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Dan Foster picks his way up the Creighton Korman route in Smugglers' Notch,
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Where does the BMC get its money from?
Photo: Alex Messenger.

A question of funding

Just where does the BMC get its money from?

Gone are the days when you could run an organisation like the BMC from a dusty backroom with a single filing cabinet. Representing a touch over 65,000 members and employing 25 full-time staff, the modern BMC burns through about £1.75m a year. Some of this goes towards running the office. But most of it goes toward the activities that people join us for: keeping crags open, safety and equipment advice, lobbying important people to nip problems in the bud, liability insurance for members, running events, marketing, producing a website and Summit magazine to tell everyone about it.

So where does this million-and-three-quarters actually come from? Well, the 2007 Annual Accounts show that last year 59% of the income needed to run the BMC came from membership subscriptions, 30% from trading activities (including travel insurance), and a slim 11% from Sports Council grants.

The figures are healthy. Membership is growing – an 8.4% increase in the last year – probably down to our new membership database starting to generate new marketing possibilities and the recent very successful Direct Debit offer. The 30% of income from trading activities (including the online shop and various events) is on track

too, but we're not resting on our laurels. We've just completely overhauled the online travel insurance application process and are about to launch a revamped online shop.

It's the smallest slice of the pie chart that causes the most confusion: most people think that the BMC is plugged into some huge source of government cash, but sadly this isn't true. However this does mean that compared to many other national sports bodies we're actually in a very good situation. The majority are heavily reliant on government support – up to 95% in some cases – to run their operations. This brings with it all the inherent insecurity and uncertainty of short-term funding commitments and the knock on effects of personnel or policy changes within government and its departments. Fortunately we're largely immune to the sort of pressures faced by other bodies, and can concentrate on simply representing climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers.

We used to get some funding from UK Sport, their focus is on elite performance and Olympic sport; previously they supported elite performance in mountaineering via the BMC expedition grants, and Mountain Leader Training at a UK level. But over the past three years they've completely turned their back on climbing and mountaineering to concentrate

on medal-winning Olympic sports.

Our current government funding comes from Sport England – their focus is different to UK Sport – their aim is to make England more active by encouraging more people to get involved in sport. So right now we're filling in lots of headache-inducing forms for the next four-year cycle of applying for some cash to put towards clubs, volunteers, high performance and mountain training.

But who decides how the money is spent? In the case of any funding from Sport England, they decide – and funding is ring-fenced and continuing targets must be met. And in the case of the other money, the membership cash, the insurance profits, then that's decided by a mindboggling process involving the National Council, the Executive Committee and the Finance Committee, directly influenced by priorities identified at BMC Area Meetings. We're in the process of producing the new four-year strategy for the BMC, the grandly named, 'Strategic Plan 2009 – 2013', and that will be available for comment on the website very soon. It's your money – tell us what you'd like to see it spent on. ■

What should BMC funding priorities be? Let us know – email summit@thebmc.co.uk.

WELCOME TO...

ISSUE 51

Summit is the membership magazine of the British Mountaineering Council. The BMC promotes the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers and the freedom to enjoy their activities. The primary work of the BMC is to:

- » Negotiate access improvements and promote cliff and mountain conservation.
- » Promote and advise on good practice, facilities, training and equipment.
- » Support events and specialist programmes including youth and excellence.
- » Provide services and information for members.

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RISK & RESPONSIBILITY

Readers of Summit are reminded that climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.



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Birds and the bees

The birds and the bees are hot topics right now. The Sunday Times ran a story about Himalayan honey bees operating at 8,000 metres – off route maybe. And at home there's trouble with the peregrines, Natural England and The Roaches.

Like many people with a total of many years – my wife Ruth says it's been most of our marriage – spent walking and climbing in the hills, my memories of mountain flora and fauna are among the most enduring recollections that I have.

I can vividly remember so much: lammergeyers, foxes and hares in the Rongbuk valley; picas, the little tail-less rodents above 6,000 metres at Chomolungma advanced base camp; choughs above 7,000 metres; blue poppies; valleys of flowers; rhododendrons; the extraordinary harvest of the caterpillar fungus; glimpses of bears; musk deer; ibex; bharal; blue sheep; Tibetan asses; a pine martin; golden eagles and the swallowtail butterfly. Like most climbers, I cherish the natural world.

It therefore came as a surprise that Natural England had decided to ban all climbing on a wide area on the Roaches – to protect a pair of peregrine falcons who were nesting on the upper tier. Let's get it straight, the BMC is all for protecting nesting birds, and liaises closely with the RSPB all over the UK. And by and large, climbers respect nesting restrictions such as those on Lundy and South Stack.

But to include banning bouldering at the bottom of the Roaches seems to me an excessive piece of bureaucracy. I gather the RSPB is on our side about this piece of over reaction – let's hope that the bureaucrats see sense. Meanwhile, I'm sure we all wish Mr and Mrs Peregrine and family well, and good hunting when the children grow up!

Have a great autumn.



Charles Clarke
BMC President

ON THE COVER: Chris Sharma working his epic deep water solo, Es Pontas, in Mallorca. He attempted the climb 80 times before success - to produce the hardest deep water solo in the world.
Photo: Corey Rich/Aurora Photos.

THIS PAGE: Holly Rees eyes up her next hold at the BMC British Bouldering Championships, Cliffhanger.
Photo Alex Messenger.

Get all the latest essential news at www.thebmc.co.uk/news

Click and go

BMC insurance gets even better with new website



If you're serious about your fun, then it pays to be serious about your choice of travel insurance too. Leading climbers and mountaineers rely on BMC insurance to give them the cover they need, and whether you're sport climbing in Spain, trekking in the Himalaya, climbing Mont Blanc, skiing in Chamonix or even climbing Everest, then we've got a policy to suit. And best of all,

by purchasing BMC insurance you're not only guaranteed the best insurance cover around, but also help to fund our vital work as the national representative body for climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers

We constantly strive to improve our insurance, and this year has seen some fantastic improvements:

- 10% reduction on all annual premiums
- All other premiums held or reduced
- Save 50% with our new rates for 65-69 year olds
- Up to 5% discount for online purchases

Take advantage of our Direct Debit membership scheme and save even further!

And now, we've completely redesigned our insurance website to make it even easier for you to take out cover.

Visit it today at www.thebmc.co.uk/insurance

Get shopping with the BMC

We're also about to launch a brand new online shop. This will feature all the twiddly bits you'd expect in a modern online shop, including video clips, pdf previews of books, and of course, great savings for BMC members.

Look out for an exclusive offer code in the next issue of *Summit*



Recycle and support the BMC

Since the start of the recycling scheme for inkjets we've raised £1,317 for the BMC Access and Conservation Trust (ACT). And now we're just got £2,379 from the mobile phone appeal. A huge thank you to everyone who has taken part. Please keep up the good work by sending your empty cartridges and mobile phones to EAH Recycling – every cartridge and mobile phone is much appreciated as the BMC receives a generous donation for each one. We're also doing our bit in the office – we managed to recycle an impressive 95% of a recent 348Kg of computer and electronic waste.

For extra envelopes call EAH Recycling on 01473 658161

Big guns head to Kendal

See Reinhold Messner and Catherine Destivelle at Kendal Film Festival



Kendal film festival (20th-23rd November) is the premier social event for outdoor enthusiasts in the UK. At the heart of the programme is the mountain film competition, attracting film premieres from around the world, with ten coveted prizes up for grabs. There's also the Art and Book Festivals, the Boardman Tasker literary award plus the Adventure Film Academy for aspiring film-makers. And alongside all this is a packed timetable of lectures, slideshows and presentations, including these four heavyweights:

Reinhold Messner. Often cited as the greatest mountaineer of all time, Messner was the first to summit Everest without oxygen and then first to repeat the feat solo. He was first to climb all the world's fourteen 8,000m peaks, and pioneered alpine-style mountaineering in the Himalayas. This is a very rare opportunity to hear one of the true greats in the mountaineering world speak,

Catherine Destivelle. Well known to UK audiences from the TV film *Seo*, with its amazing climbing sequences on cliffs in Mali, Catherine is also a hugely accomplished alpinist.

David Breashears. Climber, author and filmmaker. In 1985 he was the first American to reach the summit of Everest twice and went on to guide Dick Bass on the first ascent of the Seven Summits. Breashears was on Everest during the 1996 disaster and was made famous by Jon Krakauer's book 'Into Thin Air'.

Steph Davis. Recognised as one of the world's premier adventure climbers, Steph is one of the few women to have free-climbed El Capitan. She is also the first woman to climb all seven named summits in the Fitzroy massif. She has also recently taken up BASE jumping...

See www.mountainfilm.co.uk for full details

Warm winter welcome wanted

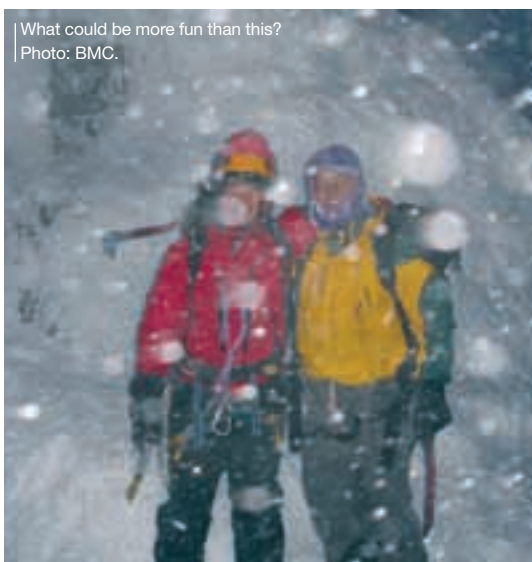
Sign up for the BMC International Winter Meet 2009

Got a good knowledge of the Scottish winter mountains? Want the chance to introduce Scottish climbing to guests from around the world? Then you need to apply for a place on the BMC International Winter Meet 2009. From 22nd February to Sunday 1st March, over fifty climbers from around the world will be converging on Glenmore Lodge in the Cairngorms – to be shown the perverse delights of Scottish winter climbing. There will be a packed schedule: climbing every day, presentations every evening and a great final-night party.

BMC International Meets are a great opportunity to make friends from around the world, and you don't need to be a top-end climber to come along. However, you do need to be an experienced and competent winter climber/mountaineer with sound navigation skills and the ability to cope safely with all that Scotland can throw at you. Some of the guests may have little or no winter climbing experience, so it's vital that you feel confident climbing with such partners.

The cost is just £85 for all accommodation, food and transport – you just have to get yourself to Glenmore Lodge, and be a current BMC/MCofS or MCI member.

Contact becky@thebmc.co.uk to find out more



What could be more fun than this?
Photo: BMC.

Don't get piste off

Head off-piste with a new BMC and Plas y Brenin DVD

The BMC and Plas y Brenin have teamed up to produce 'Off Piste Essentials' – a new DVD for off-piste skiing, ski-touring and ski-mountaineering. The film follows a group of skiers in Austria as they explore the off-piste potential of a ski-resort before undertaking a multi-day ski tour. It also covers clothing and equipment, slope assessment, skiing in glaciated terrain and dealing with emergencies. Shot on location in the Austrian Alps earlier this, the film is written and directed by Martin Chester and Rob Spencer – both Guides working at Plas y Brenin. Produced by Slackjaw, it will be launched at the Kendal Mountain Film Festival this November.

Filming the new DVD.
Photo: Martin Chester.



Get the white idea

Get your skills up to speed with the BMC Winter Lectures



This year's BMC Winter Lectures will be presented by Dave Hollinger (Aspirant Guide and MIC) and Rob Jarvis (MIC). Whatever your aims this season, Dave and Rob will make you aware of the skills required to explore the winter mountains. Topics include equipment

and clothing, navigation, footwork, route planning, avalanche awareness and climbing. Plus a heap of exciting tales and inspirational photos.

Dates and venues:

Manchester	Tue 11th November
Newcastle	Wed 12th November (TBC)
Cambridge	Mon 17th November
Londo	Tue 18th November
Oxford	Wed 19th November
Leicester	Thu 20th November

The BMC Winter Lectures are sponsored by Lowe Alpine and Asolo

Find out more at www.thebmc.co.uk/skills

IN SHORT

BMC head to No. 10

The Prime Minister is hosting a reception for the BMC in 'Celebration of British Mountaineering' at No.10 Downing Street in October. The event is being held in recognition of the work of the BMC, of all British mountaineering activities and the current role our sport plays in contributing to a fit and active nation.

CLIMBER

Photo competition

Don't miss out on the chance to win £300 worth of Mountain Hardwear gear in the Climber magazine photo competition. Enter at www.climber.co.uk.

Say no to Snowdonia airport

The Snowdonia Society is running a campaign to stop the opening of a commercial airport in Snowdonia National Park. A company want to take over the RAF military airfield at Llanbedr, near Harlech, on a 125-year lease for private light aircraft; the Society has set up an e-petition on the National Assembly website calling for a full public consultation.

BMC funds tick leaflet

The BMC has funded a new leaflet giving advice on ticks, how to avoid them and what to do if you are bitten. See www.thebmc.co.uk/access. We're also giving away 100 free tick lassos – see page 14. >>

IN SHORT

New Yorkshire Dales map

The next British Mountain Map is almost printed. Designed especially for walkers and climbers, the Yorkshire Dales map covers the area from Sedburgh to Reeth (East-West) and Kirkby Stephen to Settle (North-South) and includes the popular three peaks of Penyghent, Whenside and Ingleborough. Look out for an exclusive offer in the next issue.

Coast looks clear

In June the BMC met with Jonathan Shaw, Minister for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs to discuss the coastal access provisions in the Draft Marine Bill. We expressed our support for the outline scheme presented in the Bill and reiterated the good management practices we already operate around the coast. The Minister was interested to learn more about the BMC and offered some reassuring comments on our involvement.

Clubs working group

The new Clubs Working Group recently had the first meeting of a six-month trial – designed to bring a small group of representatives together to discuss clubs and the BMC.

Nick Estcourt Award

Chris Bonington has announced that the Nick Estcourt Award will increase its annual grant from £1500 to £2000 from 2009. See www.nickestcourtaward.org.

Thanks to Mark Vallance

The BMC would like to say a big thanks to Mark Vallance for his UIAA involvement. Doug Scott has now taken over as the new BMC representative on the UIAA Council.

Peregrine parents pull it off

First peregrine falcon chicks for 100 years at the Roaches

Peregrine falcons have bred successfully at the Roaches, on one of the country's most popular climbing crags, thanks to the co-operation of climbers and visitors. Agreeing the extent of the restricted area proved a difficult process, involving multiple site meetings and discussions with the Peak Park, Natural England and the RSPB. Climbers were clearly pleased that the chicks successfully fledged, but the feeling amongst many people was that the reaction was out of proportion, and the restricted area too large.

With the possibility that a similar situation could occur next year, a meeting with National Park and Natural England is planned. The BMC has a long track record of endorsing and actively promoting restrictions that we consider to be reasonable, evidence based and negotiated by users and local experts. Hopefully we'll be able to reach a sensible agreement if the peregrines return; in the meantime we're pursuing a partnership project of creating more appealing nest sites away from the more popular climbing crags.

Local BMC Access Rep Henry Folkard said: "We're very pleased the young have been successfully reared. From the climbing point of view it's hardly possible to conceive a more inconvenient place for the birds to nest, so a very special word of thanks is due to all those who forewent their own enjoyment to help bring about this happy outcome."



Andi Turner (L) and Cath Flitcroft (R) get interviewed for Radio 4 at the Roaches. Photo: BMC.

BMC in the house

BMC steps inside parliament to lobby where it counts

In June, the BMC infiltrated the House of Commons raising the profile of the BMC and mountaineering amongst central government, MPs, DEFRA and Natural England. Dave Turnbull (BMC CEO) and Cath Flitcroft (BMC Access and Conservation Officer) represented the BMC at a programme of meetings set up by John Mann MP.

The first of these was a meeting with the Nepalese Ambassador where the new permit system for climbing peaks, the requirement for liaison officers, and the issue of rubbish left in the high mountains were all discussed. The Ambassador was also invited to the BMC 2009 Annual Dinner at Plas y Brenin.

Next up was a meeting with the Sports Minister, Gerry Sutcliffe. Here Dave and Cath explained the structure of the sport in the UK, stressed the stature of British climbing at an international level and explained its potential – given greater support from Sport England. The Minister was very supportive, and the BMC hopes to meet him again soon.

We also improved our knowledge of how best to make representations and give formal evidence when Bills are going through Parliament, and met with the Clerk of the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee who oversees this committee (which is currently taking evidence on the coastal access provisions within the Marine Bill). Two committee hearings on the Marine Bill, made up of MPs and Peers, were also attended where oral evidence was given on the coastal access provisions.

Team BMC also attended Prime Minister's question time in the Commons and a further session the following day during which John Mann raised a question related to the BMC and coastal access.

Backdale battle continues

Long-running quarry case to go to Court of Appeal

The Peak District National Park Authority has been granted permission to appeal against a High Court decision over alleged harmful quarrying on Longstone Edge, near Bakewell. Judges in London decided in late July that both the national park authority and the Department for Communities and Local Government had a case that should be heard by the Court of Appeal.

They also agreed the case should be heard quickly – possibly before the end of this year. This is the latest in a long series of legal contests over the site, and BMC Access Officer Guy Keating said: "Whilst we welcome an early decision in the Court of Appeal, remember that with each passing day, more and more of Longstone Edge is lost for ever. National Parks are here to be enjoyed – not destroyed."



Gary Rolfe, arctic explorer, dog musher and endurance athlete, lives in Greenland with his 12 dogs where fresh food isn't always available.

He says:

"For so long lightweight nutrition meant living off junk sold as "expedition food". With an Excalibur Dehydrator I pack top notch nutrition-rich foods I'd always considered to be impracticable luxuries, like plump fresh fruit and vegetables".

Gary with two of this year's pups, six-week old Bigness and Gus

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- Ideal for mountaineering clubs, major expeditions, adventure centres, outdoor enthusiasts and expedition outfitters



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The BMC has a team of two full-time Access Officers and a nationwide network of 40 volunteer Local Access Representatives - all working hard for climbers and hill walkers.

North West

Craig y Longridge

As a way of saying thanks to everyone who contributed towards the cost of acquiring this crag, we recently had a social shindig at the crag followed by refreshments in a local hostelry. A good time was had by all. We plan to complete the site work soon – with fencing and reseeding of the ground.

Lakes

Nesting restrictions

Thanks to all who contributed towards conservation by respecting the nesting restrictions. Once again there were no reported problems and early reports suggest a successful year for the birdies.

Wales

Clwyd limestone

The Countryside Council for Wales (CCW) recently expressed some concern at bolting activities in the Trevor area. The BMC, local activists and CCW will be meeting soon to discuss.

Pembroke

The nesting restrictions in South Pembrokeshire went well again. There were no reported problems, with breeding success from a number of rare species including chough. Thanks to Lynne Ferrand of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority for the monitoring and lifting a number of restrictions early.

South West

Avon

The new fence above Exploding Galaxy Wall is being damaged by setting belays too close to the top of the fence: they create leverage forces and loosen the stonework bolts. Please only set belays at the base.

Cheddar Gorge

The National Trust, Cheddar Caves & Gorge and site warden Martin Crocker report a vibrant Cheddar scene, with many climbers enjoying the great mix of trad challenges and sport routes. Thank to all for respecting the access arrangements over the spring period; if you climb in the Gorge and 'play by the rules', you're doing your bit to ensure that this summer access continues.

From 1st July to 7th September the restored routes on the South side of the Gorge (i.e. the Cheddar Caves & Gorge side) will be restricted. The first bolts will also be temporarily removed from popular roadside crags and the approach to Sunset Buttress. In the meantime, there are plenty of other routes available – see the BMC Cheddar Access Calendar at: www.thebmc.co.uk/Download.aspx?id=282.

North East

Back Bowden Doors

A project to fell a number of trees at the crag should be underway soon. The effort is being coordinated by Northumbria Mountaineering Club and there may be a call for volunteers – keep an eye on the BMC website.

Yorkshire

Foredale Quarry

Following a successful trial period, access is still allowed at this popular Yorkshire limestone sport venue. However, the landowner (who lives nearby) remains concerned about climbers on his land – especially those with dogs. One more incident – however minor – and climbing will be banned for good.

Please adhere to the following:

Park at the foot of the hill at the end of the quarry road, and walk past the farm quietly. Leave the metalled track halfway between the bend and the cottages. Walk up the grassy ridge to the right of the fence – see the BMC signs. No camping, no dogs and no fires.

Holmfirth Edge

Many thanks to Kirklees Council for removing the graffiti and paint from Holmfirth Cliff in West Yorkshire. A clean-up project had been planned for a while, and we were really impressed when Kirklees Council turned up with a powerful steam-jet cleaning system and blasted the offending paint into oblivion.

Widdop

A quick tip for all Lancashire climbers who dare to venture onto Yorkshire grit: the Widdop road from the M65/Brierfield/Nelson area will be closed for repairs from mid-September for three months.

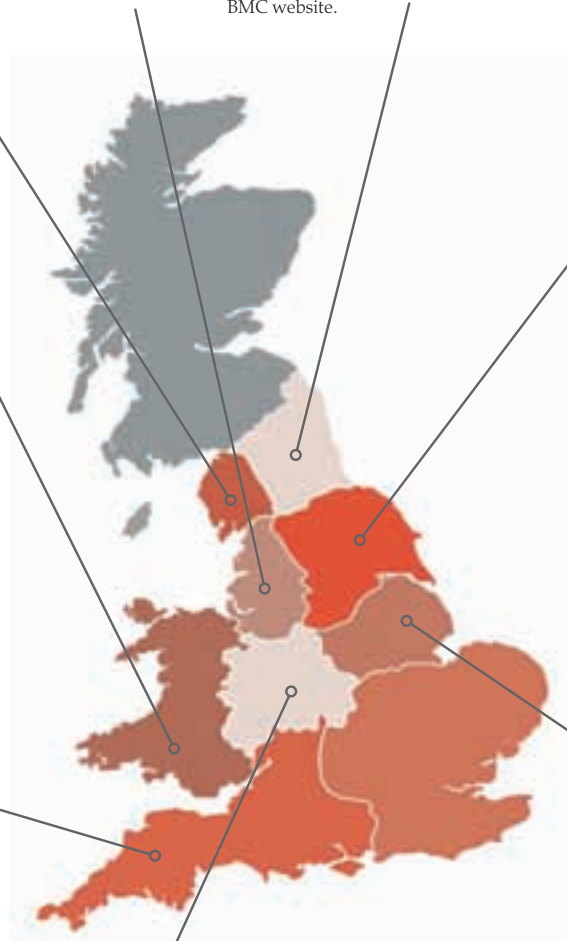
Peak District

The Roaches

By the time you read this, the peregrine chicks should have fledged this prominent nest site. This nesting restriction caused much debate in climbing circles and the BMC was not 100% happy with how the restriction process was handled. However we remain committed to working with the Peak National Park and Natural England in the future.

Turkey Dip Rocks

'No climbing' signs recently appeared at this steep bolted limestone crag on private land in the southern Peak. We've been in contact with the landowners and are hoping that the matter can be resolved soon.



Midlands

Forest Rock

The situation seems to have eased off at Forest Rock, although no new bolts have been placed to cause problems. Please be aware that local residents overlook Forest Rock so keep it clean and remove your rubbish.

Markfield Quarry

Signs have been erected in the quarry stating 'No Climbing or Absailing' (sic), but don't appear to have any impact on the climbing. The fence still remains in place, although there have been a few reports of people battling their way along the very worthwhile Baptism (VS 4c) and doing some cleaning en-route.

Find out more

For full details on any crag, see the Regional Access Database on the BMC website. Don't rely on your guidebook - it could be out of date.

www.thebmc.co.uk/rad

Your guide to climbing and hill walking in England and Wales

FocusOn... BMC Crag Care Fund

The BMC has just put £10,000 into a new Crag Care Fund to support the care and maintenance of crags in England and Wales. Half of this initial funding will go towards essential works at BMC owned and managed crags – including Horseshoe Quarry, Craig y Longridge and Bwlch y Moch. The other £5,000 will go towards area projects throughout England and Wales. Here's how to get your project supported

Q.What will the Crag Care Fund support?

A. The aim is to fund improvement works and activities that directly benefit the crags, access and volunteer opportunities, with the emphasis being on practical work. So, the Fund will help cover the costs of a number of things including;

- Materials and equipment for rock repair work
- Materials and equipment to support ground erosion control work and footpaths around the crag
- Equipment for woodland and vegetation management work
- Expert advice and survey work e.g. tree surgeons, ecological or botanical assessments
- Volunteer initiatives such as crag clean-up days or litter-picks
- BMC Area and Club 'adopt-a-crag' initiatives

However it won't support the cost of purchasing fixed equipment including bolts, pegs or lower-offs – this is covered by the BMC Better Bolts campaign.

Q. How will funding be allocated?

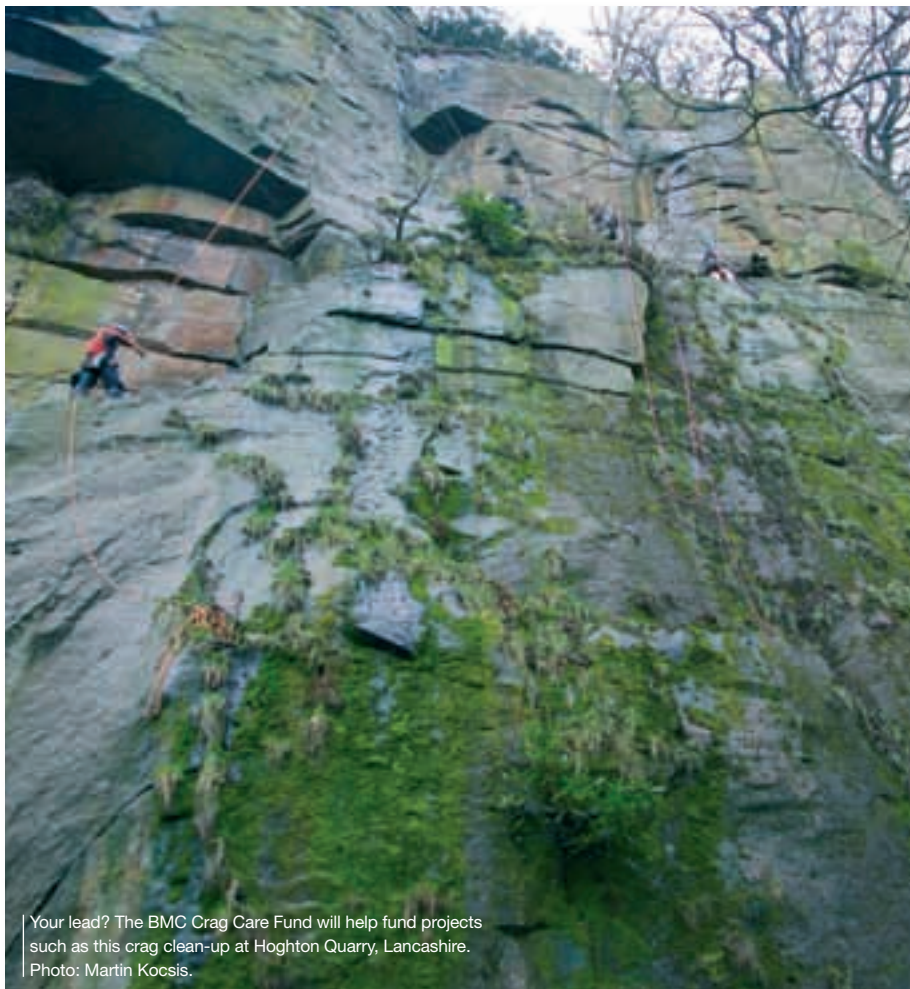
A. Money will be available to BMC members, areas and affiliated clubs. All applications must have the support of the relevant BMC area and it's the responsibility of BMC area access reps to decide whether applications require approval at an area meeting.

Q. Can you give an example?

A. A recent project proposal has been put together by a local access rep in conjunction with the area co-ordinator and the landowner. The work includes: fitting a new fence and gate with combination padlock to keep out unwanted intruders, removal of a large tree from beneath the central section of the crag, cleaning sections of rock, removal of loose blocks and encroaching brambles from the high breaks and levelling some areas of ground.

Q. How do I get involved in a project?

A. Getting involved is simple. You don't need any qualifications other than enthusiasm and a willingness to make a positive difference in the world of climbing and hill walking. If you are interested in getting involved with projects in your area, or know of a good potential project, contact Martin Kocsis on 0161 4383336 (martin@thebmc.co.uk). Alternatively get in touch with your local access rep – details on the website.



Your lead? The BMC Crag Care Fund will help fund projects such as this crag clean-up at Hoghton Quarry, Lancashire. Photo: Martin Kocsis.

Q. Who decides how to spend the money?

A. Applications of £500 or less will be agreed between the applicant(s), the relevant area official(s) and the BMC office. Martin Kocsis will be the office point of contact. Applications for over £500 will be subject to agreement by the Chair of the BMC Access, Conservation & Environment Group (ACEG) and the BMC CEO.

Q. I've a project in mind, how do I apply?

A. Having spoken to your local access rep and got the support of the area, download an application form from the website and send it in to Martin Kocsis.

Q. What's the difference between the Crag Care Fund and the Access and Conservation Trust?

A. The Access & Conservation Trust (ACT) aims to promote sustainable access to cliffs, mountains and open countryside by facilitating larger-scale education and conservation projects that safeguard the access needs of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers. ACT is a charitable trust, established by the British Mountaineering Council, the Mountaineering Council

of Scotland and the Mountaineering Council of Ireland. The key differences are:

Scale: ACT will aim to support larger projects with greater financial contributions.

Geographical Coverage: ACT supports projects throughout the whole of the British Isles with a landscape and regional focus.

Objectives: ACT aims to support a broader range of projects than the Crag Care Fund. Projects will focus on the sustainable use and conservation of the outdoor environment.

Legal Status: ACT is a charitable Trust making gift donations etc much more straightforward and tax efficient. ■

More information

www.thebmc.co.uk/cragcarefund
Visit the BMC website to find out more about the Crag Care Fund and download an application form.

www.thebmc.co.uk/Pages.aspx?page=107
The complete list of BMC local access reps.

Letters

Got an opinion? Then let us know!

Email: summit@thebmc.co.uk to get something off your chest.

Write to us at: BMC, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2BB

or have your say online at www.thebmc.co.uk/summit

STAR LETTER

No reservations

I've just returned from Windgather. I've visited this crag many times over my 52 years of climbing, so it was with some surprise that I found several routes 'reserved' for a Buxton-based commercial organisation instructing a party of youngsters. Ropes were hanging down routes which they had used, or were intending to use, rather akin to the German habit of reserving sun loungers with towels. Whilst I fully support the introduction of young people to the sport, I've some difficulty in condoning route reservation, particularly as it just seems to relate to business practice rather than the real reasons that most of us climb. When I raised the subject with one of the instructors, his attitude was less than sympathetic. What do others feel about this?

Dr David Price

For making a stand for the personal climber, David Price wins the star letter. Let us know if you come across any similar behaviour – and try and get the name of any organisations involved. – Guy Keating, BMC Access Team.

Helmet warning

Having recently purchased two of your guidebooks (Burbage, Millstone & Beyond and Stanage) for our school library, I wanted to express my disappointment at the lack of helmet-wearing being promoted in the photos. As a school on the edge of the Peak District, several well-qualified members of staff take many of our students climbing. These staff always promote best practice and insist that our students wear helmets when climbing and when they are at the foot of the crag. I've had to put a large warning message on the front cover of the books, warning of the lack of helmets on display, and reminding students that it is considered best practice to wear one. As a keen outdoor person I feel rather ashamed of this disregard for safety.

BMC guidebook photos are supplied voluntarily and usually reflect the full range of personal climbing (grades, ages, helmets etc). They're not intended to be best-practice manuals for school groups whose operating constraints are very different. Remember kids, climbing can kill you. – Niall Grimes, BMC Guidebooks.

Unhappy reader

I was wondering if there was a conflict of interest in Summit 50? You printed an article about the increased demands on Mountain Rescue Teams alongside very prominent photos and advertisements – including the front cover, the inside front cover and the contents page – that featured climbers without helmets. Whilst it is the individual climbers decision whether they wear a helmet or not, surely Summit should be setting an example? If the magazine wants to raise the issue of the increased pressure on a very valuable service, surely it should be encouraging climbers to practice safe climbing to ensure that they don't become another statistic?

Iain Johnson

Just like BMC guidebooks, Summit photos are all supplied voluntarily and we try to reflect the wide range of individual climbing out there. Summit has also run some very graphic articles on head injuries to help readers make up their own minds.

Happy reader

You've made my day! I'm the proud winner of the Rab Alpine jacket from the spring Summit competition. I'll be going to Nepal in October, hopefully to summit Mera Peak, and the jacket will be so much lighter in my pack than the one I own now. I've raised over £5,000 for Scope so far and can't wait to go. I'm all set up with BMC insurance too and hope this will be the first of many peaks. Thanks again.

Julia Woods

Get entering the competitions on the Stuff page and we could make your day too.

Coaching cover

Re the 'Wolves at the door' letter from issue 50: I suggest that anyone who has a qualification with some connection with coaching looks at the Sports Coach UK website. One of the membership benefits is a very good third-party cover and personal accident policy, whether working for pay or voluntarily. Full membership has a range of other benefits for £73 – looks a pretty good deal to me.

John Pring

Welsh thanks

I'd like to take the opportunity of thanking the BMC for its growing support for the Welsh language. It's clear that a great deal of effort is going into promoting mountain activities in Wales through the medium of Welsh, and I can tell you that it's much appreciated. Dymuniadau gorau.

Alun Davies

Win a Berghaus Arête 35 daysac worth £60 for your letter

Let off steam with a letter to Summit and you could win a brand new Arête 35 daysac from Berghaus.



The Arête is a no-frills daypack designed for cragging and walking. It features compression straps, two-point haul loop, four gear loops, side compression strap, ice axe/pole holders and two wand pockets. There's a fusion back system and oversized zip pulls for easy use. The pack is made from Esdura 600RS, a midweight 600-

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Stuff

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If you're heading off for an autumn adventure, then don't forget to take some BMC insurance with you. Get an instant quote and up to 5% off with our brand new online system, or simply call the office on 0161 445 6111. All profits from the scheme go towards working for climbers, hill walkers, and mountaineers.

Merrell Boots at Fitness Footwear **£89.99**

Put away those flip flops – summer is over. It's time to dig out some walking boots and head for the hills. But if your trusty fell footwear is looking a little worse for wear, then maybe it's time to treat your feet. Enter Fitness Footwear – a new footwear website for people who'd rather walk up Snowdon than trudge around town.

Fitness Footwear stock a wide range of hiking boots from all the popular manufacturers. They don't stop at walking either, with a range of sport and leisure shoes from running to rock climbing, and parkour to fashion. They also offer a 365-day returns policy (as long as boots are in an unworn condition), no 'restocking' fees and free delivery on all UK orders.

Visit www.fitnessfootwear.com to find out more

Win a pair of Merrell walking boots from Fitness Footwear

Fitness Footwear have got three pairs of Merrell Chameleon Arc Mid waterproof walking boots (worth £89.99) to give away to lucky readers.

Merrell Chameleon Arc Mid features:

- Waterproof construction
- Air cushion midsole
- Protective rubber toe bumper
- Breathable padded tongue
- Anatomical footbed to provide comfort and support

Just find out:

Q. Name four hiking boot brands available at Fitness Footwear.



Tick Alert TRIX Tick Lasso **£6.99**

Nothing spoils your day like discovering a tick embedded in your leg. Forget threatening it with a cigarette – for safe removal you need a Tick Alert TRIX Tick Lasso. Ticks pose a health risk not only here in the UK as they carry Lyme disease, but also in popular adventure holiday destinations throughout 27 countries in Europe where Tick Borne Encephalitis (TBE) is endemic. The Tick Lasso is made from a unique fibre and can be activated instantly, just like a ballpoint pen, making it quick and simple to use.



Buy online at www.misotrading.co.uk

For further information and advice visit www.masta.com/tickalert

Get a free Tick Alert TRIX Tick Lasso

We've got **100 free tick lassos** to give away – the first 100 people to send in their email address will get one of these handy extractors.

MuleBar

£33 for box of 24

Fed up of sugary gunk and want a great-tasting natural energy bar? You need to get a MuleBar down you. MuleBar are a new(ish) company formed by a couple of friends after a trekking trip across the Andes, making four flavours of energy bar: Pina Colada, Chocolate Fig Fiesta, Mango Tango and Hunza Nut.



The main difference between MuleBars and other products on the market is that these bars are 100% natural: a mix of fruit, nuts, cereals and rice so you've got a mix of sugars and carbohydrates for both shorter and longer-term energy. And as for the taste?

Reportedly pretty damn good – but why not enter our competition and find out for yourself.

Features include:

- 100% natural and organic
- Real, tasty food
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- Member of '1% for the Planet' group of companies

Find out more and order online at www.mulebar.com

Win a box of MuleBars

We've got two bumper boxes of 24 MuleBars to give away to lucky readers – worth £33 each. To win a box just find out:

Q. Name the climber who took MuleBars to Everest this May.

Hog Bouldering Mats

£120 (Ground Hog)

£135 (Long Hog)

If you're in need of a new bouldering mat this season, then check out the new offerings from The Climbing Factory – a team of dedicated boulderers with extensive experience in the foam industry. The mats are made and sourced wholly in the Peak District, and are specifically designed for our lovely damp British bouldering conditions.

They've started their range with two mats. First there's the **Ground Hog**: tough, durable and generously sized (130x105x10cm) – ideal for highball problems and uneven ground. Then for traverse fanatics there's the **Long Hog**: a versatile mat which can also be used for standard use. Use its full length for traverses (240x84x6.5cm) or fold it double to form a great standard mat (120x 84x13cm). It features a second-to-none foam system that allows each section of the mat to be just 6.5cm thick whilst still providing excellent support.



Features for both mats include:

- 3-layer foam for resilience and shape retention
- 3-way carry system
- Buckles for ease of opening/closing
- 1000-denier waterproof and durable cordura outer cover
- Side rings for pegging on slopes
- Reversible

Hog Mats also offer made-to-measure mats – so you can get one perfect for the fit of your car. Prices quoted on application.

Buy online at www.climbingfactory.co.uk. Free delivery anywhere in the UK.

Win a Ground Hog or Long Hog

Make rocky landings a thing of the past.

We've got two mats to giveaway:
one Ground Hog and one Long Hog.

Just tell us:

- Q.** In which Peak District town are Hog mats manufactured?



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HELLYHANSEN'S COOL™ MOVES SWEAT FROM YOUR SKIN FASTER AND KEEPS YOU COOLER THAN ANYTHING ELSE. NOTHING WORKS BETTER. TO BACK UP THIS CLAIM, HERE'S A LIST OF THE FINE PRINT TECHNOLOGY WE'VE ENGINEERED INTO THIS HIGHLY ATHLETIC SHIRT: LIFA STAY DRY TECHNOLOGY™, COOLGRID™, SUPERCHARGED™ FIBRE CONSTRUCTION AND X-PULSION TECHNOLOGY™.

Issue 50 winners

Many thanks to all those who entered competitions in the last issue, and well done if you won. Get entering these great competitions and it could be you showered in free gear next time. A full winners list is available from the BMC if required.

How to enter the competitions

Email summit@thebmc.co.uk with your answers. Or jot something onto a postcard and send it to: Summit, BMC, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2BB. Don't forget to state your name, address, which competition(s) you're entering and size if appropriate. Good luck!

Closing date is 01/10/08

Want to see your product here?

We're always on the lookout for new products to feature on these pages. It's free and very easy to arrange, email summit@thebmc.co.uk to find out more.

That's me

Naomi Buys, 26, Dental Receptionist, Burnley

The satanic Lancashire Quarries have long smouldered with some of the finest climbing talents this country has ever known. The foreboding walls and no-nonsense difficulty play right into the hands of the down-to-earth local personality, and climbers like Hank Pasquil, Paul Pritchard, Gareth Parry and Ian Vickers have all learnt their craft here before going on to make their mark.

Firmly in that tradition is Lancastrian Naomi Buys, and her husband, Jordan. Both from a very traditional apprenticeship, they've gone on to excel – with influences ranging from the dank quarries to local competitions at BoulderUK.

As such, Naomi's achievements have been across the board, and include on-sighting E5, bouldering V9, flashing F7b and red-pointing F7c. She also represented her country for three years on the British Bouldering Team. However, Naomi, first and foremost, just wants to climb, and any grades that come out of this are very much second place. A climber's climber.

I live in Burnley, but don't hold it against me. It's really easy to get away, to the Lakes, Yorkshire and North Wales. But it is rough – on Friday night everyone's out for a scrap.

I started climbing on a wall at school. Then teamed up with my brother Joel – I bought a guidebook, he bought a rack and we explored the quarries. It was pretty traditional, leading routes on-sight, a kebab, a pint then catching the bus home.

I met my husband at a Jamaican evening. Then introduced him to climbing – he was very pushy and soon started to get good. After we got married, BoulderUK opened, and totally transformed the way we climbed – it made training enjoyable –

and I got a place on the British Bouldering Team.

I used to think I could do everything and get away with it. But my health deteriorated a lot while I was doing competitions, and I ended up getting ulcerative colitis. It's a pretty nasty illness that ended up putting me in hospital, I think it was a way of saying slow down.

I work at a dentist, but I don't look into people's mouths. I'm a receptionist there. It's quite a posh dentist, so you have to be very organised. I like that.

We're both Jehovah's Witnesses. It's a great commitment in our lives, we spend a lot of time studying the bible and teaching other people about it. The bible's a great book, full of prophecies; if you want answers in life, we believe they are in there.

We've gone round houses, knocking on doors. Sometimes you get bad reactions, but there have been times when someone has answered the door, and they've been desperate in their life for some sort of answers. It's very fulfilling, and, like a lot of things, very misunderstood. I worry that people will think that we're fruit-loops, but then, you have to be true to yourself, and let people make their own minds up.



Climbing can become an obsession, too big a thing in your life. We have to be careful about that, we have to remember the spiritual side. And if you believe that life is a gift, doing life-threatening routes starts to not feel right. We've both eased back on this, and found more fulfilment from sport climbing and bouldering.

There are two things that Lancashire quarries breed: midges and good climbers. I think it's the Lancashire personality. The climbing that is, not the midges. It's very down-to-earth up here and there's little sense of the rat



*Interview by Niall Grimes.
Photograph by Alex Messenger.*

race that you get in bigger cities. And the quarries have such great routes, really pushy.

We live a very simple life. We live in a small house with a tiny mortgage. We both work part-time, so we don't have any money for luxuries; if we want to go on holiday, we really have to budget. But that's okay. We've made the choices about the life we want to lead, and it makes me really happy. That's precious.

I enjoy an E1 as much as an E5. I just love to go somewhere and do the classics.

Female climbers in Britain are really starting to believe in themselves. Competitions are great, you get a chance to measure yourself against other women, and there are loads of inspirational role models out there. But if I could say one thing to young female climbers, it's don't be a climbing girlfriend, be a climber.

I love good food. But I struggle with self-control, if I didn't watch it, I think I'd be twenty stone!

I absolutely have to have a long bath at least five nights a week. I call it

chillaxing. It has to involve lots of bubble bath, a cold drink, and a good book. I'm very choosy about the book though, it's got to be a gripping thriller.

I want to keep my balance. In the next five years I want to go to new places, climb classics, progress in bouldering and maybe climb an 8a. But I don't want to push it so much that I get stressed, and I also want to keep my spiritual side healthy. At the minute, I'm very happy, and I want to stay that way.

Naomi is sponsored by Boreal and BoulderUK. ■

Art of climbing

John Redhead, Image Maker

John Redhead was a controversial figure on the North Wales climbing scene during the 'eighties and 'nineties. Various from Liverpool and Llanberis, his large canvases were bold slashes of colour, and he thrived on the reaction they, and he, provoked. Was he a modern-day shaman paying homage to the Earth Goddess – or was he simply sexually obsessed?

Regardless, few could argue with his greatest work – the very art of climbing itself. A fantastically bold and talented climber, his new routes were a pointer to a future that is only now being realised. Characterised by lethal seriousness and intense difficulty, they were as uncompromising in line as in name: Raped by Affection, Misogynist's Discharge, The Bells, The Bells, Margins of the Mind, Womb Bits and Sexual Salami to state but few. Yet, ironically he is most notorious for a route at Clogwyn Du'r Arddu that no longer exists – Tormented Ejaculation at – a controversial half-line that became consumed by Master's Wall.

His 'serious clowning' reached a height with the publication of 'And One for the Crow' in 1997, a nihilistic and leering manifesto. Later projects included Soft Explosive, Hard Embrace (an antivision of Snowdonia), Bottles in Bottles out (interviews with Heroin addicts), and a televised solo up Norwich Cathedral (with tantric finish). One of his last public appearances was at the Kendal Film Festival in 2002, where he was pleased to receive no less than 59 complaints and one threat of legal action. He has now left the UK with his partner Mel to create a new life for his son Ryley in the French Pyrenees.

“I don't fit easily under labels of art and climbing, and in reality never served either of these bedfellows well or satisfactorily. Yet, it seems that my

whole life has been intensely preoccupied with the making of images from the land, the hills and somewhere else as if my life depended on it. Incuts and side-pulls are constants within the ever-changing flux and re-invention of my work.

Back in the 'eighties when I was most active as a climber, the studio was as much a rock face and the rock face a studio. I called the commitment to the routes a kind of 'field of savagery' and related the ascents to a ceremonial act. I didn't have to climb much, because the intense, essential nature of the routes was sufficient to provoke and release the images dwelling within. Intent is the key. The climbing wasn't the intent, the climbing was the action. The intent is the crux part of the formula which manifested itself back in the studio. This is process. The products on the wall always left me disinterested, as if the essential energy that informed the work had dissipated. The climbs were climbed and the paintings painted. The process is the wilderness and the product a zoo.

I never understood the term 'modern art'; I never understood 'sports climbing'. Now, it seems that modern art has finally 'come of age' for the masses. You too, the everyperson, can forget about what you like. You can cast off cynicism and confusion over the worth and status of art. You too can be modern. Is it cool to own a Tate Modern mug and span your semi with appropriately moody Rothko wallpaper? Beware of blatant merchandising. Like all

contemporary fashions offering a momentary buzz it's a clever consumer trick that, when the novelty wears off, will leave you wondering what next. Tesco as an art gallery?

Perhaps it's not surprising that I have long been a cynic of the art world, and always an outlaw to the business of art and climbing. It would be easy for me to say that I no longer paint, that I no longer climb. So does this article end here? Do I have more to say on the subject? Oh yes, because the dialogue, the language never left me and moves me in a different way.

In the 'nineties it moved me into the construction of large three-dimensional, free-standing panels. Galleries became a no-go area. Suddenly, the shopping centre (yes, Tesco's!) the marketplace, the factory site and cathedrals became a performance area where the issues of the day were discussed. These three-dimensional, semi-abstract panels were shaped from the slabs, walls and aretes of Cloggy and jigsawed together vaguely into a circle, creating a sacred space within the everyday.

Passers-by were hassled and provoked, the contents of their shopping bags pulled out for discussion, their private lives disassembled, their finances and love life all up for grabs. This created a very volatile intervention which I called ritual healing – an Urban Vimbuza. At one such performance in Norwich, I climbed the cathedral after a street performance to question the validity

and use of sacred sites today, and to release the angst-laden street energy whilst negotiating the ancient, pagan site. A kind of ritual trickery! I had a w*nk in the inside of the very topmost part of the spire.

Re-shaping in the 'nineties involved multimedia ventures. The palette of paint became digital sound. Investigating the landscape sonically and creating sculptural sounds started with Dinorwig slate quarry. This became a publication of words, images and sounds called 'Soft Explosion Hard Embrace'. It was a strange experience, gathering sound creatures and playing with them within the animalistic labyrinth of circuit boards and computer software. It gave tongue to the wailing and skirmishing of ghosts felt whilst developing the quarry for climbing in the 'eighties.

I'm continuing this forensic approach to the landscape in the Pyrenees. Textural sonic feedback from the raw landscape creates the soundscape in a living atrium for the audience to wander through at will. The whole physical site is both instrument and gallery in one. The source material is presented as a coherent fiction of other worlds and impossible music, not layered into a style. This is the media. It is the media where I think sound ratios change, double back, twist, jump about and turn inside out. I think it can evoke a unique sense of perception, not only of the world but of your immediate space.

And yes, I have started to paint again – a visualisation of the sounds. Each painting will have its own aural field – a circle of sounds that interact and juxtapose. Paintings like huge acupuncture needles sticking out of the mountains emitting their strange resonance to any life form that happens to pass by.

Has Margins of the Mind been repeated yet? ■ ”

Find out more about John and his work at www.johnredhead.org.





Chris
SHARMA

By Niall Grimes

www.thebmc.co.uk


Climbing is now spelled **Sharma**, once shouted the American climbing magazines, and they were right. Chris Sharma has been at the very **top** of the climbing game for **ten years**, travelling the globe to power his way up previously **unimaginable** blank canvases of rock.

Now **27**, he is balanced on the **crest of a wave**; here he talks exclusively to **Niall Grimes** about a life lived through climbing, his **motivations** and just how he will feel handing the **torch** over to the **next generation**.



Since he started deep-water soloing, Chris Sharma had wanted to find something right at his limit, and he found it here, at Es Pontas off the coast of Mallorca. The crux featured a wild seven-foot dyno that took about 50 attempts to catch. He didn't grade the route, but it's believed to be F9a+. Photo: Corey Rich / Aurora Photos

Chris Sharma - a life lived through climbing.
Photo: Keith Ladzinski.



“Climbing is the window we see our life through but it’s just part of our life. It’s not like we’re machines, it’s more a natural expression of being happy.”

Is Chris Sharma the World's Greatest Rock Climber? Is there anyone with a DVD player who doesn't know of the life, philosophies and climbs of this young Californian? A young, strong-fingered teenager, first viewed in the Free Hueco video, who really moved into a starring role in my favourite-ever climbing flick, *Rampage* – a fantastic display of different values and personalities.

Chris's abilities, joy, and most importantly, his personality, rose off the screen, in film after film, article upon article, and the thing that came off these, was that sense that you actually knew something about Chris. For the first time since Johnny Dawes, here was a figure that climbers could really care about.

The blockbusters have continued. First there was the wide-angled joy of his first ascent of Realization, nine-something, then as a shade-hunting sunshine-guru in Pilgrimage. Lately, the all-conquering King Lines has taken a reflective look at a figure knowingly balanced on the crest of a wave.

It charts his yawning success on Three Degrees of Separation – his screen-busting F9a at Ceuse in France. It follows his attempts on an unclimbed line at Clark Mountain, California – a 60-metre hurricane of non-positions and never-holds – which has spat him out on numerous 20-metre falls. It charts his attempts, and eventual success, on the amazing deep-water solo of Es Pontas, Mallorca. A battle worthy of epic poetry that yielded one of the world's most celebrated lines. Now with a huge celebrity status, Chris has the luxury of not having to buy his way onto magazine covers with big grades, and can afford to leave his creations unrated. However these climbs all come on the market well above F9a, and all represent the cutting edge on astounding lines.

He continues his quest. Now living in Spain, he's bolted up several more DVD-worthy projects – a line in Santa Linya, a limestone cave on a gobsmacking scale near Barcelona, a line beside his Ceuse masterpiece, Realisation, and a line beside La Rambla in Siurana. When these lines get done, they'll no doubt be right at the very limit too.

I caught up with Chris in the flesh while he was in Sheffield as part of a

'multi-nation lecture tour' (England and Swansea!). The funny thing was how normal it was to meet him. I realised that this was due to how similar he was in real life to what we have seen so often on telly. The slowly delivered, earnest attempts to give answers, the soft calmness and a certain vulnerability. So similar, in fact, that at one point I reached for the volume control.

Before the interview, one last thing to point out. Hoping to find some dark flaw in his character – I have yet to find someone of either sex who can bring themselves to dislike the guy – I've got to say, I thought he was a really nice person. What you see is what you get. The person in the video is the person you meet, and I imagine also the person you have known for ten years.

Here are the results of my intrusions.

As a climber, what's been your best achievement?

I'd have to say Es Pontas in Mallorca. I've done a lot of hard sport routes and stuff, but that route, to me, was kind of like inventing a new style, it's so perfect that it really felt like something new. And of course, there's Realization.

Realization has had six ascents now, what do you make of that?

I think it's great. Although, it is definitely a lot harder to do the first ascent of something – you have to have the vision to see that it's possible, really believe that it can be done and keep working at it. When other people have done something, you know that it's within the human realm and it's easier to talk yourself into it.

Would you say you were stronger than other climbers?

Not necessarily, I wouldn't say I had any special qualities. It's not like the human genes have evolved towards climbing in a better way. Maybe I have a better perception of what's possible. It's not like people are way stronger now than they were 20 years ago. The early 'eighties, and 'nineties had some really great climbers, but they were standing on the edge of something that was just being broken into. You've got to really believe something is possible and convince yourself that you can do it.

Do you think that advances are getting closer to the limit?

On a personal level, or on a climbing-in-general level? If it's on a personal level, I can tell you. I've been climbing for fifteen years now. I started when I was twelve, and within five years was climbing F8c+ and F9a. After you get accustomed to climbing, it feels like it's hard to improve a lot, the increments are so small. So, I don't think I'm way stronger than I was five years ago, but I have been taking what I've learned, my experiences from the past, and building on those.

How then could you categorise, say, your first, middle and last five years in terms of your change?

My first five years were getting involved in climbing. I had this huge improvement really through natural ability. Then from 17 until 22 I was really into bouldering, but when I think of that time, I guess I wasn't quite as motivated. I'd realised that I was a very talented climber, and never really had to work to get better or feel fit. Maybe, as I'd always taken it for granted, I wasn't so bothered. It was always like, "Oh, I'll do it next year." In the last five years I realise that I'm not going to be at my peak forever, and if I want to do certain things in climbing, I need to focus, now.

But it's normal not to be motivated. It's normal – when you've done things all your life – to go through ups and downs. You can get bombed out about that, or you can think that you're not doing the right thing. I think it's pretty standard to go through these phases. Climbing is the window we see our life through but it's just part of our life. It's not like we're machines, it's more a natural expression of being happy.

It sounds like you had a time when you weren't sure about your life?

I started at 12 and climbed non-stop from there, so maybe I became curious about other things I'd missed out on. I never took climbing very seriously, but in the last few years have been more aware that time is limited. I've got to take advantage of the time I have, and not question what I should be doing.

Does that give you more freedom?

Yeah, it's made climbing more rewarding. It was good to be playful, but now that I have to dedicate myself a bit more, I'm not questioning things as much. I feel more settled with who I am.

You have to have the **vision** to see that it's **possible**, really **believe** that it can be done and **keep working** at it. When other people have **done something**, you know that it's within the **human realm**.

Chris Sharma about to catch one of the three wild dynos on his route, Three Degrees of Separation (F9a) at Ceuse, France. Photo: Corey Rich / Aurora Photos.

Chris Sharma powering his way through Witness the Fitness (V15) - a 40- foot horizontal roof problem in the Ozark Mountains, Arkansas.
Photo: Corey Rich / Aurora Photos.



And do you think that experience is something that a lot of people go through, that perhaps it's nothing special to climbing?

Yeah, I think so. Climbing is a sport, but it's also like a lifestyle. And it's something that we do for such a long period of time that our phases in life are reflected in our approach.

So where do you see the next five years, what do you think will happen then - does the realisation that time is finite bring extra pressure?

Yeah, but in a positive way. I can focus on the things I want to do, without wasting so much time. I really want to do that route on Clark Mountain you know. That's definitely one project that's really important to me before I lose my edge. It's also inspiring to see how people like Ben Moon have evolved through climbing, now owning his own company. The business of climbing – that's pretty interesting. Sometimes I think I should maybe go back to school, but there are so many aspects to climbing that I can learn from – the design side, learning the industry.

That thing you mentioned earlier, the thing that it takes to do the first ascent, the vision – have you had times when the vision has failed?

Living in Spain you have a funny problem – where do we go today? You can bolt projects all over the place, and you should really be focussing your energy on something, but you just keep going around finding more and more lines. Nothing really gets done. So at some point you have to just pick something, focus on it and stick to it.

It sounds like your passion is for redpointing. Do you do much on-sighting?

Climbing routes at my limit really motivates me. On-sighting's a different style of climbing. I really like it, it's fun, but it's a different game. You have to climb well and fight and figure out the sequence. But if you fall, it's not necessarily because the route was too hard for you, it's often because you don't find the right hold. What really attracts me to doing hard redpoints is to find something that is absolutely at my limit, my total physical limit.

When you climb harder projects, does it come down to the mental side or the physical side?

Both. It's such a fine, fine line. You can find lines that are just within your grasp, just out of your reach. You have to improve, to become a better climber. But you also have to be determined enough, and keep a positive attitude. That's definitely mentally challenging.

Are there times when you've started to lose your positive attitude?

Totally. Six weeks is the maximum I've ever been able to work anything straight, then I have to take a break.

What routes have taken the longest?

Realization or Es Pontas. Those are the longest things I've ever worked on.

Was there ever a time when you doubted you would ever do them?

Definitely. After my first trip to Realisation I was burnt out on that thing – I was only 16, had tried hard and didn't do it. I didn't even think about going back until a couple of years afterwards. The whole process takes time, you can't force it.

Is it a battle?

It is, but slowly, in its own time. You have to beat the route into submission, not yourself. It's easy to get down, to lose psyche, and get into a position where you're not going to send the route. You have to keep a fresh attitude; make the most of the motivation and put all your energy into it. When the motivation goes, when it stops being fun, when you're forcing yourself up it, then it doesn't seem to work so well. I think, in a way, my lack of discipline has always been good for me. When I'm not motivated, I don't force it, I quit. It's kept climbing fun. I've seen people get super-serious about climbing and really frustrated, and then just kind of give the whole thing up. Maybe I have a lazy streak, but the motivation has always come back, and stronger.

Could you say that by climbing such hard things, that in any given year you spend most of life not experiencing success?

Yeah, totally! I know I could climb a lot of routes. A load of people just try

and climb a lot of hard routes, but I'm not so motivated by that; repeating a lot of F8c+'s and F9a's doesn't hold my attention. I end up trying things that are super at my limit – and spend most of my time falling. But that's the process, I want to do something that's the next level for me.

Do you compare yourself against routes?

Yeah. Like last year I was in Ceuse, I bolted a route that became Three Degrees of Separation. I was there with Dave Graham and Ethan Pringle, and they were working on Realization. I'd been bolting all day – long, hard and physical work – and I came down and they asked if I wanted a go. I was like, "I'll give it a burn, just for fun." I ended up getting way up past the crux, and that was my warm-up burn. It was cool because it felt way easier than it did years ago, it felt like a real improvement.

And what about other climbers - do you compare yourself to them at all?

It's cool to climb with good

climbers, that's for sure, it's good motivation. But to compare climbers is hard. Climbing is a sport, but it's not like tennis or basketball. I was thinking about this the other day – you can't really compare music, or musicians, and say which is the best one. Well, you can, but it's much more subjective. Just like climbing.

Which other climbers do you think are impressive?

I thought people like Dani Andrada and Edu Marin were impressive. Then I saw Adam Ondra. Man, that really blew my mind – he's the first person I've seen who's really on another level.

How? Was his climbing noticeably different?

Yeah, totally. I don't necessary compare myself to other climbers, but I can fathom what they are doing. With Adam, I'm not so sure. He's only 15 now, but give him a few years – and some muscle and reach – and he'll be doing stuff way harder than anything I've done.

“Repeating a lot of F9a's doesn't hold my attention. I end up trying things that are super at my limit - and spend most of my time falling.”



| Sharma in contemplative mood.
| Photo: Prana.

Has he got the mind for it too?

Yep. Seems like it. He's very focussed and climbs very well. He climbs as if he's been climbing for a really long time: great footwork and decisive moves.

What is it in particular that blew you away about him?

He's just a super-good climber, man. He's super-strong and super-fast. These projects that I've bolted and have been working on for a long time – he gets on them and he's – just... wow.

Would you like him to try that line you bolted to the right of La Rambla?

He did try it, and he did great. He was lacking height on a move because he's still really small. But I saw him and thought I'd better send this quick, he just needs to grow 3cm and he's got it. I bolted a line to the left of Realization last summer, something futuristic. There were about ten moves in a row where I just couldn't do a single move – but I could hang on the holds, I imagined it would be possible. So that's a line for him. It's cool to put up routes for the future. I've cultivated a vision of seeing lines, even if they are too hard for me. Maybe I'll bolt some stuff for the next generation – for Adam Ondra.

If he did go and do these things, which really took things to a different level, would it change the way you thought about climbing yourself and your motivations?

I just want to push my own limits. Obviously it's motivating and encouraging that people respect my achievements, but I'm definitely not going to quit climbing just because someone is climbing harder than me. It's a natural progression, it's the next generation. It's motivating. I've been in that situation before, I've been that kid. So it's cool to see things progress.

Is there something, over the next five years, that you want to achieve? Is there a place you want to take climbing to?

For me, if I could do that project on Clark Mountain, I'd be satisfied. It'd leave behind something that'd be a milestone in the world of climbing. But at the same time, climbing's a very personal thing – I'm not really thinking about how it affects anyone else. Although, it is great that through the videos people get motivated and inspired. It's great to have that as a way to contribute to the climbing community.

Do you feel like you are reflective towards the end of your climbing career at all?

Yeah. If I do want to do certain things, like this project in Clark Mountain, then I have to make it happen. I'll be 27 next month,

that much older, that much closer to the end of my career. Now is the time to take advantage of the fitness and the strength that I have. It's kind of motivating to do something about it, to actually focus and channel my energy in one direction. And I guess giving more thought to how I can make climbing something that will last and support me throughout my life.

Do you think there will come a time when you won't be doing what you're doing right now?

Yeah, sure I do. I'm climbing in my prime, but that's not something that will last forever, you can't keep expecting to do the hardest things. It's normal, the transitions happen naturally. I think my life is always going to be tied to climbing though – maybe I'll get more into teaching climbing or equipment design. It's important to have things to motivate you: a musical instrument, study, painting, climbing, starting a business or whatever. You've got to live a fulfilling life, whatever that takes. But I don't have a plan – I take it one day at a time and see what opportunities present themselves.

Who are your favourite people in the world?

I guess, just my friends, who I spend most of my time with. I don't have a really big family, so it's more my friends, especially those from back home in Santa Cruz. They're really like my family. They're mostly climbers but some of them have been like big brothers to me over the years.

Does your travel make it hard to be connected with them?

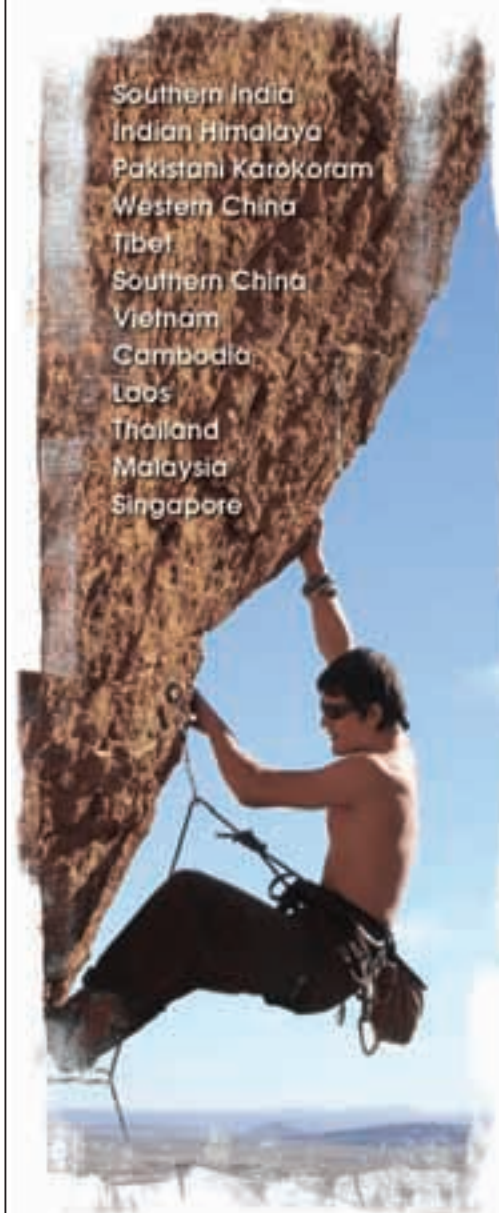
I've always been travelling, so I feel fortunate to have a really big community of friends spread out all over the world. That's just kind of how it's worked out. It's always been hard to pick a place to call home, but I've got a transient lifestyle and I'm used to that.

So where are you at right now?

I like being in Spain. It seems to suit me pretty well. I don't have any big plan, just to take it one step at a time and see what happens. And to be smart about it all – to realise that one day I'm not going to be best climber about, and to not confuse that with who I am as a person. Who we are is not necessarily our accomplishments, it's about how we relate with people and approach our life in general. Things are always changing. Climbing is a great thing, it definitely gives me a lot of happiness but it's not the source of it.

You have to find happiness from within, you know? ■

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NORTHERN EXPOSURE

Susie Allison heads to the top of the world to catch some sun – and seals.

Giant inukshuk (traditional Inuit cairns) overlooking the town of Igloolik. All photos: Susie Allison.

Alvin explained what would happen if he shot a seal: he'd untie the small boat that I sat in, push it out in front of him until the ice cracked and it dropped into the water, then jump onboard. I grinned weakly, making a mental note to hold on.

It was early January. I was standing on sea ice covering the Foxe Strait in Northern Canada, an hour's skidoo ride from the Inuit community of Igloolik. Igloolik is a small island – just a few

miles wide, south of the western end of Baffin Island. But I wasn't here to catch seals, I'd come for the sun.

At a latitude of 69°N Igloolik is well within the Arctic Circle. The sun disappears at the end of November, and I'd travelled north to witness it coming back – at the Return of the Sun festival. When I'd contacted the Province Tourist Office about my plans, their response had been less than encouraging: "It's cold, dark and there's no festival." They were almost right: it was cold, it was dark but there was a festival – a recent revival of an ancient

Inuit ceremony. Part of a modern effort to retain and revitalise traditional knowledge and skills.

With the older Inuit generation now dying, there is a danger that all their experience and knowledge will disappear with them. Moving off the land and into permanent settlements has completely changed the Inuit way of life. Nevertheless, the arrival of electricity and supermarkets doesn't alter the fact that the outside temperature usually dips to lower than minus 50°C in February. And given the price of food (a can of Coke sells

“WE LEFT ONE OF THE OTHER HUNTERS BEHIND AT THE AGLU. LOOKING BACK, I SAW HIM STANDING A FOOT FROM THE HOLE IN A SQUAT POSITION: BACK STRAIGHT, KNEES BENT, RIGHT ARM HALF-RAISED, HOLDING A POISED SPEAR. “

for six dollars here compared to one in the south) hunting and outdoor survival skills remain as relevant today as they ever were.

With a few days to spare before the festival, I was out seal hunting with Alvin. He rode his skidoo standing up, left knee kneeling on the seat, rifle slung across his back, eyes continually scanning the nearby ice for signs of weakness and the horizon for signs of movement. Twice we stopped at sets of polar bear tracks – barely visible patches of disturbed ice. “Two days,” or “a couple of hours,” Alvin simply pronounced before moving on.

When the ice was dubious, Alvin got off the skidoo and walked ahead, probing the solidity with a metal spear. Later he found an aglu – a seal breathing hole – a smooth hemisphere of solid ice in an otherwise rough and crystalline flat surface. In the centre of the aglu was a small, irregularly shaped hole through which water was visible; the sea ice we were driving on was barely a few inches thick. We left one of the other hunters behind at the aglu. Looking back, I saw him standing a foot from the hole in a squat position: back straight, knees bent, right arm half-raised, holding a poised spear. I watched as his figure shrunk into a motionless dark speck dwarfed by the landscape. “He’ll stand like that for hours,” Alvin shrugged. A feat of endurance in itself, never mind out here with an air temperature of minus 40°C.

“THE OVERWHELMING SENSATION WAS ONE OF SMALLNESS — OF BEING A VERY INSIGNIFICANT HUMAN IN THE CENTRE OF A VAST AND BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPE. “

Alvin returns to the skidoo after probing the sea ice thickness.

With rifle slung over his shoulder, Alvin is continually watchful for changes in the ice, seals, walrus and polar bears.



Each of the seal hunters drove their own skidoo and towed a komatik – a sledge. The design of these sledges is as simple as it gets: two long runners with planks of wood lashed across to form a platform. On top of this platform Alvin had tied a small boat and filled it with caribou furs for me to sit on. These were frozen solid, yet kept me surprisingly warm. The Inuit have adapted, rather than changed, their traditional ways to take account of the modern world. Skidoos allow hunting parties to travel further and faster than ever before, yet the hands on skidoo handlebars will still be encased in sealskin, polar bear or dog fur mitts. Some Inuit use modern boots, such as felt-lined Sorels, but many still wear mukluks – made from sealskin or caribou hide.

Alvin sniffed at the boots I'd borrowed

(made by a well-known winter boot manufacturer and rated down to minus 40°C) "Those are useless for up here," he said. I agreed, my feet had gone way past the point of being able to warm them up by wriggling my toes – it felt like someone had swapped my feet for a couple of solid wooden blocks. It was about minus 35°C, but – feet apart – I've felt more chilled on a Scottish winter hill day.

I was pleasantly surprised by how well my digital camera coped with the temperature too, although the autofocus was slow and the batteries needed recovery time after every shot. The least pleasant aspect of Arctic

photography was the way that my hands froze into inflexible claws after just a few seconds outside the protection of my borrowed sealskin mitts. Not quite like Scotland. In fact, after being out for a couple of hours, I could feel my core temperature starting to drop and I began to feel sick.

I'm not sure whether Alvin's acclimatisation was simply a matter of living all his life in this environment or if there is some genetic component. Like the other Inuit I met he certainly was in no danger of feeling sick and was apparently able to work with bare hands for as long as he liked. Even when driving the skidoo into a headwind he wore only a pair of sunglasses and left the rest of his face bare. I, on the other hand, barely had the slits of my eyes showing between layers of balaclava, face mask and Buff. But my view, albeit restricted, was still incredible.

It was like nothing I've ever experienced; utterly flat, the sea ice stretched away to the horizon in all directions. There were no familiar features by which to judge distances, and the overwhelming sensation was one of smallness – of being a very insignificant human in the centre of a vast and beautiful landscape.

And it was beautiful: Arctic sea ice illuminated by the refracted light of an unseen sun must be one of the most incredible landscapes on Earth. The ice itself is anything but plain white –every



Tea break, and a chance to move freezing limbs.



miniscule variation in surface angle or texture lends it a different hue. Above the horizon the sky fades from pink to dusky purple, to ever deeper shades of blue. And although the sun never rises, the tilt of the Earth's axis means that its path skims just below the horizon giving a glorious array of pastel colours. The Arctic in winter is anything but dark and gloomy.

With the skidoo engine turned off we stood in silence at the edge of the land-fast ice, breathing in the cold air, feeling the prickle of individual hair follicles freezing in our nostrils. Gradually I became aware of a sound, like the dull roar of a distant motorway – ice floes grating against each other, propelled by the current. Close by some floes had been pushed up over one another to form pressure ridges – long lines of geometric ice shards, piled up to a metre high. Alvin looked around him: "I'd be out here all the time if I could. It changes everyday."

Even as he said it I saw that the patch of open water nearby had changed shape since we arrived: an ice floe was detaching itself from the land-fast ice we stood on, closing off one lead of clear water and opening another. Thin, dark clouds hover over these patches of open water. The Inuit call such clouds tunguniq – water sky – and use them for navigation. When the sun's zenith is higher than the tunguniq the Inuit know that walrus

will begin coming out of the sea onto the land-fast ice.

In the past this would have been the signal for families to move their encampment closer to the edge of the ice. Nowadays the Inuit live in permanent settlements and skidoos make it easy to haul large carcasses back home. Nevertheless, modern technology cannot remove all difficulty from the hunt. I imagined Alvin launching his small boat, clambering into it from the unreliable ice. He showed me the iron hooks he'd use to haul himself and the boat back onto the ice after collecting the seal's body from the water. It would take phenomenal arm strength to regain solid ground, neither Alvin nor seals are particularly light and the ice edge would crack repeatedly before becoming thick enough to support their combined weight.

Despite the skidoo sitting quietly on the ice this was an ancient scene. Inuit hunting methods have barely changed with the introduction of new technologies. Hunters still come out to the floe edge to feed their families, they still need physical strength, and

“ARCTIC SEA ICE ILLUMINATED BY THE REFRACTED LIGHT OF AN UNSEEN SUN MUST BE ONE OF THE MOST INCREDIBLE LANDSCAPES ON EARTH.”

they still need traditional knowledge passed on by the elders. The Arctic, beautiful though it may be, is deadly unless treated with the understanding and respect it deserves. The Inuit know this land, this sea and this ice and as a people are perfectly adapted to survival in this frozen world.

Although I consider myself quite at home in the outdoors, thanks to weekends of hillwalking, climbing, biking and paddling, watching these Inuit hunters scan the landscape for signs of life or wait motionless at a seal aglu made me realise that my recreational activities merely scratch the surface. These people live on the land, intimately connected with it in a way that I can only begin to comprehend. ■

Susie Allison is a BMC member living in Glasgow. Her visit to Igloolik was funded by the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust who annually award

Travel Fellowships to British citizens to acquire knowledge and experience abroad. See www.wcmt.org.uk.



Alvin stands on a pressure ridge, scanning the far horizon for signs of life.

“MY FEET HAD GONE WAY PAST THE POINT OF BEING ABLE TO WARM THEM UP BY WRIGGLING MY TOES – IT FELT LIKE SOMEONE HAD SWAPPED MY FEET FOR A COUPLE OF SOLID WOODEN BLOCKS.”

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Swiss Valais

Don't let an alpine walking trip swallow your entire year's holiday allowance. Lindsay Cannon reckons you can sample the best of the Alps in five days – with the Tour des Dents du Midi.



En-route to Mex village.
All photos: Lindsay Cannon.

A nineteenth-century traveller once described the Tour des Dents du Midi as the “best of the Alps captured in miniature.” And they were right – it’s an ideal quick fix for those in need of a hit of alpine air.

While other ‘Tours’ often take over a week – if not several – this trip can be completed in four or five days, packing in jagged peaks, green lakes, hanging glaciers and alpine flower meadows. I first ventured here two years ago in search of a ‘pure’ walking trip which would provide a short circuit in a relatively quiet yet stunning area. This route which circumnavigates the most westerly mountain group in Switzerland is dominated at all times by the

spectacular seven summits or ‘teeth’ of the Dents du Midi, a range crowned by the Haute Cime at 3,257m.

I prefer to start this circuit at the Swiss village of Les Marecottes, perched high above the market town of Martigny. In the past it was an important staging post for the mailcoach heading through to the French border, but today it’s at the end of the road. Such a situation means the village has retained its character, offering a much more tranquil base than the bustling mountain town of Chamonix which is just along the railway line.

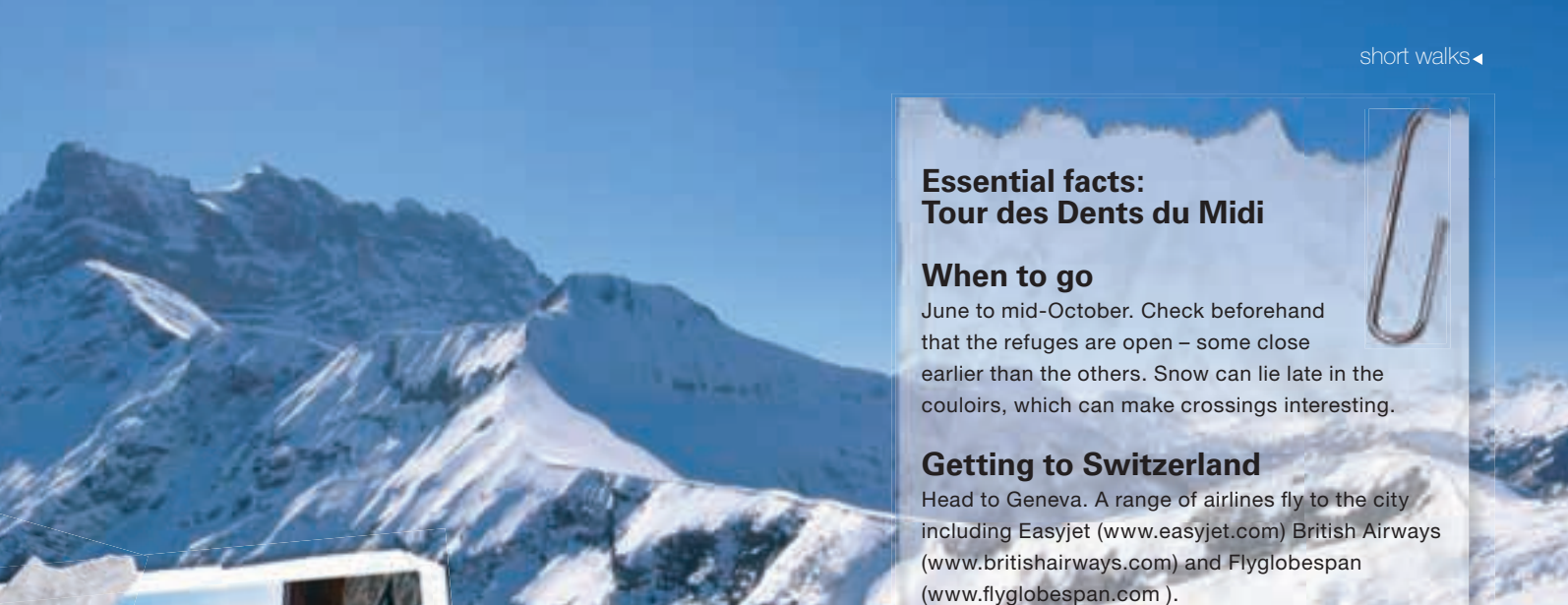
Here you can find examples of the traditional Valaisian architecture which sees houses perched on stone toadstools to keep rats and mice from invading. The famous Swiss fighting cows are also to be found grazing around Les Marecottes. These stocky black females of the Race d’Herens seem to genuinely enjoy a bout of what can only be described as sumo wrestling for bovines – the last girl standing in the ring wins! In fact, the village is such a lovely place that you might find it difficult to get started on the real business of the Tour.

For me there is nothing finer than a circular trip where there’s no real need to descend back into ‘civilisation’ in the valleys and where public transport isn’t an easy option. Being a slightly perverse creature I also enjoy the fact that not many Brits seem to have heard of the Tour des Dents du Midi. It makes me feel as though I am having a bit of an adventure and boldly forging into unknown territory – even if the reality is that the Swiss have been enjoying this area for centuries.

Starting off from Les Marecottes,



The well-situated
Refuge de Bonavau.



Essential facts: Tour des Dents du Midi

When to go

June to mid-October. Check beforehand that the refuges are open – some close earlier than the others. Snow can lie late in the couloirs, which can make crossings interesting.

Getting to Switzerland

Head to Geneva. A range of airlines fly to the city including Easyjet (www.easyjet.com) British Airways (www.britishairways.com) and Flyglobespan (www.flyglobespan.com).

Getting to the start

Begin from Les Marecottes. There are trains every 40 minutes from Geneva airport to Martigny, then catch the historic Mont Blanc Express for the final journey to the village with stunning views into the Gorges du Trient.

Accommodation

En-route accommodation ranges from a great auberge in Mex, to an eco-friendly refuge at Chindonne, and a 'heidi' style mountain hut above Champery. Options are limited so booking is essential.

Maps and guides

1:25,000 Carte Nationale de la Suisse 1304 Val d'Illeiez, 1324 Barberine. Route details from www.dentsdumidi.ch and www.champery.ch.



| Mex village.



Monkshood flowers. |

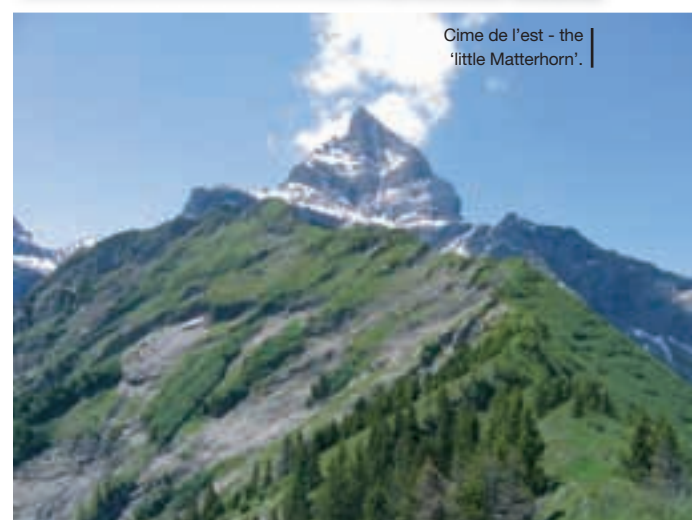
the first day takes you up the beautiful valley of Van d'en Haut before emerging into the area below the mountain that is the Tour Salliere (3,219m) and your first sight of the green waters of the Lac de Salanfe. A quick morning coffee at the refuge and then it's onwards and upwards to the Col du Jorat and views that take in the Mont Blanc massif, the Weisshorn and the Matterhorn to name just a few.

Leaving the col, the best is yet to come as you turn a corner and are faced with perhaps the most stunning of the seven summits of the Dents du Midi: the Cime de l'Est at 3,177m. This peak is often referred to as the 'Petit Cervin' the 'little Matterhorn' and its likeness to its bigger cousin in Zermatt is obvious. Even although I've seen and photographed the peak many times it still stops me in my tracks to gaze at its audacious sheer faces and outrageous ridges.

A steep descent down to the village

of Mex brings you to its ancient cobbled streets and the chance to sample a glass of Swiss wine from the local vineyards as you take in the views of the Dent de Morcles. Switzerland produces first class wines, but not enough to create an export market hence the only chance to enjoy them is on a visit to the country itself.

The Tour stays high at all times and never descends into the valleys, passing through a constantly changing landscape from benign alpine-flower meadows to threatening couloirs with the remains of winter snow clinging to their upper reaches. For me, one of the high points is the journey through the seemingly impenetrable gorge of the Pas d'Encel where a handrail protects the exposed section. This leads to a wonderful high valley below the hanging glacier on Mont Ruan (3,044m). It was in this area that Jacques Balmat, who completed the first ascent of Mont



Cime de l'est - the 'little Matterhorn'. |

Blanc with Michel-Gabriel Paccard in 1786, went missing supposedly while searching for gold. His body has never been found.

A sad fate indeed, but I can think of far worse days to spend my days than being laid to rest somewhere on the flanks of the Dents du Midi. ■

Lindsay Cannon is an International Mountain Leader (IML) and presents on The Adventure Show for the BBC. Join her in the Alps at www.tracks-and-trails.com.

DREAM of white horses



End of a perfect day on the slab. Dave Pearce (L) and Ed Drummond at the end of the third pitch. No doubt wondering what is to come on the last pitch. Photo: Leo Dickinson.

Forty years ago two young men tip-toed across a huge quartzite slab to create arguably what is now the most famous climb in Britain. Ed Drummond was one of them.

Two figures in a landscape out of Goya. Where to begin? they wonder, two young fathers at the edge of what is about to swallow them. Between the sea and the fleeing sky, a white slab.

Gulls knife by cackling, waves advance, smash against the Celtic ramparts, retreating, circling, laughing over the hard, cold slabs of real estate. The climbers – if that is what they are – steady one another as they peer into the waves hissing below them. It sounds like an uprising of the drowned, gnashing their teeth on the rocks they will one day break.

Holy Island, Anglesey; 1968. Allow me to introduce, Ed Drummond, Dave Pearce; first new climb. Stealing the necklace of Gwen Zawn, stripper of the cliffs, while King Brown and his successor, fierce Lord Crewe sleep in, dream on, riding dinosaur and mammoth to the rescue of sheepish maidens held by the chapels.

“What do you think?” A hundred and fifty feet down the sea boils “Absolutely,” grins Dave, stroking his Nietzschesque moustache. The ground shakes, depth-charged foam flutters like confetti. What on earth were we doing there on a day like that? Waiting for a ship? We were about to be baptised. A single crack splits the great slab. We are holding onto each other – the wind’s

in a state of uproar – raising my voice: “I think it might just be possible to traverse in – Jesus Christ!” – a wave, ten, twenty thirty feet and rising lifts a great white wing: Pegasaurus Oceanicus emerging out of the foaming mouth of the zawn. I have another idea.

Circling behind the serrated top of the blank face an hour later we’re almost there. “Over here,” I call to Dave, moving across the steep, wet hillside like the tilting deck of the Titanic. I had taken a chance and forged ahead, my fingers like crampons in the lush green grass to get there first. Now, wedged together behind a massive flake, just around the corner from what was out there, and here, spitting in my face, I unclip. “Your lead,” he smiles. Shivering – the wind is getting up; my stomach sinks...

“Watch me.” Down a short groove, the tail of rope trailing between my legs I get my first glimpse of the future. Not a pretty sight, black clouds massing on the horizon, the sun like a bruised eye hurrying on. The sea pacing.

Just around the corner, wanting his new father-dark eye on me as I teeter ahead, I stop. Splayed upon thin quartz ledges I drive home two American pegs, contraband from my recent pilgrimage to the toe of El Capitan. Which did not stoop to me – Nose in the air – while in the heaven of the meadow discounting

Is this the most famous image in British climbing?
White horses chase the first ascentionists
across the slab.
Photo: Leo Dickinson.



my dreams I counted my pins, vowing I'd return. Now though I was back in town – in the real world: Wales. Not 3000 feet yet, just 300 up from foundations that were shifting beneath us both as we began climbing away from home. The first among so many weekends, when, like many if not most men of our gymless generation our true love lives were shifting to the rocks, not playing in bed with our young wives and sprogs on Saturday mornings.

Dave descends, clips in, grins: "Let the fun begin."
"I'll just have a look."
Climbing down a few feet I stab a stem,

groping mist. First he sees me – on tip toes and finger tips about fifteen feet out, peering. "How is it?" "It looks"... Shrinking into thin air – hitting any remaining evasions on the head – banging in a peg – panting hard – a baby angle – ringing like a horseshoe on an anvil – in up to the eye, I...calm down. Cupping my hands around a little cloud of hot air I look around.

There's an arch a yacht might nudge beneath, a wide grey eye that the sea rips through today, that, when we are no longer here, roaming bands of skeletal white elephants might squeeze through when the sea has run dry and grapes are

Dave Pearce belaying at the end of the third pitch.
Photo: Leo Dickinson.



growing on Cloggy. And that's where our (extra)ordinary Joe hangs out I'd heard, weaving, years ahead of us, the Web, an arachnid trapeze, in the light of which I'd heard Cirque du Soleil had made him an offer: to come onboard and teach the clowns how to climb. Joe, however, declined, concerned that climbers might turn into competing puppets, sports-stars, acrobats, no longer quiet poets of the heights and deeps. "Dave! Remind me to tell you about Spider's Web and the Brown Owl," I yell, but he can't hear me now above the gagging, sucking sea.

Not knowing whether I'm coming out or going back inside my hole, my eyes shelter momentarily in a large cave mouth, tunneled into the back of the zawn by millennia of waves. I recall being told that on warm summer days seals sometimes rise from their deep blue sleep, rubbing their eyes – and scratching their heads I imagine – at the flightless bipeds scrambling over their heads making strange calls. The things we hear...



Helen John enjoying the exposure of the final pitch.
Photo: Jethro Kiernan.

“Dave? Watch me.”

The slab soars like a sail, streaked with spray. Overhead herds of clouds migrate...silent, white rain deer, fleeting ghosts... Paused in a gust my mind floats, fingering the dips and bumps as braille left by the blind winds and tapping rains, while, unknown to me, or Dave, hunchbacked into the belay.

Pouring into the zawn below between my legs I can only stare as the mother of all waves is having an avalanche – licking her long salty tongue all over me her waters burst – can’t hear see eyes screwed shut gurgling like I’m being drunk, dragging me down...

Almost. Helmet streaming like a bowl of water inverted I emerge spluttering, crowned, clown of slapstick and Dave is pissing himself, the gulls are cackling again and the sea booming a thousand cannon salute as the wave returns to its insurgent foaming grave. You call this fun?

“I’m soaked – slack... SLACK!”

For the first twenty feet, feet iffy on the trickle-vined slab it’s like edging on

skates until, spread-eagled off what at first blink looked like a nipple – holding my breath, reaching deep into the cleavage of the central crack, I’m murmuring with pleasure. There, after consulting with several long slings, by arrangement into a rather spare designer bra I hang out from a couple of ample, pointy jugs, staring out to sea like a dog for the sound of his master’s voice. This is fun.

The lively wind dies... That feels good. Settling down the sea slurps, quietly digesting. “Climb when you’re ready” I chirp.

He’s off! A patter, quick foot-switch, hop, skip, sway – weigh-up... high side step – step – an arse-splitting stretch – feeling for the jugs... “You flew across! Wow!” “Not too bad” he said accurately – “Nice lead,” while all the time sorting out the gear for the next pitch... Which, “Oh” – relieved, and miffed – handing him the nuts and pegs I am clearly not going to be leading. I have to give it to him. No question; straight as an arrow. The rope quivers...

“On.”

Pure joy to watch he sways up, stroking the rock like a lover the cold shoulder of their other, protruding from the covers at first light. The air is tangy, I can smell the salt, savouring the brew of danger and delight, a dash of this and that and whatever it takes to keep moving out of range of the insatiable sea. Dave studied philosophy, as did I, and the way he climbed reflected this in the calm manner, the gentle persuasion, the mindful, Russellian, rocking and rolling way he humoured the rock. My personal saint, though I never told him that, he would only have laughed.

In his face the leftwards forking crack is a smile. He beams... intimately, conspiratorially; as now, forty years later I believe he must have done often, as any good man can, in foreplay with the beloved obstacle and substance of his dreams. A cat comes to mind, a black cat, a big quick cat bounding... Until his luck ran out on the same abrupt land’s end just a few hundred yards up the coast, thirty years later, when a boulder

rolled... Landlord of the crowded bivouac, Dave made everyone feel at home, including me, even after – to my utter astonishment – years later, jumping his new route The Cow over my old one, The Moon. Earthy as farmers, dependable as astronauts, together on a climb, no matter where, we were at home. And if you had to go, he was someone you could have gone in front of.

The sun was starting to die down, dawning on us for the first time that day its ultimately crematorial light. Clouds parting behind us, rising eagerly to whatever difficulty the crack handed him, popping the occasional nut in its largely open mouth he leaves it, stemming left and manteling up with a little deer leap onto a small white ledge I would not be surprised to find an icon on one fine day if I pass that way again.

Reaching a shallow niche, stopping before the long maze of overhangs like a breaking wave that may take us to a great finish, he calls down to me. We don't have long.

"Climbing." Quick as a snake I slip my belay and weave up to join him. We look at each other: And laugh... "Now what?"

And there I must leave it...at the start of the last pitch. Which is where – if, late in the day you find yourself you may find yourself wondering if you're entirely all there... 'Which was answered by threading the labyrinth the following weekend, threading the labyrinth, changing from beast back to man as I ran the gauntlet of feeling afraid, finding my way back inside to that Eden of innocent freedom of movement and thought that the climbing life was to bring us over and

over; 'earth's mad missionaries' in Hughes' great phrase; suspending judgment, skylarking all over the world, everyone partners, all those routes; so little time.

With all that still to come, then and there that day we'd had it – high in the branches of the world-wide tree of life we all once inhabited, balanced on the golden boughs... It was as good as it gets, watching millions of wild, white horses running towards us in the brazen reins of the setting sun. And with night coming on I head straight up, feeling for holds, treading on air, hoping against hope the sun will stop. ■

Dave Pearce died in 2002. Ed Drummond left the UK in 1992, moving to San Francisco. Read more about Ed Drummond in a Summit "That's Me" interview at www.thebmc.co.uk/summit

a DREAM of white horses

Palomino in the morning,
as the sun rose higher they dashed,
manes on fire, pounding their hooves on the rocks.

And smashed – we were climbing –
sank, broken, foaming...The wind lashed
them back, combing their matted hair,
swollen green sea mares twenty hands high,
surrounded by herds of nervous
blue stallions, snorting and champing,
trampling us under, given the chance.

We stood by – a pitch apart – watching the rein
of our rope that led between the last grey overhang,
redden like a vein in the sinking sun. And breathed again.

Their fire gone, the dark horses were drinking,
and we were thinking of a name...Nothing
had been forced – Then the tide turned, they
surged, rearing – manes smoking white – wild horses
running, running in the night towards us.



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Over 40 years of experiencing mountains on many continents I've used a wide variety of clothing and equipment. Whatever my future in the mountains, I will keep Páramo at the top of my list to stay warm and dry, as it's quite simply the most comfortable all-weather kit on the market.”

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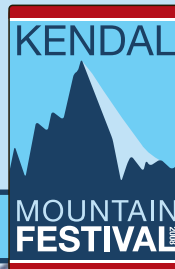
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Aiming High

Reach your peak with the brand new National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme. By Guy Jarvis.

When I was seven, I took my first swimming test. Coughing and spluttering to the other end of the pool, I was motivated by the promise of a certificate, a badge and recognition from my peers.

Ten years on and I was still swimming in competitions around the country; 35 years on and I can still plough the odd length at speed. That badge, and the others that followed it, started a legacy of health and fitness that I continue to capitalise on to this day. Develop fitness and skills early enough and they last a lifetime.

What about climbing? There's no denying that indoor climbing is very popular now – at the Bristol Climbing Centre alone we're running over 2,000 instructional sessions a year. But many of these were one-off top-roping sessions – tasters with no progression. Any other sport with these participation figures would have developed a achievement scheme years ago – think of canoeing and swimming, gymnastics or sailing. We have been slower off the mark, but now, at last, there is such a scheme – the National Indoor Climbing Achievement Scheme, or NICAS.

NICAS was launched in walls around the whole of the UK this

summer. It's run by the ABC Training Trust, a registered charity set up for the purpose, and is aimed primarily at young climbers (7 to 25). It aims to improve training, increase motivation, boost participation and increase recognition of achievement.

Working in a major climbing wall it doesn't take long to see that's where most people, young and old, are now introduced to climbing. Times have changed, walls have literally become the chalk face of the instructing industry. The young are particularly attracted to indoor climbing, especially when liability, transport, cost and weather make it harder for them to access outside opportunities – many walls have thriving junior clubs.

Instruction has often overly focussed on safety at the expense of climbing itself; the ABC Training Trust was keen to promote both good practice and climbing techniques so that new climbers could catch the bug of what climbing is really all about – vertical movement.

How NICAS works

The NICAS scheme is split into five levels – each level progressively introduces skills, knowledge and responsibilities. The whole scheme requires over 100 hours of climbing for a motivated student, depending on aptitude. Candidates receive a log book to chart their progress and a certificate after each level is completed. You can join the scheme at any level and it's fully transferable around the country.

Registration costs just £4 for Part 1 of the scheme, incorporating levels 1 and 2. The more advanced Part 2 (levels 3-5) costs £7.50. Levels 1 and 2 require instructor supervision but levels 3-5 can be undertaken more independently with instruction at key points. The

Aims of NICAS

The National Indoor Climbing Award Scheme aims to:

- Develop climbing movement skills and improve levels of ability
- Learn climbing rope-work and how to use equipment safely
- Develop risk assessment and management skills in the sport
- Work as a team, communicate with, and trust a climbing partner
- Develop an understanding of the sport, its history and future challenges
- Point the way to further challenges in climbing beyond the scheme
- Provide a record of personal achievement and accreditation

scheme can point people down many paths after completion: sport climbing, trad climbing, competitions, instructor training or on to the mountains. NICAS will have provided a thorough grounding in basic skills, and knowledge that they can take with them on their own path.

To deliver the scheme, a network of NICAS Primary Centres have been developed around the country whose role is to train, advise and administer log books to other climbing walls and instructors. Most of the Primary Centres also run outdoor courses so NICAS graduates can have the opportunity to apply their newly honed skills to real rock.

So look out for the young climbing stars of the future. They're currently found in climbing walls all around the country and hopefully NICAS will find many more of them and help them to develop their full potential. If you see a young climbing lizard at your wall eagerly filling in a log book, then you'll know they're on the right track. ■

Guy Jarvis is the manager of Undercover Rock climbing wall in Bristol, and Chair of the ABC training trust. Find out more at www.nicas.co.uk.

NICAS gives kids something to aim for. Photo: Guy Jarvis.





Young climbers can work towards five levels of award. Photo: Guy Jarvis

How does NICAS relate to the Training Board Awards?

The Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC) developed the scheme over three years. There has been wide consultation with the BMC, MCoF S, Mountain Leader Training UK and the Training Boards, including an 18-month pilot that saw over 2,000 youngsters go through the scheme at ten ABC-affiliated walls. The scheme has been designed to complement MLTUK's new Climbing Wall Award (CWA), to give instructors a uniform template to train budding wall rats with. Any organisation with a climbing wall can apply to become an Awarding Centre by contacting the ABC Training Trust. See www.nicas.co.uk.

The NICAS levels

Young climbers can work towards five levels of award.

Foundation climber: an entry-level award aimed at complete novices that recognises their ability to climb safely under supervision (approx 3hrs).

Top rope climber: a top-rope proficiency award aimed at promoting best practice in climbing and bouldering on walls (approx 8 hours).

Technical climber: a more advanced climbing and bouldering award that focuses on developing technique and movement skills (approx 20 hrs).

Lead climber: an award that concentrates on the skills required to lead climb and lead belay proficiently (approx 30 hrs).

Advanced climber: the top level award that focuses on improving performance with a deeper understanding of the sport and the wider world of climbing (approx 50 hrs).



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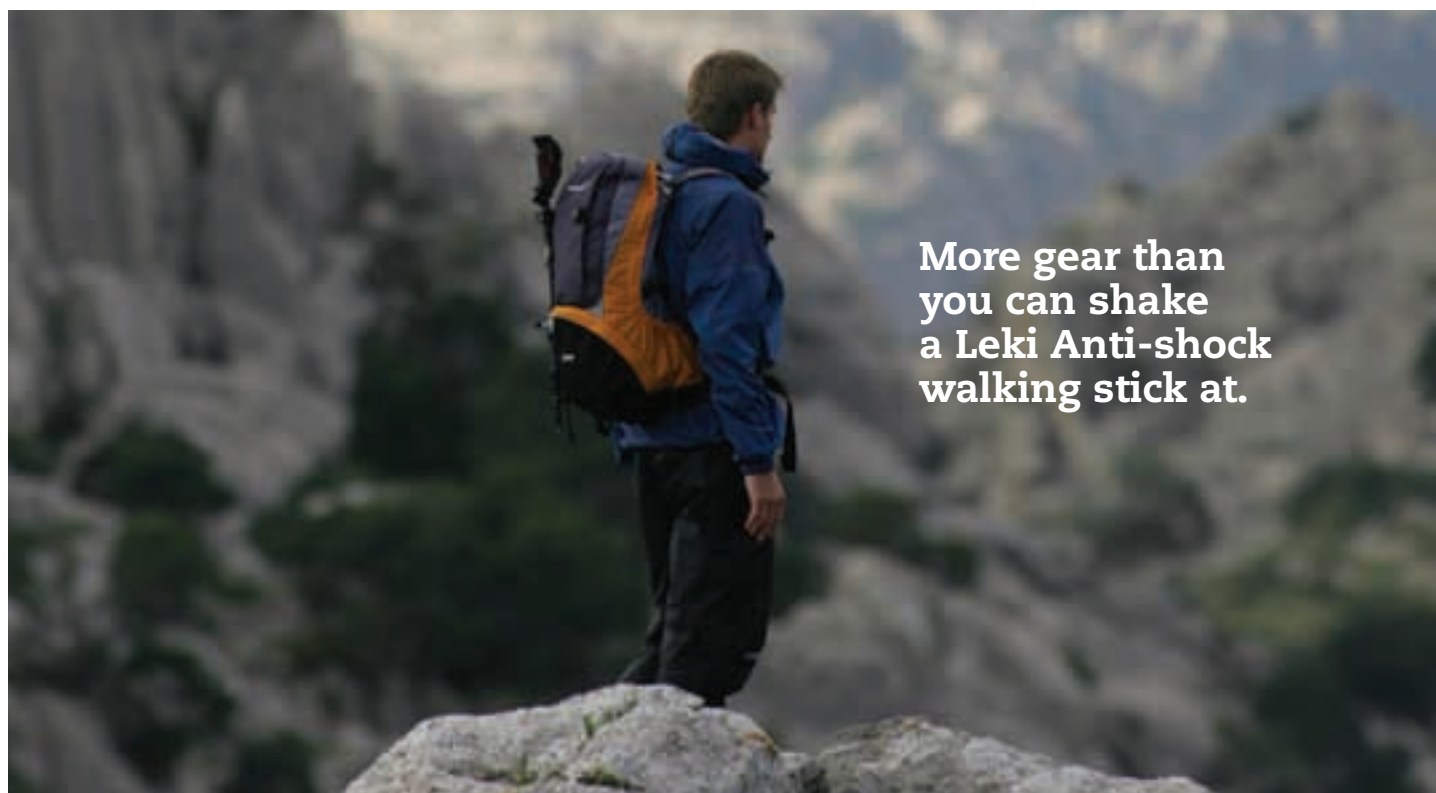
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Snowshoeing has become the cool thing to do this winter – and it's not just for strolling around forests. Hilary Sharp reckons it's the perfect way to bag some alpine summits.

A Right Raquette

Snowshoeing has been popular in the Alps for years – mainly with people who don't ski, aren't too fit and tend to traipse around forests before heading off for a large lunch. But in recent years that's all changed and snowshoe or raquette tracks are popping up in increasingly surprising places.

The forests have been abandoned as people realise that snowshoeing is in fact winter walking – limited in scope only by your fitness and the weather. With the development of technical snowshoes – driven by the explosion in off-piste snowboarding – snowshoers can now head high into the mountains. Consequently more

and more young (well, in their heads at least) and fit walkers are rejecting the organised limits of skiing and stepping out into the snow.

With a bit of imagination you can even go and tackle some real summits. But with many alpine peaks requiring technical climbing, what constitutes a viable 'snowshoe summit'? A summit should be a top, a high point above the treeline, from where you get a great view and feel like you're on top of the world. They may be very minor highpoints in summer, but in winter all this changes and such summits become fine objectives in themselves. They give great views, interesting terrain and you're almost guaranteed that no-one else will be there. And, as the season progresses and the days get longer, so higher and more demanding peaks become feasible. Tempted? Here are a couple to get you going.

Summit 1: Croix de la Tête Noire

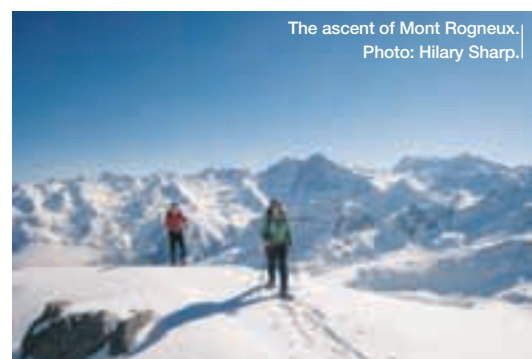
The 'Black Head' isn't the most inspiring name for a summit but don't let that put you off. Situated in the foothills of the Aravis range to the west of the Mont Blanc massif, this small pimple of a top is a real classic winter-walk. The real bonus is that it's never threatened by any avalanche slopes, so can be done whatever the weather – as long as you can get to the car park: the snow clearance of this road is well down the list of priorities for the small town of Cordon.

This ski-resort town enjoys fabulous views of Mont Blanc, and the powers-that-be in Cordon have designated several snowshoe trails – sentiers de raquettes – waymarked with red arrows. Our walk begins on one of these trails then carries on up the hillside. From the car park at Perret, the Tête Noire is signposted.

Enjoying the silence of the mountains by snowshoe - en-route to Mont Rogneux in the early morning.
Photo: Hilary Sharp.



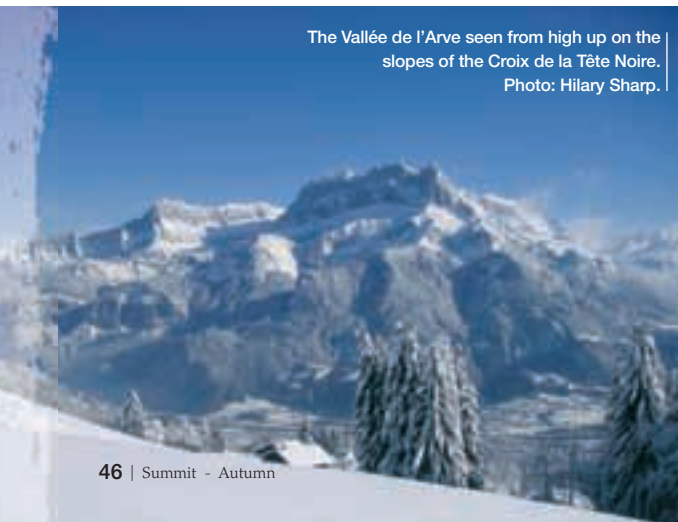
Embracing the descent!
Photo: Hilary Sharp.



The ascent of Mont Rogneux.
Photo: Hilary Sharp.



Nearly there!
Photo: Hilary Sharp.



The Vallée de l'Arve seen from high up on the slopes of the Croix de la Tête Noire.
Photo: Hilary Sharp.

A good track leads up in forest, soon getting the heart going. Several chalets are passed and emerging from the trees the views open up. To the right the peaks of the Aravis can be seen, notably the Quatre Têtes with its characteristic four rocky bastions and the pointed Pointe Percée (2,750m) – the highest peak in this range.

Above, a cross is visible on top of a wooded hill – our objective. Many people walk up this way but it seems most don't take in the summit, so you'll probably have to make your own tracks. Although only 1,891m high, this summit is a real one with a cross on top and the views along the Arve valley and up to the Mont Blanc massif are breathtaking.

For further visual delights a walk along the whaleback ridge to the tiny Cabane du Petit Patré will not disappoint. Ahead is the imposing summit of Croise Baulet, itself a demanding snowshoeing peak but usually from the other side. Those with lots of energy might be tempted by the circuit descending to the Col de Niard, then down under the sometimes avalanche prone slopes of La Miaz and

the Tête du Grepon, to the bridge at Pont de la Flée. Two cars would be an advantage for, otherwise returning by the same route gives some great slopes for running down.

WALK DETAILS:

Start: Perrey parking above Cordon.

Map: IGN Top 25 3430 ET La Clusaz Grand Bornand

**Summit 2:
Mont Rogneux**

Later in the season the lower slopes start to lose their snow; nights in huts and lofty summits call. Mont Rogneux (3,084m) is one of the most popular peaks for ski-touring in the Val de Bagnes region of Switzerland, near to the renowned ski resort of Verbier. Many skiers see this summit as a test of their endurance, preferring to do the 1,700m ascent in a day rather than staying at the Cabane Brunet hut en-route. However, on snowshoes Mont Rogneux is a huge endurance test if done in a day, it's far more pleasant to spend a night at the hut.

There is almost always a track to the

Great views across the Val de Bagnes during the ascent of Mont Rognieux.
Photo: Hilary Sharp.



summit and usually not too much fresh snow to play with – or so I thought until a recent visit. On our visit the ascent to the hut was in improving weather, the valleys shrouded in residual clouds, the trees weighted with heavy snow and ice. In the shady parts of the forest there were crystals forming on the spruce needles, creating natural Christmas-tree baubles. And, as the sun filtered through the dense branches, we relished the anticipation of the next day's climb.

The Cabane Brunet is a traditional Swiss hut with its own rules and customs; once you get those sorted it's a great place to stay. Dinner is taken very early – after that you either go to bed or try out the local specialities. Our fellow guests chose the latter: this group of male retirees from Geneva had each brought their own bottle. We were soon brought into the party.

The next day was discussed. There is only one real destination from the hut – Mont Rognieux. We'd all noticed that there was no sign of any track in the fresh snow surrounding the hut. The map provides little help with finding the route to the top of Mont Rognieux – even when you know the way it's easier to describe it than to locate on the map. It's also quite a long way and in deep fresh snow making the trail can be very tiring. Needless to say the old boys didn't surface the next morning; we were on our own.

The snow was up to our knees. Snowshoes make it possible to walk where you otherwise couldn't, but they

do have their limits – making trail can be a demanding workout. We made our way slowly up the initial shady slopes; the small, stunted bushes at this altitude were coated in snow and ice. Around us the first rays of sun kissed the mountain tops. It was a magical morning, spoiled only by the sound of our laboured breathing.

The snowy dome of the Petit Combin dominated our views to the left. Behind us were all the Val de Bagnes peaks – Mont Rognieux remains hidden until the final slopes.

The old ski-tourers in the hut may have let us down on the trail breaking, but we finally spotted figures below and a couple of athletic Swiss soon tore past us, kitted out in lycra tights and the lightest of skis. It was clear they were on a mission. We'd done our share of trail making and could now relax, even if their tracks didn't quite fit the size of our snowshoes.

Cresting the final col, Mont Rognieux can be seen not far away. The final slopes are steep and can either be avalanche prone or icy depending on conditions. On this day the skiers chose not to go to the summit, so we tentatively made our way up the last part of the climb, ploughing through wind-blown drifts. The views from the top made it all worthwhile: Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn and the Combin peaks – it's all on show.

WALK DETAILS:

Start: above Lourtier, direction Fionnay.
Map: Carte Nationale de la Suisse
5003 Mont Blanc Grand Combin
Hut: Cabane Brunet ■

SNOWSHOEING: ESSENTIAL INFO

SNOWSHOES

Snowshoeing is still relatively unknown in the UK. But there's actually a lot of equipment choice these days. For a long time snowshoeing suffered from the mistaken notion that it's walking with tennis rackets on your feet. But the explosion in snowboarding has had a knock-on effect for snowshoeing: boarders use snowshoes to tour in the mountains. Suddenly snowshoes are cool and there are constant new developments. Look for a snowshoe that's the right size for your weight and your feet. Check that it has good traction underneath and a freeze-proof binding that you'll be able to manipulate with cold hands.

POLES

You cannot snowshoe efficiently without poles. They don't need to be telescopic, regular ski poles will do, but they do need to have snow baskets.

BOOTS

A comfortable leather boot is all that's needed. It doesn't have to be particularly stiff, but a good sole is essential as you may have to walk without snowshoes when the terrain dictates. You may also want to carry crampons for more technical ground.

SACK

At some stage you will probably have to carry your snowshoes, either to the trailhead or during a walk. It's much easier if you've sorted out a way of attaching the shoes to your sack before you go. Side straps are the best option, although shoes can be held in place under the rucksack lid. Some snowboarding sacks can be used for snowshoes. There are also a few companies making sacks specifically for snowshoeing.

SAFETY EQUIPMENT

By its very nature snow can be dangerous; zero risk in the mountains does not exist. You must be equipped with an avalanche beacon, shovel and probe as well as regular walking gear for cold weather. It's crucial to have practised using the avalanche beacon before setting out.

TOP TIPS FOR SNOWSHOEING

- Don't confuse snowshoeing with skiing; sliding is not necessary
- In fresh snow try running down – this is by far the most efficient way to descend and is great fun.
- Know how to navigate in white-out conditions or go with a guided group
- Learn to use your avalanche transceiver and practice every trip
- Be aware of the time and turn back if it's running out
- Go prepared – don't stint on extra clothes, food and drink
- The best place to snowshoe is away from the ski areas, away from the groomed walking trails, in deep snow. Never snowshoe on cross-country ski pistes.
- Let loose and enjoy!

BOOKS

Snowshoeing: Mont Blanc and the Western Alps by Hilary Sharp
Published by Cicerone Press.

GUIDES

Hilary Sharp offers group and private snowshoe guiding in the French, Swiss and Italian Alps from December to April. Contact her at www.trekkinginthealps.com/ info@trekkinginthealps.com / 0033 450546209.

CARBON COPY



Are you ready for public transport?
Photo: BMC.

Are soaring fuel prices and the threat of global warming enough to tempt climbers out of their cars? Zara Maung and Julie Black decide it's time to try some low-carbon climbing.



Zara Maung and Benjamin Bonnerjea contemplate the bus schedule.
Photo: Julie Black.

During our two-week climbing trip to Devon and Cornwall we managed to stump most climbers with one simple question: “How do you get to the climbing here on public transport?”

“Um, I can look up buses on the internet,” was about as good as the replies got. Most people just fobbed us off with tales of dreaded rural bus routes, operating once a week for pensioners on a giro mission.

Climbing trips are synonymous with car use; we climbers are not renowned for our love of walking. With heavy kit to lug around and temperamental weather, we want the freedom to jump in and out of our nice comfy vehicles, drive to a drier spot, or maybe stop early at the pub. Car culture makes perfect sense to climbers. It's second nature to slide behind the wheel to get to our weekend climbing destinations – especially if we already rely on cars for travelling to work.

But there's no denying that car culture is changing. The average person now living in London has no good reason for owning a car: public transport, expensive parking and congestion charges abound. I switched to a bicycle six months ago, persuading myself that it'd be cheaper and more practical. It was. It was also disastrous for my climbing.

Used to watching the weather and arranging last-minute trips away, going climbing suddenly became hard work. I kept missing the monthly climbing club trips for one reason or another and briefly scanning the train prices, everything looked too expensive. Even trying to scrounge lifts off mates gets tiring after a while. So, approaching the summer, I

reluctantly decided that I was going to have to re-join the ranks of car users to get some decent climbing time in.

Yet after considering the cost of a car, I started wondering if this was really the way forward. I was buying a car so I could get out of the smog and drive around polluting the countryside, not to mention contribute handsomely to climate change. It didn't seem quite right. So my climbing buddy Julie and I decided to bite the bullet and see if it really was feasible to be car-less climber in the UK.

We did two five-day climbing trips, one using a car (a tiny Daihatsu mini-campervan, which Julie called “the lunchbox on wheels”) and one using public transport. We wanted to know if taking trains and buses to climb would be as difficult as we had expected, and by calculating the carbon emissions of our journeys, we intended to find out how much good we would really do the planet by leaving the car at home.

The car trip

We set off in the campervan with the promise of dismal weather for the week ahead, but being on wheels we had everything but the kitchen sink with us – including two surfboards and a bouldering mat! The plan was to drive down to Cornwall doing some climbing along the way in Dartmoor. This proved harder than we imagined as we spent most of our time dodging the rain and trying to find quick-drying crags, often driving long distances. Sheepstor at Dartmoor gave us a day's climbing, so did Roche Rock in Bodmin. Wet, grassy death-slopes to access the North Cornwall sea cliffs didn't really work for us and we wasted a few miles driving to sea cliffs and back again. We set up camp in a friendly youth hostel in Bude

to escape the foul weather, clocking up more wasted miles driving to and from crags and surfing beaches. There was no evidence of local climbers using public transport to get around, and plenty of Dartmoor climbers' tales about infamous once-a-week granny buses.

Our route: London-Dartmoor-Bude-Pentire-Bodmin-St Ives-London.

For: Could drive anywhere, always found climbing (when dry).

Against: Tiring drive to Cornwall, temptation to drive long distances to get to the best crags. Roadkill.

The bus trip

We realised that this week would require military planning when we saw that the buses along our chosen route only ran every few hours between 10am and 6pm – not that great for climbing into the summer evenings! However the week was surprisingly easy, as we found that one bus route – the magnificent 300 – served all the classic climbing destinations along the coast, moving southwards from St Ives to Chair Ladder. A far cry from the disparate climbing destinations we visited in North Cornwall. The open-topped tourist bus travelled at about a 10-20 mph on average, perfect for scenic views. Despite the useful route taken and the popularity of the climbs, we didn't spot a single other climber on the bus – they'd all taken their cars to Bosigran.

Luckily the weather held up for the whole week. Unluckily, not being the most efficient of climbers, timekeeping became a bit of a problem. On the second day, after the eight pitches of Commando Ridge at Bosigran, we'd missed the last bus by two hours and ended up hitching back to our hostel in nearby Zennor. The walk-ins were longer, but felt quite satisfying and a good pre-climbing warm up.

The most surprising part about using the bus was that it seemed to fit the

ethos of trad climbing much better than tearing around in a van. We both agreed that being stranded in the middle of nowhere along a rural bus route with only our climbing kit felt extraordinarily liberating and far more adventurous; the trips to and from climbing sometimes rivalled the intrigue of the climbs.

Our route: London-St Ives-Zennor-Wicca Pillar-Bosigran-Sennen-Chair Ladder-St Ives-London.

For: Being stranded – the transport equivalent to switching off your mobile.

Against: No such thing as an early start, or a quick bus journey. Great for sleeping in, not great for visiting tidal cliffs. Might not be as enjoyable in the wet!

Tight shoes, big footprint

To our surprise, climbing by public transport is not only feasible, it was rather enjoyable. Regardless, it's undeniable that it's something that more of us should be doing. When The Carbon Trust published 'The Footprint of the UK' in December 2006, it revealed that our leisure activities release more carbon than any other area of our lives, including emissions from domestic heating. Nearly a fifth of the average British citizen's 10.92 tons of annual CO2 emissions – 1.95 tons – is emitted through recreation. Perhaps even more for regular outdoor climbers traveling long distances.

We're already seeing the effects of global warming in the UK. Our sea temperatures have risen, Scottish snow-beds are disappearing and some of our bird, butterfly and plant species are moving to cooler climes or disappearing altogether. Via our carbon emissions, we're contributing to

Zara Maung stuck into some Cornish granite.
Photo: Benjamin Bonnerjea.



Julie Black gets to grips with the bus.
Photo: Benjamin Bonnerjea.

the destruction of our own sport in the UK. Rising sea levels could threaten sea cliff routes, and according to the SportScotland Avalanche Information Service, a gradual change in the direction of recorded snow-bearing winds in Scottish winters means snow now tends to blow onto the south face of Scotland's mountains, rather than into the north-facing corries used by winter climbers. This may be linked to the North Atlantic drift slowing down.

Low carbon climbing

If you want to lower your climbing carbon footprint then you've got a number of options – it's not simply about ditching your car. We calculated our carbon emissions using the online YETI transport carbon calculator, which is very easy to use. It uses official UK government transport carbon figures, and we made some interesting discoveries using it. It turns out that four people sharing a car is actually less carbon intensive per person than four people on the train, and three people sharing a car beat the emissions per person of bus travel.

In reality you need to bear in mind

that those buses and trains would be travelling anyway, and the fuller they become, the lower the emissions per person are, but the message is clear – if you must take a car, fill it. We recommend flagging up climbing trips on the 'lifts and partners' forum at www.ukclimbing.com. If everyone going on a climbing trip with a half-empty car offered or sought a lift on the climbing website we'd start up an instant UK-wide climbing transport system!

The ultimate car share is to jump into the minibus of your local climbing club. In fact, David Gibson of the Mountaineering Council of Scotland thinks there may well be a climbing club renaissance spurred by rising fuel prices: "Some of these clubs are a hundred years old," he reminded us, "and they were started partly as a means of sharing transport back when cars were scarce."

Climbing by public transport is certainly possible, and recommended. Bus links around the UK aren't actually that bad, but a bit of planning will go a long way – get the timetables beforehand so there are no unexpected surprises. You're likely to find better bus links in popular destinations like North Wales

and the Peak District. David Gibson also sings the praises of the Scottish train routes, including the West Highland line, which he says stops at a number of quality mountaineering destinations. CityLink buses also drive through Glen Coe and Fort William on their way to Skye. If the train journey from home to your climbing destination is too expensive, coaches offer cheaper options.

Perhaps the BMC should add detailed public transport information to its Regional Access Database too? The BMC's environmental focus should be on lowering climbers' transport emissions just as much as nature conservation. After all, there'll be no more native plants and birds to conserve once global warming has had its way! ■

Zara Maung is a climate reporter and has begun editing Ecoclimber.com, a new website for climbers and outdoor sports people concerned about climate change. Julie Black is a conservation scientist who has just completed her doctoral thesis. Her research interests can be viewed at www.iccs.org.uk. Thanks go to DMM, who supported the trip by contributing climbing hardware.



If all else fails - hitch.
Photo: Benjamin Bonnerjea.

More information

Carbon Trust Report
www.carbontrust.co.uk

YETI Carbon Calculator
www.smarterchoices.co.uk/TryYeti.aspx

Stanage Bus Timetable
www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/stanagebus.pdf

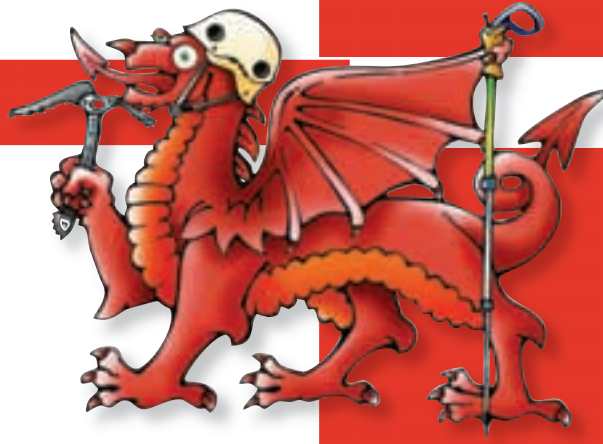
Bus 300 timetable
www.cornwallpublictransport.info/pdf_tts/300.pdf

Carbon calculations

We set out to measure the trips in four practical ways: how stressful we found them, how long journeys took, the costs and the carbon emissions.

		Trip	Car	Bus	Train	Plane
Week 1 (London - North Cornwall by car)	Kilometres	1,661	1,661			
	Carbon emissions (kg per person)	171.92	171.92	147.83		249.15
	Cost (£'s per person)	82	82 (petrol)	65 *	104*	
	Time travelling (hours)	28	28			
	Time waiting (hours)	0	0			
	Stress (1 to 10, 10 being most stressed)	7	7			
Week 2 (London - Southwest Cornwall by train and bus)	Kilometres	870		870		
	Carbon emissions (kg per person)	54.23		77.43	54.23*	
	Cost (£'s per person)	99.50		60.50*	99.50*	
	Time travelling (hours)	14.75		20.75*	14.75*	
	Time waiting (hours)	2		2		
	Stress (1 to 10, 10 being most stressed)	4		4		

* includes travel to Cornwall, plus local bus travel (week 1: all inclusive bus ticket £29, week 2: individual fares totalling £24.50)



What price?

How important is Wales to the hill walker and climber? And how important is the hillwalker and climber to Wales?

These may seem like simple questions, but did you know that the BMC receives no funding from the Welsh Assembly Government? We were recently told by the Sports Council for Wales that "Mountaineering is not a priority sport in Wales". Try telling that to the attendees on the recent BMC International Meet at Plas y Brenin, or visit Pembroke and tell me that the climbing there isn't world class. And, as for hill walking, Wales offers as fantastic and varied an area as you're likely to find anywhere in the world.

Wales is a much more independent place these days, it has its own legislative body and the list of working groups, committees and advisory groups which BMC Access Officers like Cath Flitcroft attend is very long indeed. When I lived here in the 'eighties, local people were shy about using their language in public, now it's spoken with pride. I attend the Northern Snowdonia Access Forum meetings four-times a year and they are bi-lingual meetings with simultaneous translation.

So what price a BMC Wales officer? Someone to draw in funding from the WAG; someone to raise the BMC profile with the Welsh-speaking councils of Gwynedd and Anglesey; someone to pull together the work of BMC volunteers in the south and the north; someone to support Welsh initiatives, such as the outdoor partnership which is introducing hundreds of local people across Wales to the outdoor life. Someone to tell the Welsh Sports Council that Wales is actually one of the most important places in the world for mountaineering.

On a slightly different note, climbers will be disappointed to see Eric's Café at Tremadog for sale. Whilst Eric shows no sign of slowing down – still climbing and base jumping in his seventies – he is entitled to take retirement. We thank him for supporting us for so long. What will happen to the café? Will we still be welcome? Will we still be able to park there to climb? Thanks to Eric and Ann it's a special place and many of us have fond memories of days spent here. But how important is it to us? Should we buy it and make an office for the BMC Wales officer here? What about our senior clubs chipping in – would the Climbers' Club be interested? Could the Alpine Club library be here? What do we value? Who knows? ■

Mike Raine
BMC Wales Area

www.thebmc.co.uk

Am pa bris?

Pa mor bwysig yw Cymru i'r dringwr a'r cerddwr mynydd? A pha mor bwysig yw'r dringwr a'r cerddwr mynydd i Gymru?

Gall y rhain ymddangos fel cwestiynau syml, ond a wyddoch chi nad yw'r CMP (BMC) yn derbyn unrhyw arian gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad? Dywedodd Cyngor Chwaraeon Cymru wrthym yn ddiweddar nad ydi "mynydda fel gweithgaredd yn flaenoriaeth yng Nghymru". Ceisiwch ddweud hynny wrth y rhai a fynychodd Cyfarfod y CMP Rhyngwladol ym Mhlas y Brenin, neu ewch i ddringo i Sir Benfro a dywedwch wrtha i nad yw hynny'n brofiad a hanner. I gerdded mynydd mae Cymru yn cynnig ardal wych ac amrywiol i'w gymharu ag unrhyw le arall yn y byd.

Erbyn heddiw, mae Cymru yn wlad llawer mwy annibynnol, gyda chorfforaeth ddeddfwriaethol ei hun a rhestrau faith o weithgorau, pwyllgorau a grwpiau cynghori lle bydd Swyddogion Mynediad y CMP fel Cath Flitcroft yn mynychu. Pan fu'm i'n byw yma yn yr wythdegau, roedd gan y bobl leol ofn defnyddio eu hiaith yn gyhoeddus, ond erbyn heddiw siaredir yr iaith â balchder. Rwyf yn mynychu cyfarfodydd Fforwm Mynediad Eryri pedair gwaith y flwyddyn ac maent yn gyfarfodydd dwyieithog gyda chyfieithu ar y pryd.

Felly, beth yw'r pris o gael Swyddog CMP i Gymru? Rhywun i atynnu cronfa ariannol gan Lywodraeth y Cynulliad; i hyrwyddo proffil CMP gyda'r cynghorwyr sy'n siarad Cymraeg yng Ngwynedd a Môn; i gydlynu gwaith gwirfoddolwyr CMP yn y De a'r Gogledd ynghyd; i gefnogi mentrau Cymraeg megis y bartneriaeth awyr agored sy'n cyflwyno cannoedd o bobl leol ar draws Cymru i fywyd awyr agored. Ac i rywun ddweud wrth Gyngor Chwaraeon Cymru fod Cymru yn un o'r llefydd pwysicaf yn y byd ar gyfer mynydda.

Ar nod y wahanol, dwi'n siwr fydd dringwyr yn hynod o siomedig o weld bod Caffi Eric yn Nhremadog ar werth. Er nad oes modd gweld Eric yn arafu – mae'n dal i ddringo a gwneud neidiau yn ei saithdegau – mae ganddo bob hawl i ymddeol. Rydym yn diolch yn fawr iddo am ein cefnogi am gymaint o amser. Beth fydd yn digwydd i'r caffi? A fydd croeso i ni yno? A fyddem yn gallu parcio yno er mwyn mynd i ddringo? Diolch yn fawr i Eric ac Ann – dyma le arbennig ac mae gan lawer ohonom atgofion melys o dreulio dyddiau yno. Ond pa mor bwysig yw'r caffi i ni? A ddylem ni drïo ei brynu a'i wneud yn swyddfa ar gyfer Swyddog CMP Cymru? Beth am gyfraniad gan y prif clybiau – a fyddai diddordeb gan Glwb y Dringwyr? Fyddai modd i lyfrgell y Clwb Alpine fod yma? Beth ydym ni'n ei wethfawrogi? Pwy a fydd? ■

Mike Raine
Ardal CMP Cymru

Don't waste your time on home improvement.



Sure you can simply go cragging and, in time, you will get better. But if you want to improve your climbing rapidly, there's no better way than to get some professional coaching.

At Plas y Brenin our instructors are not only highly skilled, accomplished and experienced climbers, they're expert coaches too. They know exactly how to help you achieve your maximum potential as a climber.

Whether you've reached a plateau in your development or you're simply ready to move up a grade and improve your technique, our coaches will help you see and feel improvement - fast.

What's more, after a week or a weekend with our coaches you'll enjoy your climbing more as they'll leave you with a clear picture of how to continue that development under your own steam.

Our staff are amongst the most experienced, highly qualified and enthusiastic in the country. Not only can we boast as many as eleven qualified International Mountain Guides (more than anywhere else in the UK) and over thirty full-time qualified Mountaineering Instructors, but our instructional team includes climbers with an enviable wealth of experience. Between them they

can list a catalogue of international expeditions, ground-breaking first ascents, new routes, epic journeys and impressive summits. All of which goes to enrich their coaching skills, leading to a much more interesting, rewarding learning experience for you.

But the most important quality our staff possess is their enthusiasm. It is truly infectious. And after a few days with them you're sure to take away some of that passion which will leave you eager to climb harder than ever before.

So if you're looking for a way to improve your rock climbing don't waste another minute, come to Plas y Brenin.

For a free 60-page colour brochure telephone us on 01690 720214, e-mail brochure@pyb.co.uk or visit our website at www.pyb.co.uk



> **The Professional's Choice**

Energy Crisis

**Running out of steam?
Adrian Berry is here to cut your energy bill.**

I'm always impressed by how much strength even self-declared 'weak climbers' have, but frequently find myself wincing at how much of that strength is wasted.

Reducing the amount of strength you use on each move of a climb, even by just a very small amount, can mean the difference between success and failure. It's time for an energy audit.

A bridge too far

King of energy sapping mal-techniques is the bridge. I can vividly remember seeing a photo in a 'how-to' book illustrating bridging. The climber was well-attired with PAs, an orange Joe Brown helmet and some breeches, and firmly bridged out on an eighty-degree wall. If a sudden fierce gust of wind were to strike, he'd be in just the right posture, but the problem comes when you need to move. By bridging out with your feet you cannot move either foot without moving from a balanced position to an unbalanced position – the onus is placed on your hands to take the strain momentarily until you have placed your foot on the next hold. The wider your feet are bridged, the more strain your upper body takes when you move between footholds. The solution is simple: where possible, keep your feet directly below your hips.

Trust those feet

One of the reasons that we tend to get into a series of strenuous bridging positions is because the best footholds are rarely in a straight line. But when was the last time your feet got pumped? Get used to using smaller footholds: poor but adequate footholds take only a little more strength to use than good ones. By keeping your feet in-line you can move either foot without

significantly altering your balance, avoiding putting the strain onto your upper body. Using small footholds will also mean that you'll be able to climb in smaller steps, which has the same benefit as keeping your feet in-line.

When you really have to bridge

Admittedly, there are many instances where bridging is the only way, but using the following techniques will go a long way to reducing the strain on your upper body:

Hip movement. When bridging your weight is distributed evenly between both feet – when you go to move one of your feet, your upper body has to take the strain. But when your feet are next to each other, you can transfer all your weight evenly and completely un-weight the foot you are moving. This does require a slight movement of the hips, but it's so subtle you hardly know you're doing it. In a wider bridging position, you can achieve the same result by bending your legs and moving your hips so that they are directly above the foot you are not moving, un-weighting the other foot so that you can move it effortlessly to the next foothold.

Dynamic hip movement. If you find yourself in a position where your feet are bridged too wide to allow you to move your hips over one of your feet, then you will need to get a bit more dynamic. The reason moving out of a bridging position is generally strenuous is because when you're bridging, your centre of gravity is above a point somewhere between your feet, when you move one of your feet off its foothold, your centre of gravity is no longer being supported, and it's only your hand-holds that stop you from falling. But your centre of gravity is not fixed inside your body, you can shift it

Katherine Schirmacher on steep territory on a F6a in Geyikbayiri, Turkey. Photo: Alex Messenger.

John Roberts seems to have got rather pumped at the top of Silver Shadow (E2 5b) Stackpole Head, Pembroke. Photo: Alex Messenger.



around quite easily. By generating sideways momentum with your hips you can shift your centre of gravity temporarily over one foot, allowing you to move the other before your centre of gravity inevitably returns to its original position. This is best achieved by a sharp flicking motion. Naturally, you've got limited time to execute the move, so you do need to be sure where your next foothold is.

Palming and cross-palming. Most climbers are familiar with palming, but it's a technique that could be used far more. The great thing about palming

down as an energy-saving technique is that it both relieves your fingers and places your arm below the level of your heart – adding up to good recovery. Generally you palm with your left hand to move your left foot and vice-versa, but sometimes you'll find you don't want to move your left hand to a palming position just to move your left foot. In this situation, you can often palm with the opposite hand simply by placing your arm across your body. Cross-palming also has the advantage of making you look very professional!

Knees. I was always taught that using

your knees in climbing was technically as low as you could go – that was probably because everyone wore Lycra back then and sticking your knees on holds caused dreadful ladders. The time when knees come in handy is when there is a hold roughly evenly spaced between your feet and your crotch. By dropping a knee onto the hold you give yourself an extra point of support that is more directly below your centre of gravity – allowing you to move a foot up. This of course can't work unless you happen to have some feature in the right place, but in the right situation it almost feels like cheating.

Energy saving hand positions

Climbers quickly learn that open-handed positions can be held for much longer than closed handed positions (crimp and half-crimp), but it's easy to forget this when you're fresh, and often too late to start when you're pumped. Practice relaxing your grip on each hold until it's just enough to stay attached to it, and do this from the first moves off the ground. If you've just battled through a fingery sequence, you'll naturally be holding on too hard even when the holds are big, tell yourself to relax and look to open-hand wherever possible.

Thumbs

If you ever injure your thumb, you'll quickly realise how much work they do when you're climbing, they can do a lot more than most climbers realise. You can add an extra digit to your crimps by wrapping your thumb over the first knuckle of your index finger. On many edge-holds you can place your thumb next to your fingers and greatly reduce the strain on your fingers, and you can rest your fingers by using a hold solely with your thumb.

Energy saving arm positions

Our arms give out when the body is unable to remove lactic acid at the rate at which it's being produced, so keeping a good blood flow both in and out of your forearms is essential. Place your arms above the level of your heart and the blood is encouraged to flow out; place them below the level of your heart and the blood is encouraged to flow in. It follows that if you can alternate arm positions above and below your heart-level, you'll clear the lactic acid out more quickly. This alternation between positions is most clearly seen when 'shaking-out'. Letting your arm dangle fills it with blood (mine takes about four seconds), but then briefly holding it up above your head will clear it very quickly. You may have heard of this referred to as the 'G-Tox' – the name given to it by Eric Horst – and it's certainly more effective than just 'shaking-out'.

How angle affects arm positions

Seeing as holding your arms above your head drains the blood, you'd think that the best arm position would be low, and necessarily, bent. In fact,



Good technique - it won't take much energy to move from this position.

Photo: Adrian Berry.



Palm with your hand to make things easier.

Photo: Adrian Berry.



Bad technique! Very stable but moving out of this position will take lot of effort.

Photo: Adrian Berry.



Look stylish with some cross palming.

Photo: Adrian Berry.

this is very much down to the angle you're climbing. On slabby and vertical rock, keeping your arms at around heart-level allows the blood to circulate easily. However, when things get steeper, the rules change. When your arms are working hard, bending them at the elbow produces two headaches: you're using strength to keep the arm bent, and the contracted muscles hinder the blood supply to the forearms. When things get steep, switch to straight arms and shake out frequently.

Cycling

When you do need to hold on one-handed – placing gear, clipping a bolt, or chalking-up – the pump really sets in. Don't let it happen – 'cycle' between holding on with one hand then the other. It's better to have two moderately pumped arms than one fresh and the other completely useless.

Pace

The speed at which you climb is dictated by the difficulty. This seems universally understood, but many climbers get it the wrong way around. The easy bits can be taken at a leisurely pace, the hard sections are where you need to get into gear and keep going. When climbing on-sight, accept a lower level of technical perfection than normal: on easy ground look to climb it at about 90% perfection, but on the crux, settle for a quick attack at say 75% right. It's better to get it a bit wrong and keep going than to stop in a fiercely strenuous position to try to work it all out to perfection. ■

Adrian Berry works as a professional climbing coach, based in the Peak District. His books Sport Climbing+ and Trad Climbing+ are published by Rockfax and are widely available. Further information on Adrian Berry's personal coaching is available at www.positiveclimbing.com.

Sport for all



What's a National Mountain Centre for anyway? I've been doing a lot of running around recently – mainly because I've inadvertently signed up for the Snowdon Marathon again this year. One of my favourite runs takes me round the lakes of Llanberis and back through the slate quarries. I usually pass people enjoying all sorts of activities: paddling on the lake, walking up Snowdon and climbing at Dali's hole. A wide selection of outdoor life, just like we aim to represent at Plas y Brenin.

What is a National Centre for anyway? I vividly remember my first visit to Crystal Palace as a kid; being in awe of a place where special things happened and people pushed the limits. I remember the amazing facilities, where austere coaches bred an atmosphere of high performance, and the smell of pride in the air.

But what is a National Mountain centre for? Plas y Brenin has always been a bit of an odd-one-out alongside the other centres owned by Sport England. And, as sport again takes a U-turn from health to elite performance – with the Olympics on the horizon – we have to wonder where our non-medal winning activities fit in.

We may not be able to bring home gold, but our sports are undoubtedly good for you. In a risk-averse society, there is also a refreshing need to get your head around doing something that might hurt – with no-one but

yourself to blame. In the outdoor world, people seem to start early, grow up with their chosen sport, and continue to excel for many years. As a result, the National Mountain Centre is full of people, all sorts of people, from eight to 80-years old – something that just doesn't happen in many other sports.

Look at our brochure or website and you'll see a real diversity of courses. There's something for everyone: beginners, experts and outdoor professionals. It's not all about elite performance, or even qualifications, but a shared passion. The needs of beginner and expert are quite different, but we all have much to learn – our sports have a fascinating blend of risk, strategy and technicality. That's why we offer a range of courses in every discipline – from first steps to elite performance.

The concept that outdoor centres are only for novices or groups of kids couldn't be more wrong either; all levels are regarded with equal importance and passion. I mean, just imagine being coached in climbing by the leading climbers of the day, could there be a better way to push yourself? Nor is it just students who get to benefit from the buzz of the place. The National Mountain Centre is an important resource of expertise, top performers and coaches share knowledge across all levels, all disciplines and even other sports. You can't help but be inspired. Rowland Edwards recently observed an MIA training course, and was delighted to find the place still "had that buzz" about it.

Currently we're also offering some after-school climbing to a local primary school, and organising some mentoring by James McCaffie for a couple of local hotshots (14-years old and leading E6!). If a National Centre can't help the best climbers of the day develop the talent of tomorrow, then who can. There are other ways of sharing our expertise too: website articles, top tips in the magazines, support for the BMC lecture series, committee representation, supporting local initiatives and this fledgling Summit page.

So, over the next few issues we're going to get the best people we can muster to talk about their preparation for doing 'their thing'. Look out for Andy Turner writing about his preparation for winter, James McCaffie on how to get strong for Spring, Tim Neill on the Alps and Stu McAleese on expedition climbing. I'd like to think that there will be something for everyone – but let us know.

Or next time you drive past the building, come in – for the wall, for the bar, for a weather forecast or just for the crack of it – it is your centre after all. ■

*Martin Chester,
Chief Instructor, Plas y Brenin*

Plas y Brenin is the National Mountain Centre based in Capel Curig, Snowdonia. They offer a range of courses on all aspects of walking, climbing and mountaineering. See www.pyb.co.uk for details.

Speakers from the Edge present

Andy Kirkpatrick

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Metro

Captain Stalk Lament

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27/09 MULL Mull Theatre	28/10 St ALBANS Arena
02/10 DURHAM The Gala	30/10 DUNKELD Birnam Institute
03/10 STAFFORD Gatehouse	01/11 BRECON Theatr Brycheiniog
09/10 INVERNESS Eden Court	12/11 TAUNTON Brewhouse Theatre
16/10 BIRMINGHAM Town Hall	13/11 EASTBOURNE Congress
17/10 READING Concert Hall	18/11 HAYES Beck Theatre
21/10 LEEDS City Varieties	27/11 DORKING Dorking Halls
22/10 LLANDUDNO Venue Cymru	03/12 LEAMINGTON SPA The Royal
23/10 BOLTON Albert Halls	10/12 STORNOWAY An Lanntair

For more information go to www.speakersfromtheedge.com

Speakers from the Edge present

Beyond the Void

Simon Yates

05/10 TUNBRIDGE WELLS Assembly Hall	05/11 HARLOW Playhouse Theatre
12/10 POTTERS BAR Wyllyotts Centre	06/11 WELLINGBOROUGH The Castle
14/10 MOTHERWELL Concert Hall	08/11 NEWCASTLE Journal Tyne Theatre
17/10 ARBROATH Webster Theatre	09/11 KIRKCALDY Adam Smith Theatre
21/10 CROYDON Ashcroft Theatre*	10/11 INVERNESS Eden Court
23/10 STOCKPORT Plaza Theatre	13/11 FELIXSTOWE Spa Pavilion Theatre
25/10 ROTHERHAM Civic Theatre	14/11 LOWESTOFT The Marina Theatre
27/10 SWANSEA Grand Theatre	20/11 SOUTHSEA The Kings Theatre
29/10 SURREY Epsom Playhouse	21/11 CATFORD Broadway Theatre
30/10 STIRLING Albert Halls	26/11 ABERGAVENNY Borough Theatre
02/11 HALIFAX Victoria Theatre	28/11 BARNSTAPLE Queen's Theatre
04/11 TAMWORTH Assembly Rooms	29/11 NORWICH Norwich Playhouse

*There will be a matinee and evening performance at this venue

For more info go to www.speakersfromtheedge.com



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Area noticeboard

Martin Kocsis has the lowdown on what's happening in your area.

Cymru/Wales

North: The Marine Drive bolt inspections are progressing well: over half the popular climbs have been inspected and the team aim to finish by the end of the year. Re-equipping Lower Pen Trywn will start "soon" – contact the North Wales Bolt Fund via V12 in Llanberis to get involved. The next gathering will be on **September 2nd at The Vaynol at 8pm.**

South: The South Wales team have had clean-ups at Llanbradach and Mountain Ash in recent months, and a South Wales Bolt Fund is emerging. A bolting workshop in mid-July helped galvanize participation, and everyone hopes that the south of the country will follow the north's lead. Next south Wales meeting tbc.

Lakes

The Lakes Festival of Climbing was a great success, thanks to all who came along. If you want to get involved with the Lakes Bolt Fund, contact the fund through Dan Middleton at the BMC, and if you want to subscribe to the Lakes Newsletter email lakesareanews@googlemail.com. The **next area meeting will be in early October**, keep an eye out for details.

London & South East

The London team are keen to get local clubs involved. With the recent establishment of the BMC Clubs Forum, 'club issues' are more prominent than ever. The next area meeting will be in **Central London on Tuesday 9th September.**

Midlands

Guidebook work continues with photo-sessions and crag clean-ups planned for the summer – contact iain.mckenzie@leicester.gov.uk to help out. Also bubbling under is a local bolt fund to make sense of the occasionally haphazard and illogical bolting in the region. Under the expert eye of Iain McKenzie, the Midlands newsletter is going from strength-to-strength with excellent articles and photography. The next area meeting is in **Solihull on Thursday 4th September at 7.30pm.**

North West

The current debates in the area concern fixed gear, bolted lower-offs and crag restoration. The next meeting will concentrate on a proposal to retro-bolt Lester Mill Quarry, a rarely-used crag being reclaimed by nature. The debate will inevitably lead on to suggestions about setting up a North West Bolt Fund, and the replacement of all fixed gear in the area. Should be a pretty low key meeting then! Make a date for **Monday September 15th, at 8pm at the Belmont Bull.** (in Belmont, surprisingly enough).



Peak

The team's next meeting is at **The Crown, Glossop on the 3rd September.** The Horseshoe Upkeep Group (motto: 'Every crag needs HUG') will be up and running by the time you read this, and will have achieved Good Things. The recent Peak District fixed gear debate will also have had some knock-on effects by the time you read this, and there may be 'safe' new pegs and threads appearing all over the region. Moorland grit, Shooter's Nab and bolts on grit will all be under the spotlight.

South West

There are a host of events to tickle your tastebuds if you live west of Brizzle. By the time you read this, information should be in the public domain concerning restorations at the mighty Dewerstone with Mat Johnson, the sunny seaside Meadfoot Quarry with Tom Hughes and the much loved Chudleigh with Ben Hall and Mark Glaister. There is also a confirmed rumour that suggests that the next area meeting will be on the **Culm Coast near Welcome over the weekend of the 5-7th September.** Sharpnose, Vicarage Cliff and Gull Rock are some of the nearby delights.

Yorkshire

New venue, new ideas! Meeting in Ilkley means that getting a few sneaky routes in beforehand is likely. There has been plenty of new route activity on Yorkshire limestone in recent months, but access problems are looming at Foredale Quarry. The first Yorkshire newsletter was a success, and the team are looking for help to produce the next one from anyone who has a bit of design know-how! The next meeting is at the **Ilkley Moor Vaults on the 8th September.**



FOR MORE INFORMATION ON BMC AREA OPEN MEETINGS, AND HOW YOU CAN GET INVOLVED IN ALL AREAS OF THE BMC, SEE WWW.THEBMC.CO.UK/YOURBMC.



Colin Struthers is the new Big Cheese of the BMC's resurgent North West area. No stranger to having an opinion, he's been 'local' for longer than Martin Kocsis has been alive. Undeterred, Martin caught up with him in Hoghton Quarry for a chat over a large piece of cake.

You've hit the ground running – what do you hope to achieve in your time as Big Cheese?

It may not sound ambitious, but I'd be pleased if people feel that I do the job of Chairman properly. That is, allowing efficient discussions where everyone has a chance to have their say – provided they don't drone on and on.

There are some bolted lower-offs above Jimmy Nip at Wilton one. Know anything about these?

Maybe. Can I have some new resin bolts please?

"The North West is a climbing backwater." Discuss

I think this was true a few years ago, but lately we're seeing more and more people getting out on their local crags, hardly surprising given the price of petrol). It's great that so many have been willing to put time into cleaning places like Egerton, Angelzarke and Hoghton too.

Why bother to get involved with the BMC?

It's the only show in town if you give a toss about climbing in our area and want to see the crags preserved and developed.

There's a strange mix of pegs, bolts and trad in the quarries. What's your view?

It's good that this is a live debate. For me trad climbing remains the 'gold standard' of our sport but I'm not unsympathetic to people who want to see some sport routes developed on quarried grit.

What's your claim to fame?

You can see my rucksack on the ground in the lower left-corner of the famous poster of Phil Davidson soloing Right Wall.

If you could have a super-power for a week, what would it be?

I'd wave a magic wand and year-round access at Hoghton would be restored.

Read any good books lately?

Usually I just look at the pictures, but I did find Robert Macfarlane's 'Mountains of the Mind' fascinating.

Chocolate flapjack, cream horn or fruit slice?

Obviously I like to get the horn.

(We've not heard that one before. Note to self: change the question - MK) ■

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Competitions

2008 was a great summer for British competition climbing, and some unexpected results shook up the podium line-ups. Tony Ryan takes a look at what's gone down – and what's in store for the winter.

British Lead Climbing Championships

First off was the British Lead Climbing Championships, taking place at the spectacular Blackpool Climbing Towers for the second year running – the steep and high walls providing perfect terrain to test the competitors. Not only did they have to contend with some fiendishly difficult climbs, they also had to battle strong offshore winds and unseasonably low temperatures. Gaz Parry (senior male) and Shauna Coxsey (junior female) won for the second year running, whilst Audrey Seguy (senior female) and Jonathan Stocking (junior male) were newly crowned champions. A certain Nick Colton – who when not climbing is the BMC Deputy CEO – won the veteran male category; who said fix?

Full results at www.thebmc.co.uk/blcc

BMC Youth Climbing Series National Final

Next was the BMC Youth Climbing Series Final. A record number of almost 600 young climbers from all over the country took part in the regional rounds in March and April, with 180 of them qualifying for the national final, hosted by the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena. The competition combines bouldering and roped climbing, and there are three age categories within the 8-16 age range. The general climbing standard is increasing each year, so much so this year that the seasoned route setting team were taken a little bit by surprise, leading to several ties even after super-final climb-offs.

Full results at www.thebmc.co.uk/yfc

British Bouldering Championships

Last, but by no means least, was the British Bouldering Championships – the main attraction of the Cliffhanger outdoor festival in Sheffield. The venue and 'big top' accommodation added a carnival atmosphere to the event, but didn't diminish the intensity of the competition. Shauna Coxsey (junior female), Jonathan Stocking (junior male), and Audrey Seguy (senior female) all did the double, by winning the national bouldering and lead climbing championships in the same year. 21-year old Ned Feehally out-climbed the favourites to become the youngest winner of the senior male category.

Full results at www.thebmc.co.uk/bbc ■

All these events couldn't take place without the support of the venues, and the dedication of numerous BMC volunteers. Thanks to all.

Coming this winter

If watching the summer's competitions has got you inspired, then get in training for these two great events.

BMC Leading Ladder

This series, inaugurated in 2007, will run once again over the winter 2008-2009 season, starting in October. Check the BMC website for details, or ask your local climbing wall if it's participating in the series. Each wall will have ten routes graded from F5+ to F8A for you to attempt. Hand your scorecard in for a chance to compete in the national final in March. It's a great opportunity for climbers of all levels to experience competition climbing, and an ideal way to improve fitness and maintain motivation during the long, dark winter months.

Find out more at www.thebmc.co.uk/ladder

British Team Trials

If you want to try out for a place in the 2009 British Lead Climbing Team and represent your country at international competitions, then put Saturday 6th December in your diary. There are four categories: junior boys and girls, senior men and women. Any UK passport holder can compete for a place on the team. If you're new to formal competitions the trials also provide an opportunity for you to gauge your ability against the best in Britain. Check the BMC website for details nearer the time.

Find out more at www.thebmc.co.uk/competitions

BMC Student Safety & Good Practice Seminar

Sponsored by Ultimate Outdoors
Plas y Brenin, 11 - 12th October

This excellent seminar gives university club members the opportunity to improve their club practices and learn new skills. Last minute places may be available, contact becky@thebmc.co.uk. The BMC relies upon the kind support of qualified volunteers in order to run the workshops – if you'd like to volunteer on the seminar please contact jon@thebmc.co.uk.
www.thebmc.co.uk/safety

BMC Huts Seminar

Hawkshead YHA, 18th October

This biennial event enables clubs with huts to discuss key issues and share information. Anyone involved in managing a club hut is encouraged to attend to ensure that they are 100% up to date with legally-binding legislation such as building and fire regulations and child protection laws. The event is hosted by the BMC Huts Group and features workshops by a variety of experts.
www.thebmc.co.uk/clubs

BMC Legal Workshop for Club Officials

Hawkshead YHA, 18th October

Coinciding with the BMC Huts Seminar, the BMC are running a legal workshop for club officials from 10:30-12:30 at Hawkshead YHA. Run by BMC Honorary Legal Advisor Martin Wragg, it will be based on an open forum / Q&A format. It's a great opportunity for clubs to debate issues of common concern and to receive expert legal input on the spot. If you have any technical questions for Martin, please submit them to kate@thebmc.co.uk by 19th September to allow Martin time to research and prepare answers.
www.thebmc.co.uk/clubs

BMC Technical Conference

Plas y Brenin, 25th October

Based on a theme of "Protective Equipment for the Outdoors", the day will include lectures and demonstrations from DMM, the BMC Technical Committee and independent industry experts.
www.thebmc.co.uk/equipment

BMC Winter Lectures

Nationwide, November

These inspirational and educational talks will be presented by Dave Hollinger (IFMGA Guide) and Rob Jarvis (MIC). See news for more details.
www.thebmc.co.uk/winterlectures

MLTA National Conference

Plas y Brenin, 8 - 9th November

Come along to the Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA) National Conference for a full weekend of in-depth workshops. These include: improvised rescue, GPS, SPA skills, rope-work for Mountain Leaders, setting up a small business, BMC fundamentals of climbing, teaching navigation skills, risk assessment for leaders, the MIA, good practice in gorge walking, expedition skills and the mountain environment. The event is exclusive to MLTA members; new members are welcome and you can join when booking.
www.mltuk.org

Kendal Mountain Film Festival

Kendal, 20th - 23rd November

Whether you're a travel enthusiast or just after inspiration for a holiday with a difference, this is the place to be. See news for full details.
www.mountainfilm.co.uk

10/10 OXFORD Oxford Playhouse 01865 305305
11/10 SALFORD The Lowry 0870 7875780
13/10 WORTHING Assembly Hall 01903 206206
15/10 DERBY Assembly Rooms 01332 255800
17/10 ANDOVER The Lights 01264 368368
21/10 BARROW-in-FURNESS Forum 28 01229 820000
06/11 CAERNARFON Galeri 01286 685222
15/11 PITLOCHRY Festival Theatre 01796 484626

Go to www.speakersfromtheedge.com for info

DOUG SCOTT - ILLUSTRATED LECTURES 2008

"A Crawl down the Ogre" (Ogre), "Life and Hard Times" (Life)

October	
Wed 22	New Mills, Town Hall, 01663 732701, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Thu 23	Salisbury, Education Centre, Salisbury Hospital, private lecture, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Sat 25	Wakefield, Wakefield College, Thornes Campus Go Outdoors, Wakefield 01924 272877, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Sun 26	Peebles, Eastgate Theatre – 01721 725777 10-2pm 6.30-7.30pm www.thebooth.co.uk CAN/ROKPA, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Mon 27	Langholm, Buccleuch Centre – 013873 81196 - 10-12am & 2-4pm www.buccleuchcentre.com CAN/ROKPA, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Tue 28	Irvine, Magnum Centre – 01294 313772 CAN/ROKPA, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Wed 29	Kelso, Tait Hall, Edenside Road – 01573 224269 Brown's Newsagents 01387 373232 Ext.230 RokpaUK CAN/ROKPA, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
November	
Mon 3	Dumfries, Easterbrook Hall, Crichton Campus – 01387 252891 Patties, Dumfries 01387 373232 ext 230 RokpaUK, CAN/ROKPA, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Thu 6	Glasgow, Royal Concert Hall – 01415 595450 - TISO/CAN, 'Life,' 7.30pm
Fri 7	Edinburgh, George Square Lecture Theatre, 01312259486 TISO/CAN, 'Life,' 7.30pm
Mon 10	Aberdeen, Douglas Hotel, Market St. 07986 956365/01224 634934 CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Tue 11	Dundee, Discovery Point, Discovery Quay, 01382872020/01382 221153 CAN/ROKPA 'Life,' 7.00pm
Wed 12	Lochgelly Centre – 01382 872020/ 01592 583303, CAN/ROKPA, 'Ogre,' 7.00pm
Thu 13	St Andrews, Byre Theatre, Abbey St. - 01382 872020/01334 475000, CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Fri 14	Pitlochry, Town Hall, West Moulin Rd- 01382 872020/01796 473866 CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Sat 15	Fort William, Nevis Centre – 01382 872020/01397 700707, CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Mon 17	Inverness, Culloden Academy – 07900 561296/0845 458 9527 highlandnewswoman@yahoo.co.uk - CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Tue 18	Skye, The Aros Centre – 07900 561296 or 01478 613750 highlandnewswoman@yahoo.co.uk - CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Thu 20	Oban, Corran Hall, Esplanade – 01382 872020/01631 567333, CAN/ROKPA, 'Life,' 7.00pm
Fri 21	Through to Sun 23 - Kendal Mountain Film Festival, www.mountainfilm.co.uk/
Wed 26	Worcester, John Moore Theatre, King's School, 01905 721794/01905 611115, CAN/Him.Trust, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Thu 27	Oxford, Nelson Mandela Room, Said Business School, Park End Street 01865 778536 CAN, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Fri 28	Exeter University, Newman A, Lecture Theatre - www.tauntonleisure.com , CAN, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Sun 30	Pately Bridge Memorial Hall - 01423 712922, info@snypland.com 01423 711840, janespooner730@btinternet.com , 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
December	
Tue 2	Hartlepool, Town Hall Theatre, Raby Road - 01429 890000, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Tue 9	London, RGS, 'Tibet,' speakers to be introduced by AA Gill, with Julian Freeman-Attwood, Stephen Venables, & Mike Searle - CAN/Promise Nepal - maggie@shopwyke.co.uk 01243 771177, 6.00pm for 7.45pm
Thu 11	North Berwick, Macdonald Marine Hotel with Chris Bonington - 016208 10259/ 016208 10931, CAN/Life Science Trust, 'Ogre,' 7.30pm
Fri 12	Forfar, Lochside Leisure Centre, Queenswell Road - Telephone number TBA, 'Ogre,' Time TBA

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www.catreks.com, 017687 71890, info@catreks.com

Hill Skills: Contour interpretation by Roger Wild

The most useful feature on the map for navigating in the mountains is the contour line. Contour features can nearly always be identified on the ground even when covered in snow, and developing your contour interpretation skills is vital if you want to feel confident navigating in all conditions and on all terrain.

What is a contour line?

A contour line is a line on the map joining points of equal height. The 'vertical interval' is the height between each contour, and this will be shown on the map. Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 maps have a 10-metre vertical interval while the British Mountain Maps 1:40,000 scale maps have a 15-metre vertical interval. Some popular maps of the French Alps have a 10-metre vertical interval which changes to 20-metres when you cross over the border into Switzerland. So beware!

What is a contour feature?

What is a contour feature? It's actually pretty simple, as there are actually only six general types:

Ring contours: which portray knolls and hills (RC)

Saddles (S), bwlchs, bealachs(S)

Slopes: which could be gentle (GS), medium (MS) or steep (SS)

Valleys: they come in different shapes and sizes (V)

Ridges: which can be small, medium or large (R)

Flat areas: the absence of contours can be useful (F)



Example contour features by permission of Harvey Maps.

The illustration map above shows examples of all these features (the letters in brackets shown above refer to the features indicated on the map).

Contour interpretation

Contour interpretation is about relating the contour features on the map to the real features on the ground, and vice versa. Once the map is set, this can be done in three main ways:

1. Evaluate the ground under your feet. Defining the type of feature it forms will help with identifying it on the map. This can be done in both good and poor visibility.
2. In good visibility, look at features beyond your immediate location and identify them on the map. These features may be close-by or several hundreds of metres away.

3. In poor visibility, examine the contour features on the map and form a mental picture of what the ground ahead of you would look like if the visibility was good. Anticipating what the ground will be like before you arrive is very useful – it forces you to interpret the contours on the map.

Like all skills, the more you practice the better you become. On days with good visibility there may be a tendency to walk along looking at the view or chatting away, rather than studying the map in detail. A habit worth acquiring is to always spend part of each hill day developing your contour interpretation skills – even if it's not really necessary at the time. You could set a limit on the time you'll spend on this, maybe half an hour, or until you reach a particular landmark.

Build up a repertoire of images by matching up features on the ground with the contours on the map. For example, the illustration map shows two examples of a ridge (R). The westerly ridge is fairly narrow but is relatively easy angled (although there may be a short, steep section at the apex of the thick contour) whereas the easterly ridge is broader and steeper. By identifying these features on the ground you'll be able to store their images away for use in other situations where the terrain is similar.

Another example of feature variations can be found by examining slopes: how close together are the contours on a steep or medium slope, and how do you define a steep

Expert Q&A



This issue's expert is Nigel Williams. Nigel has been Head of Training at Glenmore Lodge for 11 years. A Mountain Instructor, nordic skier and orienteering coach, he's passionate about the coaching of navigation.

Q. Is orienteering a good way to develop my navigation skills?

A. Definitely. Most of us don't practice the full range of navigation skills on a regular basis. Orienteering provides a brilliant afternoon's walk with a map. A mid-level course (light green) is about 3-4km, offering a dozen legs requiring navigation strategies and map and compass skills. A forest can be the equivalent of mist. You don't have to run or wear lycra and you'll marvel at the detail of the maps. See www.britishorienteering.org.uk to find an event.

Q. Does getting lost mean I'm a poor navigator?

A. No. Navigation is an art, not a science. Even the best of us get lost occasionally, usually because we've lost concentration. In fact I'd recommend getting a bit 'cartographically challenged' in order to practice your re-location skills. Again, orienteering provides an ideal opportunity to practice for real, and hopefully you won't end up 20km away from the car.

Q. What do you look for when buying a compass?

A. A compass is a scientific instrument, you generally get what you pay for. A long base plate is essential if you are aiming at things, keeping to a bearing and pacing. I like a good magnifying glass, especially with complex detail on say a 1:25,000 map. It is amazing what additional map information you can pick up when on ridges or between letters of words etc. I don't tend to like too much clutter on the base plate as I use centimetres and millimetres mostly to measure distances on the map.

Practice your navigation in good visibility.
Photo: Alex Messenger.



or medium slope anyway? Generally 45-degrees is too steep for walking, whereas 27-degrees is a reasonable angle, which we will call a medium slope. How do we know if the contours on the map are going uphill or downhill? Here's a few ways:

1. Look for the contour heights which are incorporated within the contour lines. Also remember that the contour height figures are printed on the map facing uphill – if you're looking at the figures the right way up you're looking uphill (on the map) and if

they're upside down you're looking downhill (on the map).

2. Rivers and streams flow downhill – they are useful indicators of high and low ground on the map.

3. Find the nearest hill (on the map) this will usually make it clear.

Develop a library of mental images of different features and how they are represented on the map by contours. This will increase your ability to work out where you are and to anticipate the ground which lies further ahead in your

journey. Once you begin to master contour interpretation, you'll feel more confident when navigating in the hills. ■

This is one of the navigation skills taken from the MCofS 'Navigators' Dozen' – a list of everything you need to know about mountain navigation. Roger Wild is the MCofS Mountain Safety Advisor. Roger co-wrote and co-directed the forthcoming Hill Walking Essentials DVD with Jon Garside (BMC) and Mal Creasey (Mountain Leader Training England).

Q. What is the most important element of teaching navigation?

A. Building confidence. Someone once said that "Navigation is 25% map work, 25% compass work and 50% confidence in the other two". Forget grid references and learning map symbols in the classroom – start navigating on small-scale orienteering maps with lots of information. Have a steady progression of learning, from map setting through to re-location skills, and use a non-threatening environment (such as school grounds or a park) before hitting a forest then the hills.

Q. What is the best way to introduce young children to navigation?

A. Orienteering! It's a family-friendly activity, kids can relate to the map scale and courses are graded in colours like ski runs. The teaching methodology has provided the UK with world-class navigators in every age group, whilst many of us who learnt 'map reading' (as opposed to navigation) on a 1:50,000 OS map in school struggle to navigate effectively later in life.

FURTHER INFORMATION



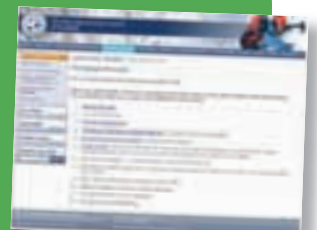
Hillwalking

Hillwalking is the official handbook of the Walking Group Leader and Mountain Leader scheme and it's packed full of advice to help you make the most of your time in Britain's hills and mountains.

www.mltuk.org

The Navigator's Dozen

Check out the Navigator's Dozen on the MCofS website for more navigational tips. www.mcofs.org.uk/navigators-dozen.asp



Essential Skills: High altitude expeditions

Want to enhance your chances of success and even 'enjoyment' on multi-day expeditions to big peaks? Whether you're after bagging Mont Blanc, Mera Peak, Denali or even Everest, you can stack the odds in your favour.

Apart from poor weather and conditions, there are three major reasons why people often fail to reach the summit of their chosen peak. Let's take a look.

Reason 1: motivation

The single biggest factor in determining your chance of success on an expedition peak is motivation. We're all highly motivated when looking at a pretty picture in the pub, but fatigue, dehydration, weight loss, sunburn, boredom and food fantasies all erode our will to climb. You're less likely to dig deep and go that extra mile if you're cold, tired, thirsty and hungry; to keep your motivation high you need to make the effort to look after yourself.

Climbing big peaks is all about keeping the show on the road (or rather you on the hill and, ideally, going upwards). Drinking, eating and sleeping are the three essentials – miss out on any of those and you'll rapidly run out of steam. Also remember that thirst and hunger are poor indicators of hydration and calorie intake – make a big effort to drink and eat even if you don't feel like it.

Expeditions are long enough for the cumulative effects to matter – what you do on the approach can affect how you feel on summit day. Get that hat and shades on and be meticulous about applying sun cream and lip barrier. Keep on top of hygiene with constant hand washing – various modern alcohol gels help. Make the effort to adjust your clothing so you don't get too hot or cold during the day, preferably with lots of 'on-the-go' adjustments that don't require you to take your pack off. Likewise, stay positive if you're not acclimatising so well or get a cold. Expeditions are long enough to recover and get back on track, and people regularly do just that.

Reason 2: acclimatisation

The most effective acclimatisation takes place with reasonable, but not excessive, levels of respiration. The ideal is 'active pottering': lying in your sleeping bag on a rest day isn't good, but neither is charging about trying to gain height too quickly. Ensure that your itinerary has sufficient time

Meals with a high calorific value are essential on big, cold mountains. Pan-frying Alaskan Salmon at Kalhitna Base Camp, Denali. Photo: Tom Briggs/Jagged Globe.



Expert Q&A



This issue's expert is full-time Jagged Globe leader Adele Pennington. Adele has summited with clients on Everest, Ama Dablam, Mount Vinson, Kilimanjaro and peaks in the Andes, yet still manages to find time for her own mountaineering.

Q. I've never been high before. Should I try trekking first?

A. What is important is that you choose something within your technical abilities. Some easy peaks are no more difficult than a trek – Kilimanjaro is considered a 'trek' even though you reach a summit, and the trek across Ghondokoro La pass near K2 is probably just as tough as Mera Peak. Gain your experience in Scotland or the Alps before setting off.

Q. Do I need special boots for altitude?

A. I'd always recommend a plastic double-boot when above 6,000m. These are warmer and easier to manage than leather. On the very high peaks, such as Mustag Alta, Cho-Oyu and Everest, system boots (super-insulated double-boots with an integrated gaiter, such as the Scarpa Phantom 8,000 or Millet Everest) are the way to stave off frostbite. I've worn both these boots above 8,000m and had no problems.

Q. What's your view on Diamox?

A. I think it has its uses, especially if you're having problems sleeping

or suffer from Cheyne-Stokes breathing, but I prefer to allow plenty of time to acclimatise. That said, everyone is different and those who acclimatise slowly and aren't bothered by the side effects (tingly fingers and toes, and a desire to pee a lot!), then Diamox certainly can help.

Q. What's best to eat at altitude?

A. Whatever you can get down. It's obviously best to eat food that's high in calorific content, but it's important that you enjoy eating it. Try a selection of

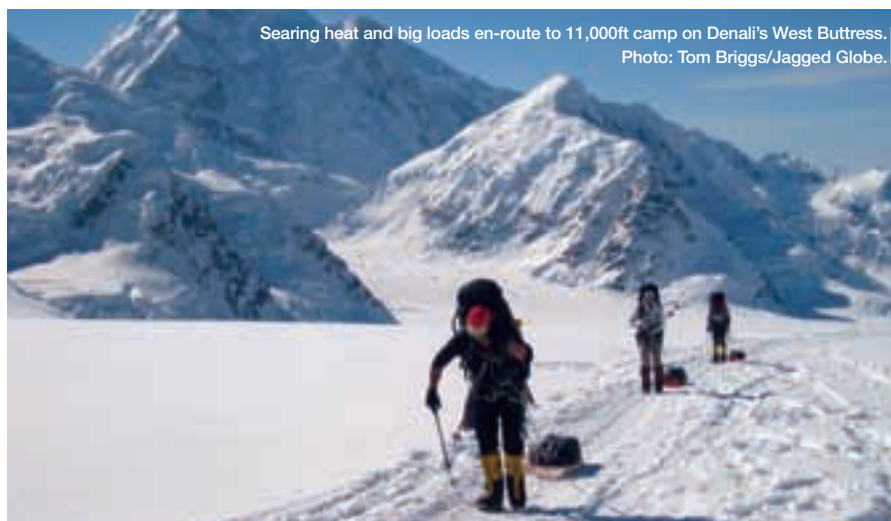
by Rob Jarvis

for rest days and a slow rate of ascent – you'll be relaxed and confident that you'll acclimatise well – and you may even enjoy your time spent high. Anxiety about your acclimatisation won't help though, so be aware, but not 'over-aware', of the symptoms of Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS).

Being relaxed, patient and adopting the slow pace of expedition life will also help. Take some good books and an MP3 player so you don't lose the will to be hanging about base camp or staring at the top of your storm-bound tent. Make the effort to get to know the local staff team (Sherpas, cooks and porters) and you'll be unlocking the door to hours of good banter and fascinating cultural exchange.

Reason 3: preparation and fitness

It may be true that fit people don't always acclimatise well but it's equally true that unfit people are adding an extra strain on their process of acclimatising. Don't just pound away down the gym – make your training specific for your trip. If you're hauling a large sack up the stony paths of Aconcagua then multi-day, self-sufficient backpacking trips in the UK will help prepare. If you're off to the steeper and more technical Ama Dablam then time spent working hard on exposed, difficult ground will pay dividends (as will



Searing heat and big loads en-route to 11,000ft camp on Denali's West Buttress. Photo: Tom Briggs/Jagged Globe.

practising using fixed ropes). On the other hand, if your chosen peak has lots of exposed snow slopes then there's no shortcut for time spent on these in Scotland and the Alps.

Coming back down

Hopefully some of these tips will help you out, but do remember that there are few things more tiring than a big day at altitude. Be aware that fatigue builds and AMS can have a time lag. The idea that you'll suddenly feel good again when you return to thicker air lower down the mountain often just doesn't work out. Feeling exhausted and hypoxic whilst

committed high on a mountain is not most people's idea of a good holiday, so save a few 'beans' for the descent.

In summary: prepare well, train hard, relax, look after yourself and good luck with the weather. Berg Heil! ■

Rob Jarvis has learnt a lot about expeditions since his first totally naive and epic trip in Pakistan with his brother years ago. He is an Aspirant International Mountain Guide and his company, www.highlandguides.com, runs mountaineering, climbing, alpine and expedition training courses based in the Scottish Highlands.

dehydrated or boil-in-the-bag meals before you go. My personal favourites are a dehydrated 'cod and potato real meal' followed by cheese and biscuits.

Q. How do you keep hydrated?

A. At times this is very difficult and it is important to rehydrate yourself whilst at camp. On the trek Platypus style water carriers are OK, but on summit day they'll freeze – use a thermos flask or a bottle with an insulated cover. On Everest I carried a ¾-litre thermos flask of hot sweet tea.

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Tech Skills: Bouldering mats by Dan Middleton

Bouldering mats are the new kid on the block when it comes to climbing equipment. It's hard to believe that before the late-nineties these were seen as something reserved for 'soft Yanks'; the British had bouldered for a hundred years with nothing more than a beer towel at their feet.

Of course, once you'd actually used one, it became apparent that they dramatically reduced the impact and forces of hard landings. And, as pads became more widely used, bouldering took off to become a mainstream activity.

How they work

It was soon realised that just filling the pad with a soft cushioning foam wasn't enough, and ideas were taken from gym mats to provide the basic modern design – using a combination of different density foams to provide the required performance. High density, closed-cell foam is used on the landing side. This relatively stiff and rigid foam spreads the load out over a wide area. The softer, low density open-cell foam underneath this is then compressed under impact. This compression reduces the force of the impact, and reduces the likelihood of injury. Just as importantly, the fact that the landing area is smooth, flat and uniform greatly reduces the chances of twisting or going over on ankles or twisting knees.

Portability

The next question facing mat designers was how to make a decent sized but portable mat, and two basic solutions have been found to this: hinged or rolled (aka taco) designs. Most early pads were hinged, and this style is still the most popular. Most fold in half, but there are designs around which fold into three and even four. The great thing about this idea is that it doesn't fold and damage the foam. On the downside, you do potentially have a problem if you land smack bang on the hinge line. Some models get around this by angling the hinge.

The taco design eliminates the dead spot created by a hinge. Because the pad can be effectively rolled into thirds, it's popular for really big pads. The price you pay is that this rolling damages the structure of the high-density foam, and tends to leave a permanent bend in the pad. As it's the high density foam which suffers most from this memory effect, some taco designs use a solid piece of low-density foam with a split piece of high-density foam, alleviating most of the effect.

Double or triple density?

The basic double-density design works pretty well, but for enhanced protection against 'bottoming out' on uneven ground, triple density foam can be useful. An extra layer of high-density foam is added to the bottom of the pad. This helps prevent tree

roots and rocks from being pushed up into the softer open cell foam. It also means that the pad can be used either way up.

Carrying the pad

These days most pads have a variety of carrying options: grab handles, over the shoulder strap and rucksack straps. A nice feature on some pads is that the rucksack straps are removable, and attach to the clean landing side of the pad. This comes into its own when a muddy session is followed by a strategic retreat to the public house.

Looking after your pad

The foam in pads will lose its structure over time, and become less effective at reducing impacts, but a few simple steps will enhance its life. First of all, it may be tempting to use your mondo-sized pad as the mother of all sleeping mats. Comfortable it may be, but do this regularly, and it'll reduce the useable lifetime of the foam. Allow your pad to dry before storing it, and if it's a taco design keep it un-rolled to help prevent foam memory problems. Replacement foam is available for many designs, and is well worth considering if the outer fabric is still in good shape when the pad has become flabby.

Other considerations

Check it will fit in your car. Many a boulderer has rushed out of the shop with

Expert Q&A



This issue's expert is Ian Ratcliffe. Ian has worked within the foam industry for the last twelve years and runs his own leisure furnishings company. He has recently started the Climbing Factory, making bouldering mats alongside Dave "we only ever used beer towels" Bishop.

Q. Are the thickest pads the best?

A. Not necessarily, it all depends on the quality of the foam being used. For example, four inches of high-density foam would give far more support and last twice as long as a six inch low-density foam. The layering system in the mat is also important. A mat with a three-layer construction has far more advantages than just a two-layer construction. Some of these being support, extra protection on rough ground and the versatility of being able to use the mat both sides.

Q. Can I recycle my old foam when it wears out?

A. Yes, we do recycle our foam. For this we granulate into small pieces and then re-use it for things like cane furniture cushions and lumber supports.

Q. Why is the foam so expensive?

A. Basically this is all down to the cost of raw materials. We've seen increases of around 42% over the last three years and with little sign of slowing, this means that foam is only going to get more expensive.

Q. I mostly do traverses, how can I extend my mat?

A. The honest answer is buy a pad suitable for purpose. There are a couple of good extendable pads on the market. One of which is created and supplied by the Climbing Factory!

Q. I'm bored of carting a big pad around – can you get inflatable pads?

A. Yes, there are air system pads on the market which give good support when landed on but they tend to be heavier and more expensive than foam based mats.

Are you still spotting me? Yes, of course we are.
Ben Heason straying a little above safe pad height,
Bishop, California.
Photo: Alex Messenger.



their new purchase, only to find their new pad doesn't fit into the boot of their tiny city runabout. For the environmentally conscious, micro-pads are available which can be carried when cycling – as long as it's not too windy! Rounded corners help reduce damage to the fabric from abrasion, and metal buckles on the straps won't get crushed as easily as plastic ones. A cordura

landing surface will wipe clean and dry easily, but isn't much good for drying rock shoes on. A piece of carpet, preferably removable for easy drying, will prove useful, although you can always make your own. Staking points are useful for those awkward sloping landings, if present make sure they are well sewn in.

And finally, remember that bouldering

mats can only offer limited protection, especially if you land awkwardly or from a long way up. A good attentive spotter can make a real difference, so team up and look after each other out there! ■

Dan Middleton is the BMC Technical Officer. Contact him at dan@thebmc.co.uk with your technical questions.

FURTHER INFORMATION



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Walking the line

David Gladwin tackles the notorious North Face of the Eiger.



David Gladwin on top of the Eiger.
Photo: David Gladwin collection.

When I saw the local forecast, I knew we were on: it was time to tackle the North Face of the Eiger. All winter I'd been waiting for this opportunity, keeping in shape by constant ice climbing and dry tooling; when no partners were available, I'd solo easy ice routes or do endless pull-ups on my axes.

Aboard the Jungfrau train in Grindewald, we chugged away from grassy pastures towards the base of the Eiger – and my first sight of the North Face. Looking up, part of me was ecstatic, part anxious – this route has claimed 70 lives. It was tempting to abandon our plans, to join the group of camera-happy Japanese tourist on their trip right through the Eiger to the far ridge, but summoning our reserve we headed to the campsite.

At camp there were a few climbers waiting around for ideal conditions: two Danes hoping to make the first Danish ascent, three French planning on flashing the route in a day and a pair of Austrians who'd fixed some rope over the difficult sections the previous day, before using the famous train tunnel window to come back down. We packed our bags with the absolute minimum, ate as much as our anxious stomachs could stand, then settled down.

By midnight we were underway. The sky was a brilliant blanket of stars and the silence a deep nothingness. We plodded along until the big, black void was above us and we could see the French climbers' torches just ahead, moving fast. We got the ropes out and climbed together, and when the going got difficult belayed each other, alternating leads. The day passed like this, exchanging the odd word or joke but never stopping. The only sounds were the familiar thump of the axes or crampons and the occasional screech of

metal scraping on rock. By 6pm we were on the third ice field and our home for the night was in sight – the Death Bivy. Its name dates from 1939 – a German party sheltered from a storm here and never left.

The second day was meant to have the most technical climbing on it. Right from the very start we climbed vertical ice, and sections of rock that for entire rope lengths seemed to have only matchbox sized footholds and nothing for our hands. One never-ending section finished with a strenuous mantle, and with tiring arms all I could manage was a desperate grab at a sling tied to a piton. To my dismay it pulled out, sending me sailing down the face before the rope came taught.

The route finding became challenging too; chimneys leading to seemingly impassible walls of rock. Already totally exhausted, we didn't want to risk climbing the wrong way, and had to frequently retreat to try our luck

with the next one. As the light faded, we decided that the 60-degree slope of ice in one of the gullies would be as good as our night got – and set to work digging out a couple of bum-sized ledges, melting some snow and eating the last of our food.

Avalanches came down all night, filling my bag, although I was better off than Jim – he'd opted to travel light and left his behind. At around 4am we decided that this disturbed, fitful sleep was pointless, and as Jim's shivering was worrying us, set off on the final exit cracks. Eventually, the angle of the rock eased and we hit the final ice slope leading to the summit ridge.

We plodded on at a snail's pace, on calf-burning 45-50 degree ice, and summited around midday. After three days of technical, heart-wrenching climbing, we were sitting on the summit of our world; we had a beautiful panorama of the Monch and Jungfrau mountains to our side and the inviting safety of the Grindewald valley below. But the clouds were coming in fast, leaving an incredible tail of cotton wool behind them – we decided to get down before the weather broke.

The descent wasn't technical, but it was exposed. Jim lost his footing a couple of times, one ending in him sliding down a rock gully for five metres then stopping on a football sized rock at the bottom, no more than a footprint away from a 30m cliff.

We arrived in Grindewald, every muscle aching, hungry and dehydrated. Despite this, when we saw our friends, we were grinning from ear to ear and hugged them affectionately. They congratulated us, seeming as proud and relieved as we were. We joked and exchanged stories then heard the bad news: one of the French men, after summiting in one day, slipped on the descent and died.

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Ian Parnell on *The Guillotine* (E3) Stanage

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