travers who specialised in wooden bobs with steering wheels.²¹

In Arosa those involved in the business of tourism rather than tourists themselves were instrumental in the creation of winter sports in the resorts. In 1887 a *Kurtaxe* of 20 centimes a week was introduced to finance communal facilities for guests.²² The tourist office, *Kurverein*, created the first ice rink on the village lake in 1891 and a few years later the toboggan run opened.²³ The first president of the *Schlittelverein Arosa*, the toboggan club, was Dr Jacobi of the Sanatorium-Hotel Tschügggen. It held its first international competition in 1897 with competitors joining in from Davos and Klosters.²⁴ A second run was created from the hotel Hof Maran in 1898.

Ice skating facilities were boosted in 1899 when a consortium created an ice rink in Inner Arosa. The consortium's members were all involved in the tourism business. There was Dr Herwig of the Villa Herwig, his sister Maria who owned

the Sanatorium Berghilf, Dr Jacobi and Nico Hold of the Bellevue. A year later a much larger consortium opened another rink by the lake. Members of the medical profession, hoping to attract patients to Arosa, were prominent in this group, men such as Dr Romisch, Dr Ruedi and pharmacist Dr Alfred Schaeuble. Most of these people had moved to Arosa for their own health and had stayed on in business there. Likewise when a ski club was formed in 1903, less than a year after that in Davos, at its first meeting in January 1904 were Dr Schaeuble, Dr Pedolin, Rell the dentist, Mr Pfenniger, who ran the Hotel Collina, innkeeper Jundt, mountain guides Juon and Ruedi and a school teacher.²⁵ When the first ski race in Arosa was held on 26 January 1904 the local contestants were Dr Schaeuble, Pfenniger, Jundt, Ruedi, Rell, Ueli Abplanalp, Dr Burkhardt and Dr Amrein.²⁶ All of these men were involved in the tourism or sanatorium business of the resort. Dr and Mrs Lichtenhahn of the *Kinderkurhaus Prasura* were also prominent members of the ski club.²⁷ The club built a ski jump and huts to shelter on the mountains.²⁸ A Norwegian instructor was employed to run skiing courses but by 1908 some Arosa skiers were able to give lessons themselves. In order to preserve a tract of open land to use as a ski slope that allowed skiers to run almost down to the village, the owner of the Hotel Kulm in Arosa, Beat Stoffel, bought a large part of the meadow near Inner Arosa and around the mountain church, preventing its development for building and preserving it for winter sport.²⁹

The existence of resorts with the infrastructure for outdoor snow sports and a ready market for new, exhilarating, outdoor activities made the alpine resorts the ideal place to introduce skiing from Scandinavia. This was introduced to the Alps by people who had seen Norwegian cross-country skiing. In Davos the Branger brothers, businessmen who themselves catered for the tourism market with their hardware shop supplying goods to visitors, experimented with skis and in 1893 crossed the Meinfelder Furkka to Arosa.³⁰ The next year they did so again accompanied by the British author Sir Arthur Conan Doyle. Little skiing appears to have been done as the party lacked basic skills in the sport. On the steep descent the party fastened skis together to sit on like a sledge.³¹ Skiing was slow to catch on initially as there were few people who knew how to do it and no one to teach them.

The Richardson brothers, Edward and Charles, introduced skiing to Davos in 1901 after trying it out on a holiday in Norway. Residents were amazed when they skied down the slopes, swinging from left to right. In 1902 they wrote an article for *The Davos Courier* 'Davos, a skier's paradise', probably the first use of that cliché. Skiing was extolled as a sport for the independent. Unlike the skater and tobogganer, skiers weren't confined to a rink or run but are free to choose their own path across vast tracts of unbroken snow.³² Beyond the initial cost of the skis there was no further outlay for rink or run use. Their enthusiasm led them to form the Davos Ski Club in 1903 with the help of their friends the Wroughton brothers. In 1904 they founded the Ski Club GB. The Richardsons are acknowledged as introducing skiing as an organised sport into Switzerland.³³

The Skiclub Alpina was formed in St Moritz, later in 1903, in the restaurant of the Kulm Hotel with twenty founder members. Emil Thoma Badrutt was the first president and Philipp Mark its vice-president and first instructor.³⁴ The Winterkurverein installed a small ski-jump and provided a challenge cup to encourage competition. The St Moritz Ski Club with British committee members was formed in 1904.

The steep slopes of the Alps are unsuited to the long cross-country skis from Scandinavia. To ski downhill, skis needed to be shorter and new techniques devised. The Austrian Matthias Zdarsky developed his own system at Lilienfeld in Austria.³⁵ It was another tourist organisation, the Public School's Alpine Sports Club that played a major role in the development of Downhill or Alpine skiing as a sport. Although called a Club, this organisation was actually a tour operator, a holiday company organising winter sports holidays for young and wealthy British people who had been to public schools or university and their sisters. Arnold Lunn was the son of the founder and it was he who instigated downhill skiing races for tourists travelling to Switzerland with his father's company. Beginning in Adelboden, the company opened up new winter sports centres in Mürren, Wengen, Kandersteg, Villars and other resorts.³⁶ Lunn is credited with inventing the downhill race known as the slalom which was a test of skill involving a series of turns through gates marked by posts. He believed downhill skiing was better suited to tourist skiers as it did not depend on physical strength developed by living in the mountains and walking up and

down steep slopes from an early age. It was Arnold Lunn who led the campaign for downhill skiing to be recognised as a sport by the FIS and to its introduction into the Winter Olympics in 1936.³⁷

As more tourists took up skiing a new infrastructure was necessary to accommodate them in the form of ski lifts, equipment manufacture, hire and sale, hotels and other forms of accommodation.

Winter sports infrastructure, ice skating rinks, ski slopes, runs and tracks for sledging and bobsleighs, is expensive to create, even with a visitors' tax. The expense of hosting the Winter Olympics in Chamonix was intended to be offset by the legacy of being able to use the facilities created to attract more tourists to use it and to allow elite competitors to train and practice. In St Moritz the existing facilities of the Cresta and bobsleigh run, as well as tourism facilities and hotels, were decisive in its selection as host for the 1928 Games and again in 1948. It was also tourism that helped supply the competitors for the Winter Olympics. Those who took part, who were not residents of mountain areas, first experienced their sports as tourists. They had to travel and stay in the mountains to learn and take part in these sports. For the Alpine nations, many of their elite winter sportsmen and women were employed as instructors, passing on their skills to tourists in the resorts. This led to early accusations of professionalism, contrary to the Olympic ideal.

As we have seen, there is a close relationship between alpine tourism and winter sports, each depending on the other for its creation, development and survival. Tourists themselves and those involved in the tourism industry as hoteliers, tour operators and suppliers of goods and services were all instrumental.

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² Jules Ferdmann, *Der Aufstieg von Davos*, Davos, 1945, second edition 1990, p.160

³ J.C. Coester, *Davos-Platz: Alpine resort in summer and winter for tourists and health seekers with special reference to the Grand Hotel and Pension Belvedere*, 1894, p. 43

⁴ J. Burney Yeo, *Notes of a Season at St Moritz in the Upper Engadine and a Visit to the Baths at Tarasp*, London, 1870, p. 58

⁵ *The Davos Courier*, 9 February 1889

⁶ Rudolph Rubi, *Im Tal von Grindelwald, Der Sommer und Winter Kurort, Band III*, Grindelwald, 1986, p. 108

⁷ Barton, *Healthy Living in the Alps*, p. 28

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- ⁸ As above.
- ⁹ Michael Seth-Smith, *The Cresta Run – A History of St Moritz Tobogganing Club*, Slough, 1976, pp. 18-19
- ¹⁰ As above, see also Barton, *Healthy Living in the Alps*, p. 43
- ¹¹ Seth-Smith, p. 19
- ¹² Barton, *Healthy Living in the Alps*, p. 50
- ¹³ Roger Gibbs, *The Cresta Run 1885-1985*, London, 1985, p. 19
- ¹⁴ Seth-Smith, p. 20
- ¹⁵ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 2 November 1901
- ¹⁶ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 2 November 1901
- ¹⁷ Barton, *Healthy Living in the Alps*, p. 55
- ¹⁸ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 7 February 1903
- ¹⁹ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 7 February 1903
- ¹⁹ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 2 November 1901
- ¹⁹ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 2 November 1901
- ¹⁹ Barton, *Healthy Living in the Alps*, p. 56
- ¹⁹ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 7 February 1903
- ²⁰ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 4 January 1902
- ²¹ Max Triet (ed.), *A centenary of bobsleighbing*, Swiss Sport Museum, Basel, 1990, p. 64
- ²² Hans Danuser, *Arosa, wie es damals war, Band I, 1850-1907*, Arosa, 1997, p.42
- ²³ Robert Just, *Alpdorf und Kurort Arosa*, Zurich, 1908, p. 51
- ²⁴ As above
- ²⁵ Hans Danuser, *100 Jahre Ski Club Arosa 1903-2003*. Arosa, 2003, p. 6
- ²⁶ Danuser, *Arosa wie es damals war*, p. 98
- ²⁷ Ernst Lichtenhahn, *Aus der Geschichte de 'Prasura'*, Basel, 2003, p. 2
- ²⁸ Danuser, *100 Jahre*, p. 10
- ²⁹ Danuser, *100 Jahre*, p. 13
- ³⁰ *The Davos Courier*, 8 November 1888
- ³¹ Frederick C. Kittle, "Down the Slopes with Conan Doyle at Davos", *Journal of the Arthur Conan Doyle Society*. Vol. 4, Chester, 1993, pp. 88-103
- ³² C.W. and E.C. Richardson, in *The Davos Courier*, 7 March 1902.
- ³³ W.G. Lockett, *The Davos Portrait Gallery I, The Brothers Richardson, Davoser Revue*, Jahrgang IV, Nr. 5, 1929, pp. 126-129
- ³⁴ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 2 November 1902
- ³⁵ *Alpine Post and Engadiner Express*, 7 November 1903
- ³⁶ Arnold Lunn, *The Story of Skiing*, London, 1952, p. 33
- ³⁷ Richard Holt, *An Englishman in the Alps: Arnold Lunn, Amateurism and the Invention of Alpine Ski Racing*, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol 9, No.3, (December 1993), pp. 421-432, p. 428