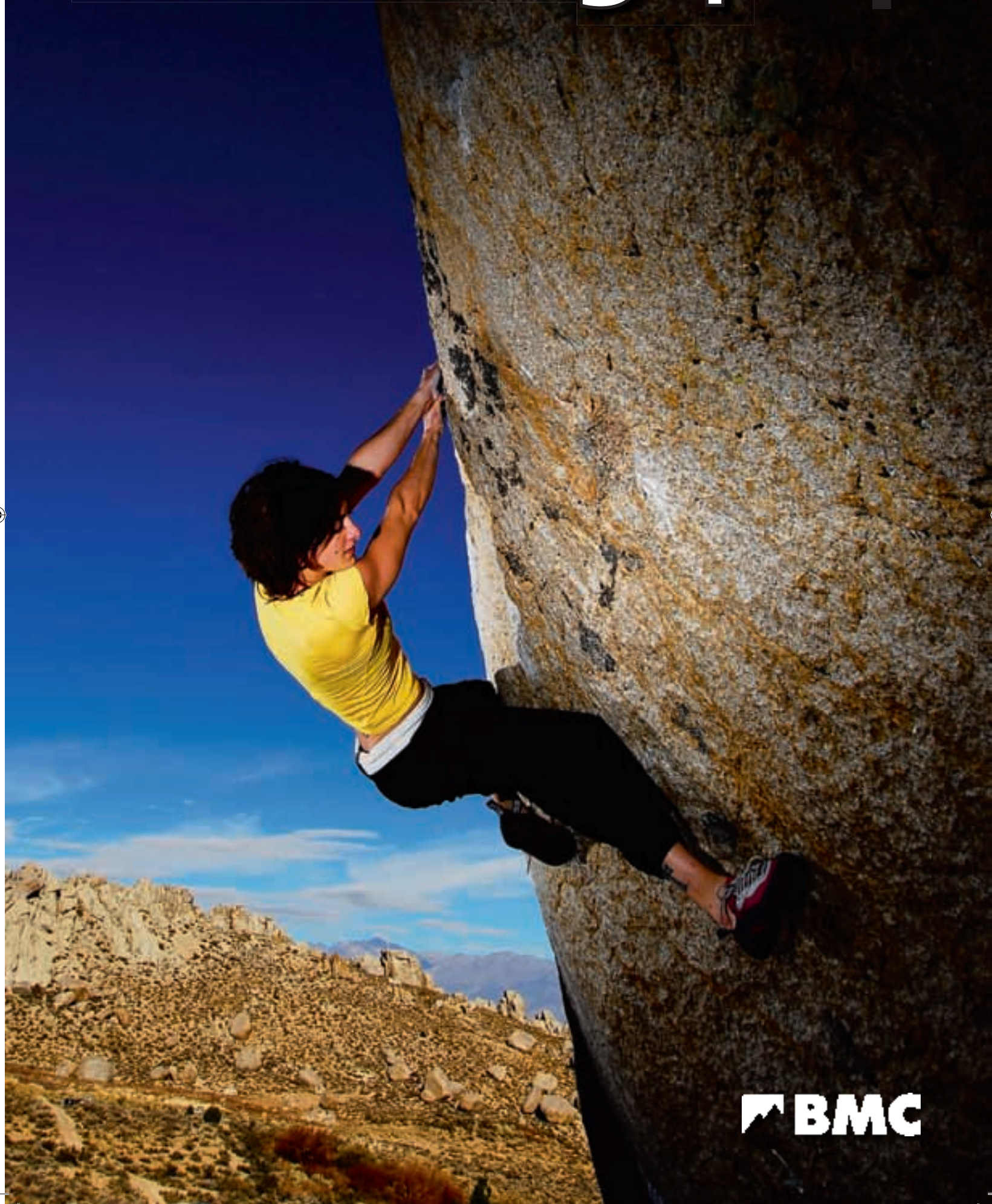


summit:54

www.thebmc.co.uk

Summer 2009

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 **BMC**



Seeing red

Seeing red in the Llanberis slate quarries.
Photo: BMC.

New BMC Access & Conservation Officer planned for Wales

The BMC represents climbers and hill walkers in Wales, as well as England, but when it comes to our office and staff we've always been an 'England-based' organisation. After 31 years in London we moved to Manchester in 1975 and – other than a brief spell in the early 1990s when we employed Ian Parnell as the South West Officer – we've remained rooted in leafy suburbia ever since.

That was until 10th June, when we interviewed six candidates for the newly created job of Access & Conservation Officer for Wales – the job will be based in Snowdonia and will cover the whole of Wales. This move to strengthen our access and conservation work has been widely welcomed, although some still question exactly what the new person will do.

It's a fair question – the post is likely to cost the BMC over £125,000 for the three-year contract period. So, what will BMC members be getting for their money? The first thing to bear in mind is that it will benefit our work in England as well as Wales: increasing the staff

complement will not only mean much improved support for our Welsh work, but also free up plenty of staff time to focus more on England. The new Welsh Officer's work will certainly be cut out – here's a taster of what to expect:

- **A higher profile for mountaineering in Wales.** And an enhanced political profile for the BMC through more regular contact with the Welsh Assembly Government, the Sports Council for Wales and the Countryside Council for Wales.
- **A proactive approach to local access negotiations.** Whether it be your crag in South Wales Valleys or on Clwyd limestone, a footpath problem in the Berwyns, discussions with the MoD over access to firing ranges or dealing with public safety and liability concerns in the slate quarries, the new Officer will be on hand.
- **Improved support for volunteers.** The BMC's reputation in Wales is at an all-time high, thanks to our resurgent volunteer group: BMC Cymru/Wales. An important part of the new officer's job will be to lend professional support for current volunteer initiatives and to get new projects up and running.

- **Practical environment work.** Plans for a climbers' track to the Cromlech have been floated in recent years but have not yet got past the drawing board. Sustained professional effort is often needed for large projects of this type and the new officer will provide the impetus for this, and similar environmental improvement projects in the Welsh mountains.
- **And finally.** Expect to see greater emphasis on the Welsh language from now on. Recently the BMC paid for the translation of the Mountain Leader Training book *Hill Walking into Welsh*. We don't plan to go overboard, but we are committed to making more important items available in Welsh.

Wales is a special place for mountaineers and the appointment of a specialist to oversee our interests seems a step in the right direction and an investment in our future.

Dave Turnbull, Chief Executive

Do you have an issue for the new Welsh Officer?

Let us know – email summit@thebmc.co.uk ■



WELCOME TO...

ISSUE 54

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.

BMC

177 - 179 Burton Road,
Manchester, M20 2BB
Tel: 0161 445 6111
Fax: 0161 445 4500
office@thebmc.co.uk
www.thebmc.co.uk

President:

Rab Carrington

Chief Executive:

Dave Turnbull

Summit Editor:

Alex Messenger

alex@thebmc.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Contributions should be sent to the editor at the above address. Every care is taken of materials sent for publication, however these are submitted at the sender's risk. The views expressed within are of the contributors, and not necessarily the BMC.

PUBLISHING

Group Ad Manager:

Emma Howl 01778 392443
emmahowl@warnersgroup.co.uk

Production Co-ordinator:

Emma Robertson
01778 391173
erobertson@warnersgroup.co.uk

Graphic Design:

Viv Lane

Ad Design:

Helen Mackenzie

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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.





A new dawn

It's less than 25 days since I became your new "El Presidente" – only another 75 before you all start asking what I've achieved.

I've been pleasantly surprised by the number of climbers and hill walkers offering congratulations and support for my stint – an equal number are offering me sympathy for the amount of work ahead.

First of all, sincere thanks to all who took the time to vote for me at the recent AGM. It was great to see that the election between myself and Doug Scott (mountaineer and old friend) generated so much interest. It's a shame that there had to be a winner – I know that Doug would have made an excellent leader.

I'm continually being asked what a President does. Quite honestly, I'm not sure – but then again I was never certain what I did at RAB either. Possibly my key role will that of 'encouragement': encouraging the host of BMC volunteers to go the extra mile; encouraging the excellent BMC staff to make the tough decisions and improve the situation for our members; encouraging our membership to take a more active role by attending Area Meetings; encouraging the thousands of walkers and climbers out there that the BMC is doing a good job and they should join.

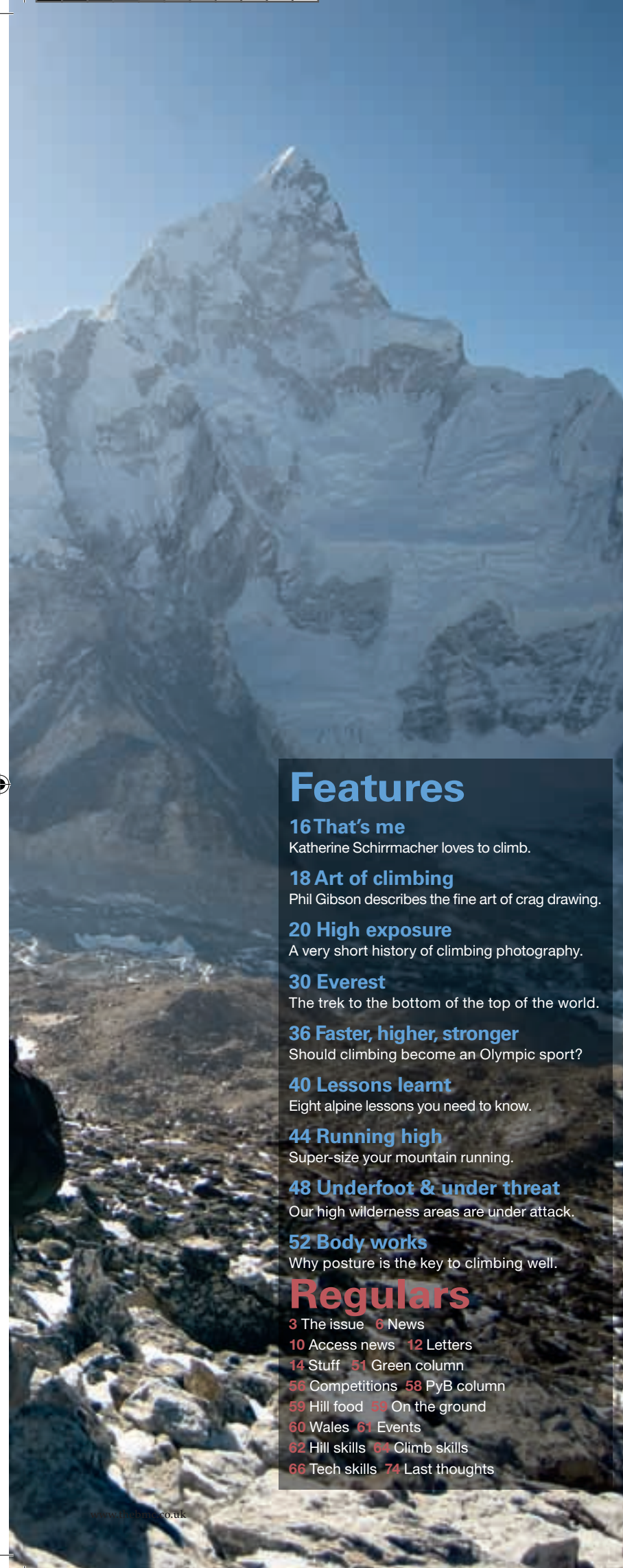
In about another 75 days I'll be writing my second foreword. If I can report that I've achieved any of these aims, that the weeds haven't overrun the allotment and I'm still climbing then I'll have got the balance right!

All the best for the summer

Rab Carrington
BMC President

ON THE COVER: Jacky Moore showing some style on the ultra-classic Checkerboard (V8) at the Buttermilk boulders, Bishop, California. Women, flashes and bouldering – whatever would the pioneers of climbing photography have made of it all? Turn to page 20 to find out how it all started. Photo: Alex Messenger.

THIS PAGE: A new day begins as Tony Capstick and Tracey Hemming near the top of Kala Patthar (5,545m). This is the highest point reached on the Everest Base Camp trek, and offers the best view of Everest – the black peak on the left. What's the trek like? Find out on page 30. Photo: Alex Messenger.



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The new BMC Executive Council.
Photo: BMC.

Rab bags BMC President role

Multi-tasking Audrey Seguy becomes Vice President

The end of Charles Clarke's Presidency in April sparked an unexpected leadership race within the BMC, as Rab Carrington and Doug Scott both vied for the top spot. The decision was to be decided by voting at the BMC AGM, at Plas y Brenin in North Wales. A record number of proxy votes were recorded – as BMC members who couldn't attend still wanted their votes to count – and the results were conclusive: Rab won by 639 votes to 281.

Rab is a familiar figure in the outdoor world, having founded the successful RAB Down Equipment company. Since retiring from stuffing sleeping bags, Rab has become increasingly involved with the BMC, and has just finished a three-year stint as Vice President.

The London-based, multi-tasking Audrey Seguy moves into Rab's role as Vice President. Audrey is the current women's British Bouldering Champion and British Lead Climbing Champion – as well as Managing Director of the Castle Climbing Centre. Audrey explains how she got caught up in BMC politics:

"I was originally approached by Charles Clarke and I think that it's to the great credit of the BMC that they would look for someone outside of the 'normal type'. One of the real strengths of the BMC is that it represents such a wide group of people that enjoy all the different aspects of climbing and hill walking. Although,

of course, this is also one of the greatest challenges, since measures that benefit one discipline may not always be appreciated by participants of others!"

Pat Littlejohn and Rehan Siddiqui were re-elected as Vice Presidents and David Lancely was re-elected as Honorary Treasurer. The BMC is extremely grateful to Dr Charles Clarke, who finished his term as BMC President, and Brian Griffiths, who retired as Joint Honorary Treasurer.

Thanks to everyone involved for making this year's AGM weekend a success, especially the Plas y Brenin staff, James McHaffie for his Friday-night lecture and Jim Curran for his entertaining after-dinner speech.

See www.thebmc.co.uk/agm for the AGM minutes.

Clare Bond also for President

Former BMC Access and Conservation Officer Clare Bond has also been elected for President – of the newly-named UIAA Access Commission. Clare's appointment followed the UIAA meeting at Plas y Brenin in May. The BMC currently has strong representation on the UIAA, with Doug Scott starting his term on the UIAA management committee and Anne Arran continuing as President of the Youth Commission.



Ecoclimber launched

Want to get outdoors, save money and travel in a greener fashion? Then you need check out the new ecoclimber website and share a ride.

Launched at the Castle Climbing Centre's eco-festival, ecoclimber was created by Summit's very own eco-columnist, Zara Maung.

Zara explained: "Ideally it'd be great to see climbers and walkers ditching their cars altogether and getting around by public transport, but the next best thing is car sharing."

Sign up at: www.ecoclimber.com to share your lifts.

Read Zara's latest column on page 51.

Club support

Clubs that applied to the BMC for financial support, made available through the Sport England funding, will hear in early July whether they have been successful. This financial support will help with website and newsletter developments, purchasing equipment and to provide mountaineering instructor support for new members.

BMC live on UKC

The BMC has teamed up with www.ukclimbing.com for a series of live online question-and-answer sessions with BMC Officers. We kicked off with Technical Officer Dan Middleton setting the world to rights on gear and technical issues, then followed up with Rob Adie (climbing walls and competitions) and Jon Garside (training and safety). The forum threads are still on www.ukclimbing.com. Let us know if you'd like to see more topics covered.

Look east

RSPB and National Trust win bid to manage Eastern Moors estate

The Peak District National Park Authority has given the RSPB and National Trust a 15-year lease to manage the Eastern Moors estate, near Sheffield. This 6,200 acre estate is the Peak Park's largest land-holding and includes the famous venues of Curbar, Froggatt and Birchen, as well as Big Moor, Ramsley Moor, Totlely Moor, Clod Hall Moor and Leash Fen.

A review of the Park Authority's properties had recommended that the site was leased to a like-minded organisation to increase investment in the estate. Proposals from two partnerships were considered, and the National Trust and RSPB's proposal selected over a proposal by the Sheffield and Derbyshire Wildlife Trusts.

The decision is welcomed by the BMC; the successful bid being strongly supported by both the BMC and the Friends of the Peak District. Having supported the bid from the very start, the BMC will be in a great position to ensure that our members have a voice in the management of the area. Special thanks must go to Adam Long, who did a fantastic job of representing the BMC, along with Cath Flitcroft and Henry Folkard.



The Eastern Moors: in safe hands.
Photo: Messenger/BMC.

Mountains of deals

Acquire your alpine needs with exclusive BMC shop offers

If you're heading to the Alps this summer then make sure you stop off in the BMC online shop first. The shop is already packed full of great BMC member-only prices, but for a limited period we've slashed prices even further on our range of alpine products. Exclusive BMC alpine deals include:

- BMC Alpine Essentials DVD: **£12.40**
- Complete Guide to Rope Techniques: **£11.69**
- Haute Route: Chamonix – Zermatt: **£10.36**
- Mont Blanc 4808m: 5 Routes to the Summit: **£17.96**
- Mont Blanc Walks: **£11.66**
- The High Mountains of the Alps: **£27**

Visit www.bmcshop.co.uk and check out the Special Offers section.

Prices shown are for BMC members, excluding p&p. Offer ends 31/07/2009.

Exclusive Summit 54 offer

Get the Alpine Essentials DVD (RRP £13.50) + The 4,000m Peaks of the Alps (RRP £21) for just £22.
– A saving of over 35%. Enter the offer code of **summit54** at checkout.



IN SHORT

news

4,000 pull-ups

Major Phil Packer – the inspirational injured serviceman who recently completed the London Marathon – recently climbed El Capitan in Yosemite. Accompanied by Andy Kirkpatrick, Ian Parnell and Paul Tattersall, Phil cranked out over 4,000 pull-ups to complete the climb. Look out for an interview in the next Summit.

BMC International meet guest wins Piolet d'or

Japanese alpinist Kei Taniguchi (who was a guest on the recent BMC International Winter Meet) has become the first woman to be awarded a Piolet d'or – the international award for alpine climbing achievements. Kei impressed the judges with her first ascent of the 1,800m South East Face of Kamet with Kazuya Hiraide.

BMC membership on the up

We're pleased to announce that BMC membership is beating the credit crunch. Last year saw an increase of over 10% in individual membership – that's over 3,000 more members than last year.

Coastal access debated in Commons

In what is probably a welcome diversion from expenses, the Marine Bill is now being discussed in the House of Commons – following its readings and report in the House of Lords. The BMC Access Team is busy lobbying MPs and is closely following the Bill's progress, with close attention as to how the improvements to public access to the coast will be implemented.

>>

IN SHORT

MLTA site revamped

The Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA) has just revamped its website. New facilities include the handy "Find an Instructor" search engine which helps you find the right person, in the right place, with the right qualifications.

Plas y Brenin beer

Plas y Brenin – the national outdoor centre at Capel Curig – has launched its very own beer. 'Brenin Bootliquoer' is a real ale, brewed locally by Nant Brewery, and is exclusive to Plas y Brenin. Cheers.

South Downs ups status

The South Downs area is set to become England's ninth National Park. The new Park will cover 627 square miles in Sussex and Hampshire, containing woodland, rolling chalk uplands and river valleys. A new South Downs National Park Authority is expected to be established by April 2010. The decision comes almost 60 years to the day since it was first recommended for National Park status.

Wheelchair rambles

A series of countryside rambles are planned for wheelchair users this summer in north-west Wales; see www.ccw.gov.uk for dates. Over in the Peak District, a new 'Access Passport' DVD has been launched – showing a selection of wheelchair-accessible country trails with stunning views. Presented by former paralympian John Harris, the DVD is available to watch in visitor centres and online at www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/accesspeak.



Leading Ladder final.
Photo: Tom Napier.

Totally laddered

Second BMC Leading Ladder series a success

Nearly sixty walls signed up for last season's BMC Leading Ladder events – in which climbers self-scored themselves on a nationwide network of specially set climbs. Over 300 climbers took part, all hoping for a place in the Leading Ladder final at the Foundry in early April. 75 finalists from three categories (Elite, Recreational and Improver) battled it out in six intense hours of climbing, with a simple format: everyone had five routes to attempt, and the climber bagging the most points would win.

After easier routes got the climbers warmed up, attention was turned to the harder lines in the main arena of the Foundry. There was a fantastic atmosphere; some of the best climbers in the country were climbing alongside climbers enjoying their very first major competition. Come 4pm, it was time to start adding up the scores and there were some surprising results (and some even more surprised competitors).

Thanks to Crag X climbing shop for some great prizes and the Foundry for allowing us to take over the wall for a day.

BMC Leading Ladder winners 2009

ELITE

Male: Adrian Baxter
Female: Beth Monks
Junior Male: Jonathan Stocking
Junior Female: Shauna Coxsey

RECREATIONAL

Male: Paul Walters & Craig Bailey
Female: Joanna Goorney
Junior Male: Sean Hopkins
Junior Female: Jaime Davidson

IMPROVER

Male: Mike Bean
Female: Donna Carless
Junior Male: Sam Brannigan
Junior Female: Tara Hayes
Visit www.thebmc.co.uk/ladder for full results.

Chunky Monki support Junior Team

The BMC British Junior Climbing Team has a new clothing sponsor in the form of Chunky Monki – so now they've been kitted out in a full wardrobe of stylish clothing to both compete and hang out in. Chunky Monki launched their new brand of clothing at the Outdoors Show at the NEC in February, and the team will receive their new kit at the British Lead Championships in July.

Visit www.chunkymonki.com to find out more.

Local Areas livened up

New BMC community site coming soon

If you've got an opinion on a thorny topic, or want to help out with some practical work, then BMC Area Meetings should be your first port of call. For years these meetings were confined to dusty back-rooms and got bogged down with talk of minutes and policies, but now a new generation of local activists have dragged them into the light. These days BMC Local Area meetings usually take place in a pub (with shock, horror: entertainment, chips and drink) and as a result local areas are thriving and local projects seeing an influx of interested volunteers.

In fact, the only thing that's been missing is an easy way of finding out what's going on in your area. To solve this, we're about to launch a brand new community section of the BMC website dedicated to local volunteers. It'll be full of all the usual techno-twiddle you'd expect – forums, blogs, wikis, profiles and photo galleries – and will help make the mysterious world of the BMC a bit more transparent. Now you'll easily be able to see just who's responsible for what, what else they're involved in, and how to get hold of them.

And, if you like it, we'll expand it to cover all areas of our work.

Keep an eye on www.thebmc.co.uk



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.

Lakes

Nesting restrictions

Several Lakes crags are subject to voluntary nesting restrictions until late June. For full details download the 2009 nesting restrictions poster at www.thebmc.co.uk/birds.

White Scar

We are currently still waiting for a decision from the landowners on the proposed one year access trial.

Wales

Clwyd limestone

Just a gentle reminder for climbers thinking of climbing here: several of the crags have nesting restrictions for protected birds until the 15th or 30th June. The BMC has received several reports of people climbing in restricted areas and affecting the behaviour of nesting birds. Climbers have an excellent relationship with local conservationists here and the restrictions only cover a minimal area. The sites are regularly monitored and restrictions are usually lifted early - please pay your part in making sure these voluntary arrangements continue to work. See www.thebmc.co.uk/crags.

Craig y Forwyn

We are still in the process of attaining property plans for various land parcels around the crag. So if you decide to visit, please take note of advice on the Regional Access Database.

North East

Fire Hazards

The North Yorks Moors National Park Authority has reviewed its 'outline directions' and CRoW restrictions for fire hazards. In exceptionally dry conditions a temporary restriction of CRoW rights may be necessary. Phone 01439 770657 or email info@northyorkmoors-npa.gov.uk for more information.

Yorkshire

Great Close Scar

Climbers were recently asked to leave the crag by a National Trust representative, "to protect nesting birds" - despite no clear evidence. We are following this up.

The Three Peaks Project

The Yorkshire Dales National Park is launching a new project to help safeguard the long-term conservation of the footpath network around these much cherished peaks. See www.yorkshiredales.org.uk/threepaks.

North West

Wilton

The first of many restoration days took place in March. Check the BMC website for a full report and details of how to get involved.

Peak District



Stange: watch the Ring Ouzels.
Photo: Messenger.

Stange

The ring ouzels are nesting on Stange again this year, so a voluntary restriction now covers all routes between 'April Crack' and 'Narrow Buttress'. Please follow the on-site signs and keep an eye on the Regional Access Database for updates. Following last year's poor breeding season, ouzel numbers are low - this could be a critical year. Your cooperation will be much appreciated.

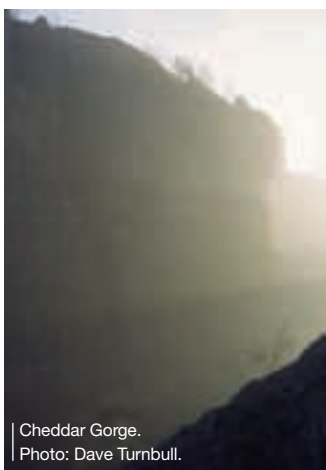
Roaches

The Upper Tier is now unrestricted as the nesting Peregrines have relocated to Hen Cloud. The new nest site is on Black Wall and a voluntary restriction covers all routes left of 'Delstree' - see signs on approach.

Backdale

The BMC and other countryside campaigners are celebrating the recent legal victory in the long-running battle over Backdale Quarry on Longstone Edge. See news for details.

South West



Cheddar Gorge.
Photo: Dave Turnbull.

Cheddar Gorge

Cheddar Gorge & Caves have raised concerns that certain crags and routes have been accessed outside of the agreed dates, particularly over Easter. Most of the incidents involve climbing above parked cars at Horseshoe Bend Buttress or ascents of Coronation Street. The current access arrangements are the result of years of work by all concerned - to ensure that summer climbing does not compromise the safety of other visitors. With variable safety restrictions and dates, Cheddar can be a complex place to climb - but please remember that it's your duty to check the arrangements before climbing.

Download the 2009 Cheddar Gorge Access Calendar at www.thebmc.co.uk/cheddar.

Vixen Tor

We are pleased to report that Vixen Tor may soon be accessible again, thanks to a decision by Devon County Council. Last April the BMC and the Ramblers Association submitted evidence to show that footpaths to the Tor were regularly used prior to 2003. On the weight of this evidence, Devon County Council has agreed to create a Public Right of Way to the Tor. However the landowner can appeal and how exactly it relates to climbing remains to be seen.



FocusOn... Black Rocks tree clearance

Black Rocks, in the south Peak District, is well known to climbers. Its routes are legendary: Promontory Traverse, Demon Rib, the celebrity that is Gaia and the darkly infamous Meshuga. But until recently you'd be hard pressed to stray off these few classics: you couldn't see the crag for the trees. Encroaching vegetation meant that much of the crag was in a very poor condition – it was time for some drastic action.

Q. What was the situation at Black Rocks?

A. Local climber Rob Tresidder alerted the BMC with a proposal to remove some of the trees, so we contacted the owners (the Forestry Commission) to see if they could help out. After a site visit we all agreed that it was pretty bad: large trees, canopy shading, en-route saplings, lichen and soaking, heather-clad ledges were all having a dramatic effect. Many routes left of The Promontory were practically unclimbable in their current state.

Q. What was the plan?

A. The District Forester, Andy Powers, and his team determined that there were no significant conservation issues with the proposal, and a consensus was reached to address the overgrown parts of the crag in two stages. Firstly, small trees and saplings would be removed from the crag, and the ledges and cracks cleaned. This would be followed by felling and thinning in the woodland below to open up the wider aspect.

Q. Has the work started?

A. The first stage kicked off in early April; a team of skilled tree surgeons removed saplings and trees between 'New Year Buttress' and 'Fat Man's Chimney' on the main crag, and also around 'The Block' and 'Railway' boulders. The results are fantastic – take a look if you happen to be passing. Andy Powers commented: "Once the BMC told us of the issues at Black Rocks we were keen to help, and we have opted to fund the work from our own resources." BMC Access Officer Guy Keating is pleased with the results: "Many famous climbers have cut their teeth on the technically difficult routes, while, for others, it offers a great day out in the forest. The first stage only took a day or so and will have no environmental impact, so it's a win-win situation."

Q. Are overgrown crags an issue elsewhere?

A. Yes, they certainly are. Other Peak District grit crags such as Cratcliffe, Gardoms Edge and Chatsworth



Tree clearance work around 'The Block' at Black Rocks. Photo: Guy Keating.

Edge are all rapidly disappearing beneath the greenery. There must be many other examples throughout England and Wales.

Q. Why are trees on the march?

A. It's probably the result of a few factors: semi-natural woodlands such as these are no longer managed for firewood, our warmer and wetter summers promote growth, and once a crag starts to become a bit green then climbers head elsewhere and the problem escalates.

Q. Can I just take a saw to the crag next time I go?

A. The BMC advises all climbers to contact us before starting to remove trees or significant patches of vegetation. Whilst small scale, en-route cleaning (e.g. brushing lichen, removing small tufts of grass or cleaning cracks) will probably have little effect on the overall ecology of a crag, crag habitats often contain rare plants and may also be legally protected Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Thanks to the BMC's long history of access and conservation work, there is a good chance that we will know how to check the situation for any given crag.

Q. How can I get involved?

A. We need your help to identify crags that would benefit from this type of work. We can offer help on many levels – advice, liaising with the owners and even funding – but you are our eyes on the ground. A good

starting point would be to download the new BMC Crag and Habitat Management Guide. Then contact the BMC Access Officer, Guy Keating, on 0161 438 3309 or email guy@thebmc.co.uk.

More information

www.thebmc.co.uk/habitat

The new BMC Crag and Habitat Management Guide. This handy publication was produced with Natural England, The National Trust, The Forestry Commission and The Countryside Council for Wales. It's packed with up-to-date advice and case studies.



www.thebmc.co.uk/cragcarefund

The BMC set up the Crag Care Fund and the Access and Conservation Trust for this type of work – we may be able to provide financial help for a specific project. Visit the BMC website to find out more and download an application form. www.thebmc.co.uk/accessreps



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

We built this world

I must express some sympathy with Adrian Gude's letter, concerning the environmental cost of flying for adventure in Summit 53, but personally I find this newfound sympathy with the environment a little short-sighted. The act of pulling up the drawbridge and staying local could cause just as much damage as travelling. What would the environmental costs be if we stopped travelling to the areas that are now totally dependent on tourism? For example, Everest and its environs are the draw that means the incumbent population now have access to schools and hospitals.

Even this argument is not clear-cut. The reason some areas are so dependent on the tourist dollar is that (through manipulation and coercion) local communities have given up skills and land so that our visit to their country is as convenient as possible. We have built a world, parts of which are heavily dependent on tourism, and to just stop flying is not the answer. Any attempt to realign these areas with traditional methods of sustainability will be a long and arduous trek, only achievable with the support of governments and commerce; I doubt there are many who believe such real political will exists.

But I haven't given up hope completely. Like Mr Gude I'm looking forward to re-discovering parts of our island that I last visited as a child. But I will also continue to travel abroad, just not as often as I used to. I will also continue to harass the powers-that-be, in the hope that one day they will do something for the environment because they can, not just because they think it's a vote winner. And I will continue to read Summit – who I believe are aware of the contradictions contained in their pages, but are doing good work in getting all of us to think about the true costs of our actions.

David Lawrence

Rage against the bus pass

So, Sir Chris Bonington has gone beyond the bus pass. I'm sure he'll have no problem with organisations falling over to associate themselves with him, unlike us mere mortals who have also reached the same milestone. I've been perusing Summit for some time and making a note of the few times that anybody over 50 is mentioned. We of the bus-pass age are not all Saga louts. Some of us are not content to just ramble. Some of us have had a lifetime in the hills, mountains and rocks; some of us would like to keep up with the latest developments; some of us would like

to frighten ourselves silly on a rock climb; some of us would like to navigate our way through the mountains and perhaps wild camp; some of us would like to canoe or white water raft; some of us would like to go into the hills in winter. What's stopping us? Is it the lack of courses and training opportunities targeting this generation? Is it the fear of litigation in this present compensation culture? Or is it just a simple case of ageism? After all, we don't want the old dears pegging out halfway up the hill do we? They wouldn't with a suitable peer group, but where in the present scheme of things would they find one?

Ken Adey

Manaslu mix up

I was surprised to read a letter from Valerie of High Altitude Junkies in Summit 53 – stating that she'd summited Manaslu the day before me. The Jagged Globe team and I summited on the 4th October, whilst Val and the Altitude Junkies summited on the 5th. She may have been confused as our summit blog was posted on the 6th but, if you read it, I woke their team at 2.00am on the 4th for our summit push. I was very surprised that Val does not also remember us passing her on our way back down. She could, however, still claim to be the first British woman without supplementary oxygen so well done to her – when I'm working on the mountain I always use oxygen.

Adele Pennington

Let's see some respect

When are we going to see a BMC campaign to highlight the need to respect the crags? It's a privilege to be able to climb in beautiful settings but there are a minority of climbers who are tainting that beauty. Leaving litter at the bottom of crags needs to be nipped in the bud, as does going to the toilet; I've come face-to-face with human faeces on two separate routes recently. We all get caught short but there's no excuse for abusing our crags. Recently we've started picking up other people's litter – but we draw the line at human waste!

Roger Lee

Dismay on Everest

I was intrigued, indeed dismayed, to discover that Sir Chris Bonington had reached the summit of Everest in 1953. I was awoken to this remarkable fact by the photo on page 23 of Summit 53. Having read extensively about the first ascent of the world's highest mountain I'm surprised that this astonishing historical fact has hitherto not come to light. Is Sir Chris the climber in the red or the brown? Did he summit before Hilary and Tenzing? Why has it not been revealed before? I think we should be told. Yours in astonished admiration.

Jerry Adams



Win a Berghaus rucksac worth £60 for your letter

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



The Arete 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-denier ripstop polyester fabric, which combines an excellent balance of strength, wear resistance, soft handling and low weight.

For further information visit www.berghaus.com or call 0191 516 5700.

Stuff

Mountain Equipment Tundra 2 Tent

£375

If you need a home away from home this summer, then check out the new Tundra 2 tent from Mountain Equipment. The Tundra 2 follows on from the highly successful Dragonfly range – meeting demands for a mountain tent with bags of internal space at a low weight. It's no slouch in the stability stakes either: the offset tunnel design ensures that the Tundra 2 can happily cope with unpredictable mountain weather and all but the worst of winter storms. It's ideal for those wanting a lightweight, spacious and stable shelter for backpacking in the mountains this summer.

Features include:

- Lightweight and spacious two-pole, offset tunnel design
- Flysheet and inner pitch as one
- Continuous lightweight pole sleeves aid rapid pitching
- Fully-taped bathtub groundsheet
- Large single porch for gear storage
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- Internal mesh pockets
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- Supplied in a strong and light compression sack

Find out more at www.mountain-equipment.co.uk

Win a fantastic Mountain Equipment Tundra 2 tent

Get your summer accommodation all wrapped up – we've got one of these fantastic new tents up for grabs. You just need to find out:

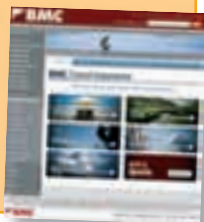
Q. When was Mountain Equipment founded?



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Woodland Ways Bushcraft Basics Course

From £59

If you've got a hankering to live off the land and be the next Ray Mears, then get yourself along to a Woodland Ways Bushcraft Basics course. Woodland Ways run a variety of bushcraft and adventure courses, and Bushcraft Basics is their introductory day course, aimed at those who want to learn how to live more comfortably in the wild. The one-day course covers the basic skills required to survive, and is based upon the four main principles of survival: fire, food, shelter and water.

You'll learn how to build an emergency waterproof woodland shelter using only natural materials, and how to collect, filter and purify water. You'll also have the opportunity to prepare a piece of game for your lunch such as pigeon, pheasant or rabbit and cook it over an open fire (vegetarian options are also available!). The instructors will then demonstrate several different ways for creating fire without using matches and you'll have the chance to try out the various techniques.

BMC members get 10% discount off of any Woodland Ways UK-based courses - just quote your membership number when booking.

Find out more at www.woodland-ways.co.uk

Win a place on a Woodland Ways course

We've got two free places on a Woodland Ways Bushcraft Basics course up for grabs (worth £59). You just need to find out:

Q. Name two of the Woodland Ways instructors

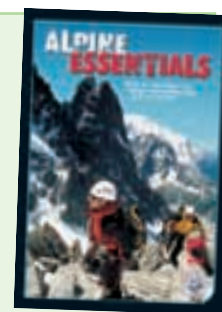
Please note that Woodland Ways will be supplied with email addresses from this competition.

Alpine Essentials DVD

£12.40 (BMC Members)

If you're heading to the Alps this summer, then make sure you brush up on the basics with the Alpine Essentials DVD. Packed with information and advice on all the skills and techniques necessary for alpine climbing, the DVD contains a range of separate chapters which expand upon the topics covered in the film, including: glacier travel, crevasse rescue, moving together, abseiling, huts, bivouacs and via ferrata. The DVD is filmed by Slackjaw and jointly produced by the BMC and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland.

Buy online now at www.bmcshop.co.uk. Visit the special offers page for plenty more great alpine offers.



Win a copy of the Alpine Essentials DVD

We've got five copies of the Alpine Essentials DVD to give away. Just let us know:

Q. Who first climbed Mont Blanc?

Patagonia Release Trail Running Shoe

£85

Summer's here so it's time to escape the gym and hit the trails. Enter the new Patagonia Release trail running shoe, designed to keep

your feet well-protected and comfortable on long-mileage runs, so the only thing to give out will be you. The breathable synthetic air-mesh upper is water repellent treated in case our summer is less than perfect, and the 'dynamic fit lacing system' provides a precise and secure fit that custom wraps around the forefoot. Strategic tread placements on the Vibram sole provide excellent grip and traction on sketchy terrain.



Features include:

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- Durable DWR-treated breathable synthetic upper
- Breathable DWR-treated air mesh
- Dynamic Fit Lacing System provides a precise and secure fit
- Injection Molded TPU InStep support arms secure the heel
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- 2mm 15% recycled EVA insole provides extra cushioning
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Find out more at www.patagonia.com

Win a pair of Patagonia Release Trail Running Shoes

There's no excuse to be a couch potato. We've got two pairs of Patagonia Release trail-running shoes to dish out this summer. Just let us know:

Q. Who founded Patagonia?

How to enter the competitions

Email summit@thebmc.co.uk with your answers unless stated. Or send in 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 01/08/09.

Issue 53 winners

Many thanks to all those who entered 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.

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.

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Heidi Wirtz | Czech Republic | Photo: Tim Kemple



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NEVER STOP EXPLORING™

That's me

Katherine Schirmacher, 35, Climbing Coach, Sheffield

Anyone who has climbed or spent time with Katherine Schirmacher will know that the phrase 'outgoing personality' doesn't begin to describe her. Enthusiastic, effusive and energetic, you will know when she is at the crag, and you will probably know how she is feeling that day. Never one to hide her emotions, Katherine's openness always makes for stimulating and fun company.

Having started climbing at Leeds University in the 1990s, Katherine had a long and traditional apprenticeship, regularly climbing up to E4 throughout the country. Later, a more focused approach and training mindset saw her climb to a much higher level, with ascents of Rain Dogs – the classic British F8a, Brad Pit – a benchmark for serious boulderers, weighing in at Font 7c, Balance It Is – the grit test piece E7 at Burbage South, plus stacks of traditional E5 onsights.

Three years ago Katherine brought all this experience, motivation and insight together to form her own coaching company: 'Love to Climb'. Having already experienced working with larger companies, she wanted to be free to offer exactly what clients wanted as well as the opportunity to share her approach and ethos.

She is married to Nic Sellers and lives in Sheffield.

I wasn't free-thinking in my teens.

The thought of not doing what was expected never occurred to me; I toed the line.

My universe expanded beyond comprehension when I went off to university.

That's where I started climbing; everyone was mad for it, but it never mattered how well you climbed – the important thing was just that you climbed.

Climbing took me around the world. I was always up for anything, if someone said, 'Let's go there,' or, 'Here, try this,' then I would – no question. You lose that as you get older, which seems a shame.

I soon regressed to conformity.

I became an NHS regional project manager. I was making good money, moving my way up the ladder and working a four-day week. But I had lost myself, I hated it.

I'm very emotional. How I feel has a huge influence on my climbing: when my head is good it's great, but when it's not, it stops me dead. Nic used to call me the sparrow because I'd just grind to a halt on a climb and peck around for runners.

I got worse at climbing in my mid-twenties.

I had less free time with my career; I was climbing less and getting worse. I realised that if I was to keep my level up I was going to have to put some real effort in.

My best climbing experience was climbing Balance It Is.

I'd always wanted to do an E7, and I know that headpointing is out of fashion, but I so wanted to do that route. I have never been under so much pressure, and added to that I was being filmed for the Committed DVD. I'll never forget the elation of standing on top.

I once got paid a thousand dollars to model my calf muscles. I was in Los



Angeles after a climbing trip and a man approached me, said that he loved them and asked if I'd model them for his website. I told myself that it was just for fitness enthusiasts, but when I saw the website later I realised the truth!

I'm really into interior design. At the minute I've bought some antique chairs that I want to re-upholster. I've always loved little creative projects.

I got to thirty and hit a crisis. In the space of one month I had my thirtieth birthday, got married,



resigned from my job, started seeing a life coach and went on the Carol Vorderman detox diet.

I love watching people progress.

So much of it is due to gaining confidence and overcoming fears. I feel I'm good at understanding what holds people back because I've been there, that's what I have to go through when I climb.

If I met myself when I was twenty, I'd tell myself to train. I didn't start training till I was almost thirty. I

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don't regret all the adventures and messing about I did in my first few years, but right now I really want to be able to realise my potential – before it's too late.

I've come to terms with my body.

But I've got a love/hate relationship with my shoulder muscles: I wouldn't have them any other way for climbing but they don't fit into a party dress very well.

A lot of climbers these days don't know what laybacking is. I do a lot

of coaching at walls, and often have to explain what laybacking means – but they all know what bat hangs are, because Steve McClure used them on a 9a+. ■

Find out more about Katherine's coaching at www.lovetoclimb.co.uk

Interview Niall Grimes.

Art of climbing

Phil Gibson, Crag Artist

Not long ago, when the interweb was but a glint in a techie’s eye, there was only one way of finding out climbing information: the climbing guidebook. And there was only one way of illustrating where the climbs went: commissioning a crag artist.

Phil Gibson is one such artist, well-known in the climbing world for his illustrations of mountain crags and outcrops. His own obsession with climbing began in 1973 – as a teenager on Staffordshire grit – and has shown no signs of relenting; he also introduced his younger brother to the sport – a certain Gary Gibson.

A native of Stoke, Staffordshire shaped not only Phil’s climbing, but his artistic direction: trained as a ceramic designer, he worked for Wedgwood and Moorcroft before freelancing as the pottery industry declined. His interest in guidebook art dates back to 1979, when he provided a set of drawings for the BMC Staffordshire guidebook, and in picking out the fine detail of crag architecture he found a real niche.

His preferred medium is working with traditional pen and black ink, on a white drawing board in front of the cliff – a brutal and uncompromising medium, much like grit itself. His style is concerned with balance and design, with attention to form, textures and surfaces.

These days technology has replaced the crag artist, but Phil is continuing to evolve. Much of his work is no longer destined for the bookshelf, but the wall itself, and one of his recent commissions was for the Climbers’ Club – a picture of Lliwedd to celebrate the centenary anniversary of their very first definitive guidebook.

“Six months after receiving the invitation to illustrate Lliwedd, I picked up a pen and started to draw. I wondered if I should do what was expected (a painting) or what I knew best (a pen drawing). So I went back

to what I had been taught at art school – that I must draw with three principles: with what I see, with what I know and, above all, with what I feel.

So, a drawing trip to the great cliff of Lliwedd was inevitable. It’s not an architectural masterpiece, not like its big brother Clogwyn du’r Arddu – a massive, powerfully tilted cliff with beautiful, mystical routes to which I had been drawn countless times as a climber and artist. No, Lliwedd’s beauty was more aesthetic and organic, almost subliminal. I had dallied with it only twice as a climber – choosing to give it the respect of climbing in big boots on two of its most famous routes. I remember the peace, commitment amongst the great swell of rock and amazing white quartz. I became quite lost amongst the place as I climbed solo, but my mind was not thinking about the poetry of paint or ink on that day.

After my commission, I returned in deepest cold November – arriving before dawn to get the best position and light. The sun never did light up the face, but I was blessed with a fine texture of snow all over the buttresses, highlighting the cliff’s features. Ideal I thought, as all sorts of possibilities presented themselves from different angles, but it was so cold to draw detail that I had to be content with quick sketches.

When I was drawing my BMC Peak Limestone series, I found that the only way I could get my drawings accurate was to visit the sites like this, in deepest winter, when the trees had lost their leaf umbrella. I’d dodge between the trees with all my drawing paraphernalia to see the features. No camera can pick up this detail correctly.

When I got back to my studio, I read the pages of the 1909 Lliwedd guidebook. This was the original exploratory cliff of our climbing forefathers: “Independent gentlemen from the universities and professions, appropriately clad and well read and written”. The little book was lying around my studio for several months whilst I wondered how to tackle the project. My mind wrestled with paint and colour, a place for which Lliwedd had little palette. Its buttresses and gullies were a grey, dark cluttered place; textural and organic. In the end I decided to draw it in black ink, represented as a massive swathe of texture. That was the answer.

It is a pity that in today’s digital guidebook world there is little place for the crag artist. Call me traditional if you will, but there is something to be said for drawings in guidebooks. Digital photography is great – and I use it myself – but a photo will always gloss over the detail, whereas the artist has licence to tell a story and show other perspectives.

So what am I doing today? What I know best - drawing and painting the mountains and crags – in pen and ink, and now colour – in a much more personal and contemporary style, with a view to selling and exhibiting my work. ■ ”

Find out more about Phil’s work by emailing philgibson2@ntlworld.com – he’ll email you a pdf of his very latest catalogue.

Photo: Three styles of Phil’s work: Lliwedd, Higgarr Tor and Ramshaw Rocks. All copyright: Phil Gibson.



Lliwedd



Higgar Tor



Ramshaw Rocks



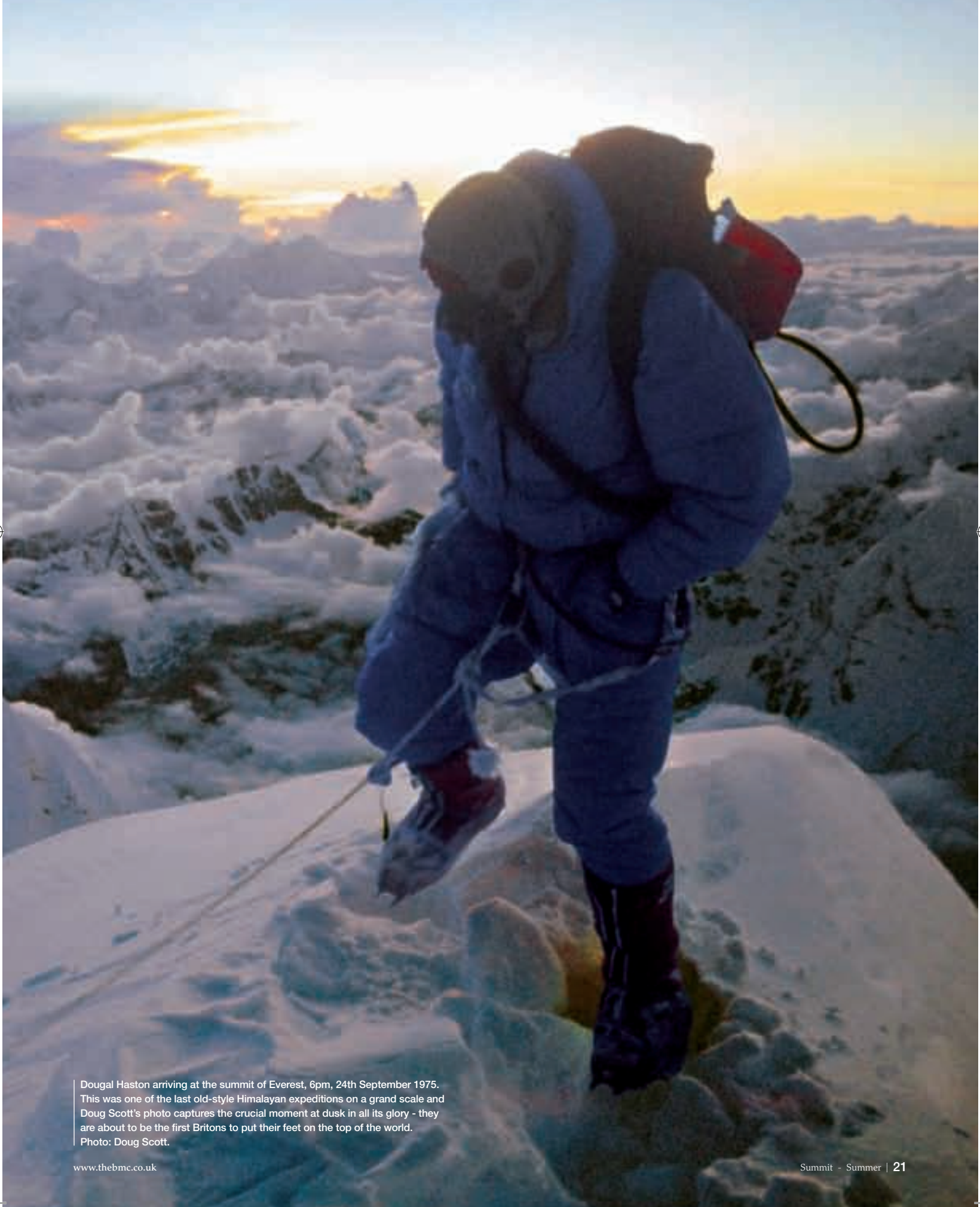
High Exposure

A very short history of climbing photography

Climbers have been stopping time for over a century. David Pickford traces the rise of climbing photography – from black-and-white Box Brownies to the beginning of the digital revolution.



“Some climbing photographs weave a moment in history into the frame of a strong image. These are the shots we talk about.”



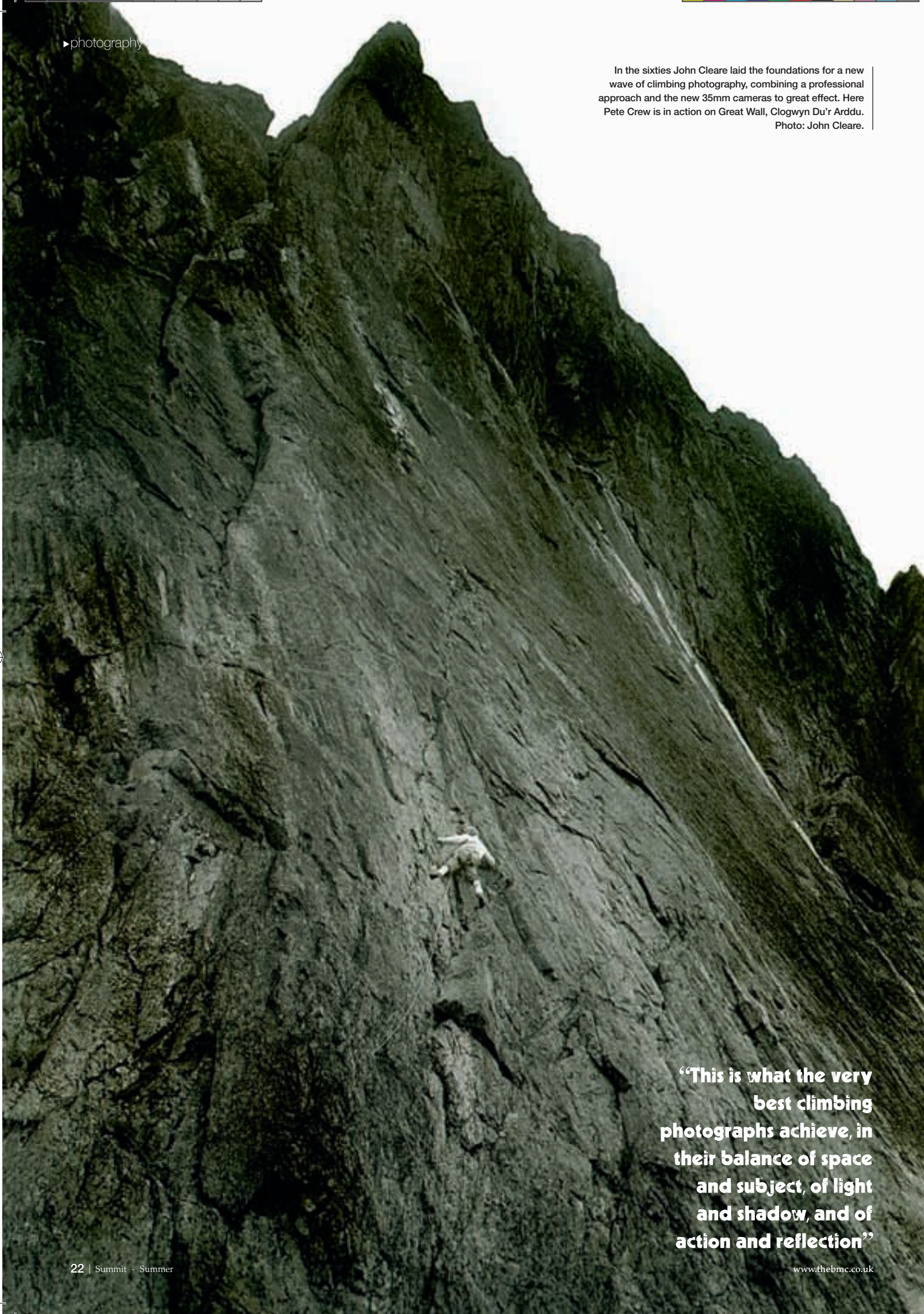
Dougal Haston arriving at the summit of Everest, 6pm, 24th September 1975. This was one of the last old-style Himalayan expeditions on a grand scale and Doug Scott's photo captures the crucial moment at dusk in all its glory - they are about to be the first Britons to put their feet on the top of the world. Photo: Doug Scott.





► photography

In the sixties John Cleare laid the foundations for a new wave of climbing photography, combining a professional approach and the new 35mm cameras to great effect. Here Pete Crew is in action on Great Wall, Clogwyn Du'r Arddu.
Photo: John Cleare.



“This is what the very best climbing photographs achieve, in their balance of space and subject, of light and shadow, and of action and reflection”





Douglass Haston in action on the first ascent of the South East Arete of the Old Man of Hoy in 1967. Photo: John Cleare.

We live in a visual world on a scale unimagined by previous generations. The confluence of digital photography and the web have blown the doors of photography wide open; anyone can capture an image and send it around the world in seconds.

Ten years ago you'd have been surprised to see climbing pictures make it into the general press. Today, you might open The Guardian to find Conrad Anker high on an Antarctica wall, or visit his blog to find shots taken only moments before. Visit one of several leading climbing or mountaineering websites and you're immediately immersed in a rich world of imagery – you can plug yourself into the world's wildest places from the comfort of your desk. Even the corporate world has started to recognise the powerful public appeal of climbing images.

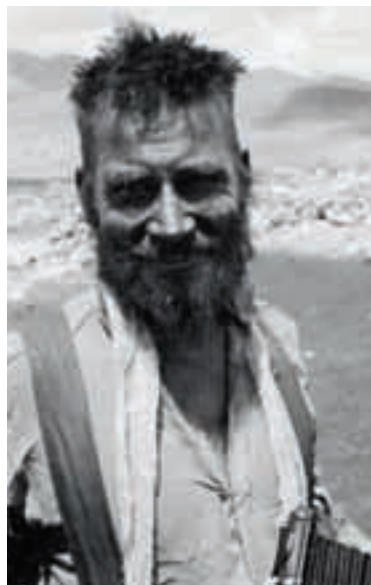
Yet for us climbers, photographs have always been dream-catchers; through them we identify our desires and ambitions. The camera has become an essential tool for the interpretation of experience and few conversations about climbing today – particularly at the cutting edge – will take place without reference to photographs of significant ascents. Climbing photography now pervades all levels of the sport, and particularly powerful images have become part of the history of climbing itself.

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Opium dreams

The relationship between climbing and photography goes back to the early nineteenth century – well before any photographic technology existed that could be taken into the mountains. Back then, climbing literature was the chosen media for the transmission of adventurous experience. In the 1820s (at around the same time the French inventor Nicéphore Niépce made the first permanent photograph), the English Romantic poet Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote a remarkable account of a descent of Broad Stand – the long bastion of slabs below the summit of Scafell – in one of the earliest pieces of identifiable mountaineering literature. Coleridge became stranded on a ledge, and recalled: "...when the sight of the Craggs above me on each side, and the impetuous Clouds just over them, posting so luridly and rapidly northward, overawed me. I lay in a state of almost prophetic Trance and Delight..."

Coleridge's "Trance and Delight" is often regarded as a consummate statement of the Romantic condition (although it's also highly likely that he was in the grip of opium-induced visions), but I'd like to suggest that these evocative lines also represent a strong anticipation of climbing and mountaineering photography. Coleridge had no means by which to take a photograph of Broad Stand. Instead, he did what he could: he wrote



Harold Tilman holds a camera on the 1935 Everest Expedition. Photo: Royal Geographical Society.

a 'textual negative' of his experience. His description is filled with the sense of the unknown that every adventurous climber understands. It's a very modern description, and far more in tune with the heady reality of adventurous experience than the laborious prose of many expedition reports written a century later. In Coleridge's eyes, climbing is a vivid interaction between the self and the world. This is also what the very best climbing photographs achieve, in their balance of space and subject, of light and shadow, and of action and reflection.

Box Brownie beginnings

Without photography, you needed to write a decent account of your climb to be acknowledged, and this is precisely what nineteenth-century pioneers of alpinism such as Mummery and Whymper did – they simply couldn't carry the heavy Victorian box cameras around the Alps. The germination of climbing photography had to wait for the development of the first portable camera: George Eastman's Kodak





Eric Shipton adjusts the lens of a 35mm camera on the 1935 Everest Expedition. Photo: Royal Geographical Society.

Brownie box camera, introduced in 1900. The 'box brownie' remained popular for decades – many of the earliest climbing snapshots were taken on these – but their relative bulk still made them impractical for use on serious adventures, and they certainly couldn't produce the same quality negatives as the larger-format cameras of the day.

It was German optical scientist Oskar Barnack's extraordinary breakthrough in 1913 that heralded the beginning of

climbing photography as we know it. Barnack had found an ingenious way of using 35mm cine film to produce a still image, and his 1913 prototype, the Ur-Leica, was the first truly compact camera capable of producing high quality exposures. The First World War stalled his research, but by 1925 he put the Leica I on sale. The world's first production 35mm camera was received with immediate popular acclaim, and produced an almost instant photographic revolution: quality images could now be obtained anywhere, any time.

Eric Shipton took a Leica I with him to Nepal in 1933 on his legendary Everest reconnaissance expedition. Interestingly though, Shipton and H. W. Tilman didn't take any photographs from the actual summit of Nanda Devi after their first ascent in 1934 – even though they had a camera on the trip. With pre-photographic era values still very much present, it simply wasn't expected of them to produce a photograph from the summit. Contrast this to today where a quick snap will be taken 'for the record' even in the very worst conditions.

By the 1940s, in the face of ever-advancing photographic technology, it

became clear that that no account of a climb or expedition would ever be complete again without the addition of a few photographs. So when Edmund Hillary stood on the summit of Everest for the first time – nineteen years after the first ascent of Nanda Devi – it was unthinkable that he wouldn't take a photograph. His striking image of Tenzing Norgay on the summit instantly became the world's most famous climbing image, and was splashed on the front of newspapers across the Western world. That epoch-making photograph was to herald an approaching revolution in both climbing and photography, when the technical standards of both climbers and cameras rocketed to previously unimagined levels.

Spirit of the age

The fifties were a dramatic decade in Himalayan mountaineering, with twelve of the fourteen eight-thousand metre giants seeing first ascents (only Dhaulagiri and Shishapangma had to wait until the sixties). They were also hugely important in the development of European and North American climbing, with major first ascents such as The Nose on El Capitan in Yosemite,

One of the definitive shots of seventies mountaineering - Pete Boardman and Joe Tasker, high on the West Ridge of Kanchenjunga in 1979. Photo: Doug Scott.





Possibly the finest seventies cragging photo?
Steve Bancroft making the first ascent of
Strapadictomy, Froggatt in 1976.
Photo: Bernard Newman.

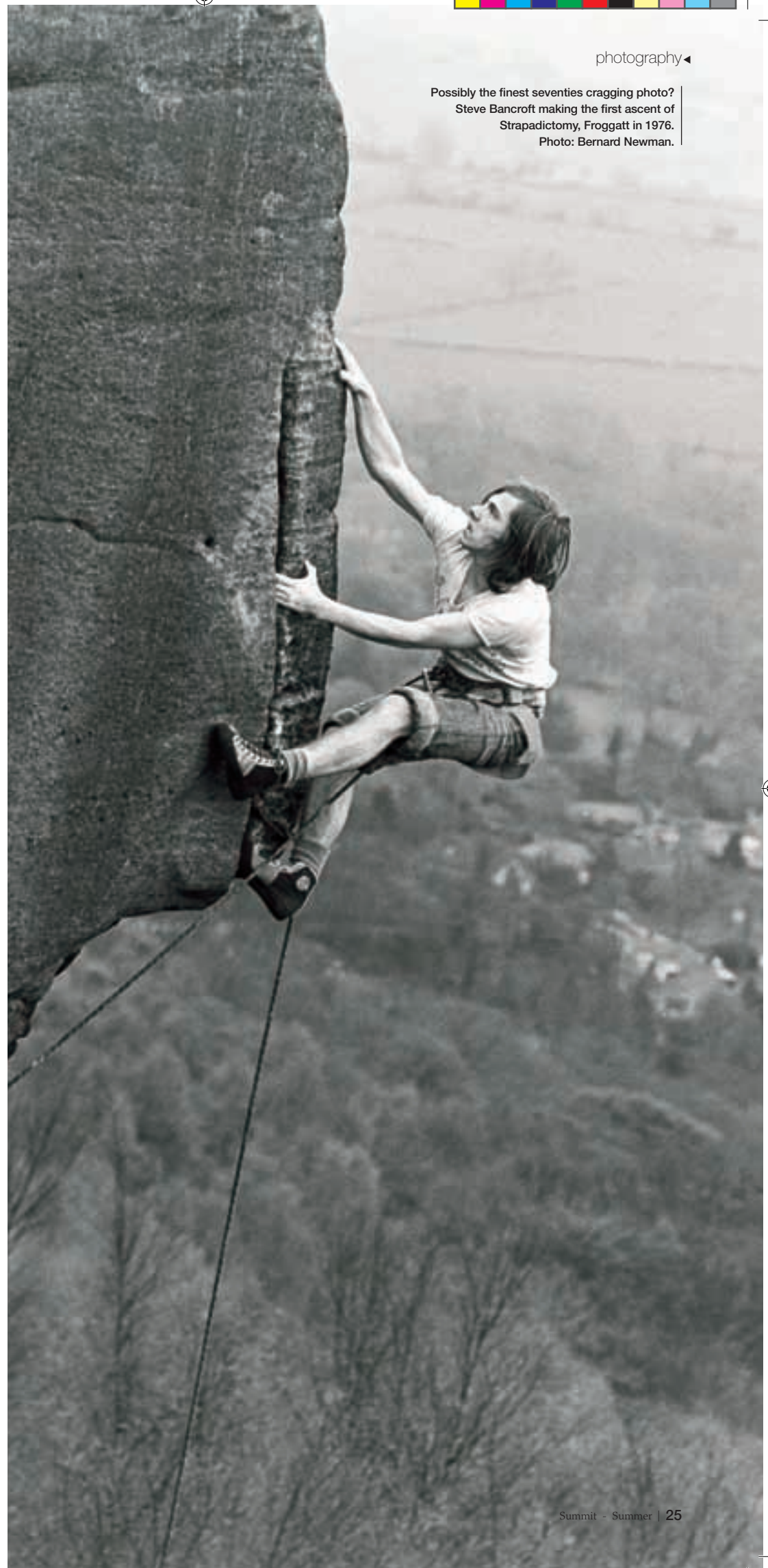
the South West Pillar of the Dru in the Alps, and some of the biggest lines on British crags like Cenotaph Corner and Coronation Street.

These huge leaps forward were matched in the world of photography, where the pace of technological development in compact cameras was driven by the Western media's insatiable thirst for images, and by the new prosperity of post-war consumers. In 1959 Nikon introduced their ground-breaking 'Nikon F' – the world's first single lens reflex (SLR) camera to use 35mm film. This enabled photographers to capture images of a quality previously associated with far heavier cameras, and the legendary 'F' would be used to great effect by the leading climbing photographers of the sixties and seventies. Perhaps the most influential of a small group of British post-war climbing photographers was John Cleare, an adventure photographer and filmmaker, whose iconic book *Rock Climbers In Action In Snowdonia* laid the foundations for a new wave of climbing photography.

Cleare's ambition in his book was extraordinary: he set out to capture significant ascents in a 'fly-on-the-wall' manner, using the previously unknown technique of taking shots whilst hanging from a rope. This opened a new world of photographic possibility. Cleare also sought to illuminate the climber as a kind of visionary figure, moving through a landscape of dreams more mysterious than the climbs themselves. Cleare reveals this in the mysterious caption to his unusual shot of Peter Crew on Pellagra at Tremadog: "I had this dream, see, and I was falling upwards in a shaft of light."

Cleare's stunning images presented a huge challenge to future photographers. You can see the influence of his work in all the best modern climbing photographs by people like Galen Rowell, Heinz Zak, and Simon Carter. Today, even the most experimental shots still retain many of the compositional qualities first seen in Cleare's book: the dramatic silhouette; the monumental object highlighted by a small figure; the reflection of a shadow on the wall; a shallow depth-of-field drawing the eye directly to that of the climber; the presence of changing weather at the edge of the frame.

But what special ingredient makes a good climbing photograph into a great one? Often, historical achievement is a major catalyst. Hillary's photo of



“Few could have predicted the tsunami that was about to sweep through the photographic world.”

Tenzing, for example, is exceptional only due to the event it records. Yet some climbing photographs also weave a moment in history into the frame of a strong image. These are often the shots that we remember most vividly and talk about most frequently. Think of Doug Scott's image of Pete Boardman and Joe Tasker, high on the West Ridge of Kanchenjunga in 1979. Two grinning figures in bright red down suits lean on a tiny snow bank as the ridge steepens. In the background, it falls away for thousands of metres below before vanishing into a sea of cloud drifting over the Sikkim foothills. It is an iconic shot, and defines the zeitgeist of seventies Himalayan mountaineering. Scott's photo also gained an unnatural poignancy, since just a few years later, Boardman and Tasker would themselves vanish in the cloud high on the North East Ridge of Everest.

Rock climbing photography, too, can capture that elusive spirit-of-the-age. Bernard Newman's beautiful black and white composition of Steve Bancroft making the first ascent of Strapadictomy at Froggatt Edge in the Peak District in 1976 is a strong contender for the greatest British cragging shot of the seventies. It perfectly highlights the attitude and equipment of that era. With Bancroft in rolled-up Levi's and EB climbing shoes, the photograph is so steeped in the atmosphere of its time that you can almost smell the roll-up smoke hanging in the air.

Explosion in standards

By the eighties, 35mm colour slide film had become the norm for the world's leading climbing photographers, allowing richly-saturated and finely-grained images to be produced even in the most difficult conditions. Cameras had developed extensively since the sixties too: in 1978, Polaroid introduced their innovative SX-70, the world's first SLR autofocus camera. Pentax, Nikon, Minolta and Canon all soon followed suit: by the late eighties, the proliferation of autofocus systems allowed climbers to be frozen, mid-move, on the very hardest climbs – coinciding with a dramatic leap forward in international climbing standards.

Climbing magazines were evolving too, from black-and-white pamphlets

into the glossy format we are familiar with today. And, at the same time, an all-new and intriguing phenomenon arose: the climbing photo-book. Although mountaineering books containing extensive photography had been around for some time, three significant and highly influential books appeared in the early 1990s that confirmed the new power of the photograph as a climber's dream-catcher: David Jones's *The Power Of Climbing* (1991), Doug Scott's *Himalayan Climber* (1992), and Uli Wiermeier's *Rocks Around The World* (1996).

Although completely different in style and subject, the books shared a single theme: the power of documentary photography within the climbing world. Scott's book is a kind of photographic autobiography, recounting the best tales from dozens of major expeditions across the world. *The Power of Climbing* is a remarkable historical record of the British forcing grounds of the Peak District, Yorkshire and North Wales in the late eighties. Shot exclusively on black and white film, it remains a unique account of an unforgettable era. *Rocks Around The World* is a very different kind of story: a photographic record of an exceptionally successful road-trip throughout the early nineties by one of the world's best climbers, Stefan Glowacz.

A secret revolution

When these books first hit the shelves, few could have predicted the tsunami that was about to sweep through the photographic world. In the late nineties, a secretive photographic revolution was bubbling in the research laboratories of the Japanese camera manufacturers. In 1999, Nikon released their D1, a 2.74 megapixel digital SLR model. Selling at a hefty £4,000, it was affordable only to pros with a taste for the new, or keen amateurs with deep pockets (it's a measure of the pace of advancement that only a decade ago the D1, the world's best digital camera, produced lower quality images than many of today's mobile phones). However, by 2003 Canon launched their 300D for just £600, confirming that digital SLR technology had entered the mass market.

Many professional photographers were initially sceptical of the benefits of digital. This was understandable since those early digital cameras produced far

poorer images than a sharp 35mm slide. However, when Hasselblad released their prototype medium-format digital body (the H1D) in 2002, with a resolution of 22 million pixels, the jaws of the professional photography world hit the floor. By 2005, it had become clear that the days of film would soon be numbered.

Eyes to the future

What did this technological whirlwind mean for climbing photographers? Well, it improved the odds for the photographer: exposure can be tested and compositions reviewed before the climber reached the crucial move, and a virtually unlimited number of photographs can be taken. One of the most obvious consequences is that the number of climbing photographs in circulation, particularly on the internet, has multiplied at an astonishing rate. Many of these images are mediocre, but then there were plenty of mediocre photographs in the days of film too – only fewer of them, and not shared so publicly.

One of the tremendous positive influences of digital technology is the way in which it has sparked a fresh interest in photography from people who just didn't have the time to work with slides – and so the basic standards of climbing and mountaineering photography have been pushed considerably higher. Increasingly spectacular, beautiful, unusual, inspiring and creatively diverse climbing photographs are being taken all the time, amplifying and enhancing our global culture of climbing and mountaineering.

Yet even within the whirlwind of imagery that surrounds our lives, we can still isolate those moments of clarity that are the lifeblood of our experience on the cliffs and mountains. All the time, we re-discover Coleridge's state of prophetic trance and delight, or John Cleare's visionary dream, and we reach for the camera. We encounter it when the sudden rainbow falls through the sky, or when our partner's rope flashes darkly against a setting sun, or when the snow sparks with moonlight as we approach the shadow-lit wall. ■

David Pickford is a photographer, writer, and climber. He is the editor-in-chief of www.planetfear.com, the leading adventure sports website. See www.davidpickford.com to find out more about his work.



photography ◀



The cover shot from *The Power of Climbing*: Nick Harms committing himself to the wall dyno on Bobby's Groove (F8a+), Lower Vivian Quarry, Llanberis in 1990. Photo: David Atchison-Jones.

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►photography



An unmistakable Simon Carter image - one of the masters of modern climbing photography. Here Roxanne Wells is on pitch two of The Free Route (25) on the Totem Pole, Tasmania. Photo: Simon Carter.

Faster, Higher, Stronger



A competitor in the 2008 British Lead Climbing Championships. Will we soon see climbing in the Olympics?
Photo: Messenger/BMC.

Where in the world is Kaohsiung? Any ideas? I was stumped too, but on 16th July, Kaohsiung plays host to the World Games, home to all those niche sports you've also not heard of that didn't quite make it into the Olympics. Fingers crossed the meeting puts Kaohsiung on the map, but to be honest I hadn't heard of the World Games either.

Staged under the aegis of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the World Games seems to be a kind of athletic purgatory. Here sports must suffer while the gods of Olympus decide whether they have reached whatever arcane standard these things

are judged on to break through to the big time.

Bear in mind that while you too may never have heard of the World Games, it takes just as much commitment on the part of athletes to get there as it does to qualify for the Olympics. Only there's no pot of gold at the end of this rainbow. The World Games is a junction, not a destination. And no one wants to stay there for long.

There will be more than 30 disciplines competing at Kaohsiung, a smorgasbord of minor sports, the new guys, the bitter old hands and the downright weird. There is fistball, which is not as grim as it sounds, and something called korfbal, which is a lot like netball. There's also something called flying disc, which

you'll know better as Frisbee.

And the bitter? That would be squash, a hugely popular sport that screams out to be in the real Olympics but which, for reasons unknown, languishes at Kaohsiung. If you want to see a sport already lobbying hard to be included in the 2016 Games, then visit www.worldsquash.org. Given that the world's top three men are all Egyptians, and the IOC loves to see African medals, I'd put money on squash getting in.

Climbing is there too, of course, as it was at the previous World Games held at Duisberg, Germany, in 2005. If you want to get a glimpse of what climbing might look like if it ever made the Olympics, click here www.video.sportcentric.com/channels/media/43/129. At Kaohsiung



Climbing could be heading for the Olympics. But is all that glitters really gold? Ed Douglas takes a look behind the scenes.

there will be lead and speed climbing events, but no bouldering.

Like squash's parent body the World Squash Federation, the International Federation of Sport Climbing is campaigning to get competition climbing upgraded to the Olympics. In fact, it's one of the establishing articles of the IFSC – born in 2007 from the wreckage of a sour divorce of what

was the International Council for Competition Climbing from the International Mountaineering and Climbing Federation (UIAA) – to keep up the pressure to have climbing included.

Of course, the ultimate decision about whether or not climbing will be part of the Olympics rests with the IOC. Does it have a real chance of getting in? There

are certainly factors in climbing's favour. The IOC is known to be intrigued by the success of the X-Games and has favoured other less conventional sports, particularly skiing and snowboarding disciplines in the Winter Games.

Then there are powerful new revenue streams for the IOC to exploit. There isn't a huge industry built around korfbal, but there are some powerful brands associated with climbing, like North Face, which must be aching to get a stronger association with the Olympics. And outdoor sports can boast a high participation factor, certainly higher than many current Olympic disciplines.

That debate, however, is for the future and will happen elsewhere. The crossroads we have reached now is much closer to home. When the IFSC voted on its statutes and articles last summer, the BMC was forced to abstain because it had not yet made up its mind whether or not to support the idea of climbing becoming part of the Olympics. The decision we now face in England and Wales is whether or not the BMC should back the IFSC in its bid. It can't be put off any longer. The BMC has said it will reach a decision at this September's National Council meeting.

The BMC has a little catching up to do. The Mountaineering Council of Scotland has already made its decision. In its current strategic plan, the MCoS states: 'Our competition goal is for a Scottish athlete to achieve medal success in the Olympic Games' first ever sport climbing competition in 2020.' Mountaineering Ireland is not quite so bold, but has said it will 'develop a long-term strategy towards Irish sport climbers competing in the 2020 Olympics.'

Of course, the BMC already hosts international and national competitions. This year over 500 young climbers have competed in the BMC Youth Climbing Series, with over 300 seniors taking part in the BMC Leading Ladder Series. The number of competitors at national events – like the British Bouldering Championships and the British Lead Climbing Championships – regularly exceeds a hundred.

Scenes from the Arco Rockmaster competition in Italy. A small glimpse of what the Olympics could bring? Photo: Messenger/BMC.





Maja Vidmar from Slovenia competing in the Arco Rockmaster, Italy.

International events are held less regularly and are hugely expensive, but have undoubtedly proved popular with spectators. They've boosted the public profile of climbing in the UK and despite the cost and regulations, there are currently two UK cities – Edinburgh and Sheffield – hoping to host the 2013 World Championships.

To qualify for that, they need to have hosted a World Cup in each of the three competition disciplines, speed, difficulty and bouldering, in the previous three years. That's a big commitment. Both cities are looking for reassurance from the BMC because they know their bids would be compromised if the organisation turned its back on the Olympics.

Those who support the BMC backing the IFSC's bid for Olympic participation argue that if the BMC said no to the Olympics British climbing would lose out – and so would the BMC. Competitions officer Rob Adie says: 'I don't think the IFSC would ever demand us to resign, but I don't think they would be too happy if we say: "We don't support competition climbing becoming an Olympic sport, but oh, by the way, can we host the World Championships in 2013 please?"'

Adie says the main argument for voting yes is to remain involved in the decision-making process leading up to Olympic participation. 'The IFSC are pursuing this with or without our support, so it is not a question of whether we agree with it, it is whether we want to be involved, and in the meantime allow us to host international events in the UK.'

Adie's predecessor Graeme Alderson, now a director at the Climbing Works, is a longstanding advocate for Olympic status. He believes the BMC would be in an intolerable position if it chooses not to back Olympic participation. 'The BMC is a member of two international organisations, the IFSC and the UIAA, whose stated objectives include getting climbing into the Olympics. So if the BMC said no to the Olympics then they would be in violation of their obligations as members. They would have to allow a new body to take care of competitions.'

If that happened, Alderson says, no one has any idea of the kind of organisation that would emerge to manage competitions. Would it have the same values as the BMC? Would the new organisation take members and government funding away from

the BMC? And if climbing did achieve Olympic status, would the BMC be turning its back on a lot of new money that could help all its work – including access?

Most sports require formal competition to function, but some, like climbing, don't. We're not alone in that. Others like it include yachting, horse riding, mountain biking and canoeing, all of which have Olympic status but which are mostly valued as recreation. These are sports our increasingly chubby nation actually participates in, rather than just watching them on television. What's more, the fact they are informal and with few rules make them accessible.

Could the focus on competitions that Olympic status would bring undermine climbing's recreational appeal? That's arguable. Lots of us enjoy mountain biking but few of us could name more than a couple of Britain's top bikers. The fact that some mountain bikers are heading for the Olympics has little impact on our recreation. Mountain biking, like climbing, is obviously bigger than the narrow strand of competition that a tiny percentage enjoy.

So would it really make any difference to most of us if climbing were an Olympic sport? And since it won't be the BMC that decides that anyway, is it sensible for the BMC to turn its back on the Olympics now and jeopardise its current position? The BMC has fought hard to keep all aspects of climbing under its umbrella. There would have to be fairly compelling arguments against seeking Olympic status for the whole juggernaut to come to a shuddering halt right now. What is the case against?

It's hard to argue that Olympic status won't change climbers' attitude to competitions. When the BMC organised the first World Cup event in 1989 at Leeds, it attracted top names from the sport from across Europe. Very few of the biggest stars now take part in climbing competitions. For all kinds of reasons, climbing outside still draws most of the talent and gets most of the media attention, certainly in Britain. But I'm willing to bet that if there were an Olympic gold medal up for grabs, many top climbers would reconsider – and the climbing public would be riveted.

How would that impact on British climbing generally? That can only remain speculation, but it will happen with or without the co-operation of the BMC. The IFSC is going to seek Olympic status with or without the BMC's support. The Olympics is a colossal shop-front but



Bonny Masson climbing in the first international competition in the UK - Leeds '89. This was the event that launched competition climbing in the UK, and helped make Simon Nadin's name when he won the overall World Cup series. Photo: Bonny Masson collection.



Where it all began: Bonny Masson ties in for the Yorkshire Open at Leeds in April 1989. Organised by DR walls and Graham Desroy, this was the first ever competition in the UK. Look carefully to spot a very stylish young Adam Wainwright! Photo: Bonny Masson collection.

would only show one aspect of climbing. What impact might that have? Then again, Himalayan mountaineering is already fixed in the public eye, and only a minority of climbers practise that too.

There's also a valid argument that the Olympic ideal is the logical conclusion for a process that began with the construction of climbing walls. With so many climbers being introduced to the sport indoors, and some of them rarely if ever venturing outside, indoor competitions aren't controversial at all, so why should Olympic status be any different?

The more pertinent question is how that status would change the BMC. Olympic sports attract the kind of public funding the BMC can only dream about. Gordon Brown committed £500m to the UK's Olympic effort in 2012, with a further £100m pledged from other sources. Water polo, for example, was initially given £3m – a sum £1m greater than the BMC's total income just for water polo's Olympic effort – although that was later slashed in half as the economy tanked.

One Sports Council manager I spoke to with knowledge of the BMC thought climbing couldn't pass up the opportunity to get Olympic status but warned of the impact the influx of cash can have on a small organisation. Currently, the BMC only gets ten percent of its income from the Sports Council. Only 12 percent of its specialist programme budget is

absorbed by competitions. The Olympics would change all that.

That flood of money would inevitably be spent on a very small number of climbers, coaches and administrators. Ordinary members might wonder what's in it for them, especially, as the official warned, other grants might become vulnerable. Losing an access officer while taking on coaching staff would alienate ordinary members like nothing else. The character of the BMC might change for good.

Other sports have been down this road before. Log on to the British Canoe Union's website and the first impression you get is that canoeing is all about competing and little else. There is no mention of access and conservation work at all, despite both being burning issues for ordinary canoeists.

For recreational paddlers, that's frustrating. One stalwart from the canoeing scene told me that the BCU's relationship with competitions has become 'a case of the tail wagging the dog. It's the debate of the day in many clubs and is creating a lot of discontent.' Canoeists traditionally entered the sport through clubs and then specialised, for example as slalom canoeists or sea kayakers. Young paddlers are now more likely to be switched on by competitive kayaking. That is having an impact on how the sport develops.

Yet there is nothing inevitable about competitive climbing elbowing other aspects of the BMC's work aside. In contrast to the BCU, the Royal Yachting

Association gives a more balanced impression between competition coverage and information for recreational users. The implication is clear. Competition climbing will only dominate the BMC if it's allowed to do so.

Dave Turnbull believes that most climbers are content to let the BMC press ahead. 'In my view it is a valid and perfectly natural thing for competition climbers to aspire to and I suspect that the majority of climbers in the UK today would not have a problem if the BMC were to put some effort into pursuing Olympic status.'

Agree or disagree, if you want to support the BMC in pushing for Olympic status or oppose it, now is the time to speak up. ■

WHAT'S YOUR VIEW?

Now is the time to speak up if you've got a strong opinion on whether climbing should be in the Olympics. Come along to your next area meeting to make your vote known:

- Lakes: 9th Sept, Keswick, venue tbc
- London & South East: Early Sept, date and venue tbc
- Midlands: Date and venue tbc
- NE: 7th Sept, Stonebridge Inn, Durham
- NW: 7th Sept, Wilton
- Peak: 2nd Sept, The Crown, Victoria Street, Glossop
- SW: 5th Sept, venue tbc
- Wales: Sept 1st, The Vaynol, Nant Peris.
- Yorkshire: 8th Sept, Ilkley Moor Pub & Vaults

See www.thebmc.co.uk/yourbmc for latest Area Meeting details

Lessons Learnt

Getting schooled is no fun – so learn from other people’s mistakes instead. Nicholas Gardiner has a lesson plan for first-time alpine success.

Most aspirant mountaineers gravitate towards a baptism of fire – the first season in the European Alps. That first visit to the Alps can be a daunting voyage of discovery. I took the plunge and headed there last summer. I guess it was a typical first alpine season: short, undistinguished and with badly-packed rucksacks. But we survived to tell the tale and to pass on eight lessons that I wish I’d known a year ago.

Lesson 1: be prepared

As any aspiring alpinist knows, successful planning should be grounded in a realistic assessment of your capabilities. Yet with the planning phase usually kicking off in the pub, this can result in an increasingly ambitious assessment of one’s capabilities. For our August Chamonix trip, we convened in the Bryn Tyrch in Capel Curig one cold

January and, over the course of the evening progressed from a tentative assault on a Facile to a full-on AD III as a logical second objective. We only scaled back our plans our first day’s experience in the Alps, which just goes to show the power of dreams (or perhaps Guinness).

The second prong of the planning trident is being physically fit, building up your stamina well in advance with long training runs and weekends away, with the end game to be able to match the fabled ‘guidebook time’. My personal regime involved treadmill sessions in a subterranean bunker in central London, otherwise known as ‘Fitness First’. Whatever floats your boat, but it will make a difference.

Of course, you also need the right kit. From my previous snow-and-ice experience (in New Zealand), I was convinced the centrepiece of the alpine toolkit was the snow stake; I insisted we take one each, almost at the expense

of anything else. Unfortunately stakes appear a touch thin on the ground in Europe, and a few days before departure I was ringing around retailers in a mild frenzy. I finally tracked down the last stake in Southern England and a quick jaunt to East London ensnared what would surely become the cornerstone of our alpine experience. We were ready to go.

Lesson 2: get there in comfort

You’ve probably only got a week or so of precious summer holiday booked – you need to maximize your time available, arriving fresh and ready to assault the mountains. With this in mind, one Saturday morning in July I dragged myself from my bed at 1am, and found myself on the 4am Trucker’s ferry to Dunkirk. A ten-hour drive southwards saw us arriving at Chamonix at tea-time where due to an oversight in our exhaustive planning we had nowhere to stay. Luckily, tents in hand, the newly-discovered Argentière campsite beckoned. Despite the owner sporting both a fetching felt hat and a barely disguised contempt of Les Anglais, we soon occupied a small square of France for the week; this was Base Camp. We were on track.

Lesson 3: size is everything

Dragging ourselves from our tents on the Sunday morning, we wiped the celebratory hangovers from our eyes (well, we’d arrived, eh?). There was just enough time to grab fresh croissants as we prepared to do battle (neatly avoiding the felt-hatted proprietor who

Approaching La Tour Glacier.
Photo: Kyle Wood.



Sunrise on l'Aiguille du Chardonnet.
Photo: Kyle Wood.



was enthusiastically trying to help some Dutch trekkers break into their own car with what appeared to be a stale baguette).

Three nights at the Refuge Albert Premier had been booked and, looking at the map, we decided a couple of hours trekking should do it. Thus we had plenty of time for last-minute shopping, a fitting alpinist luncheon (lots of cheese, meat and potatoes) and an hour spent repacking everything we'd need for three days into the day-sack.

We set off, intermittently meeting friendly locals, which gave me a chance to show off my French. One old lady, on seeing us looking quizzically at the map, enquired as to whether we were lost, and then seemed equally puzzled when she found out where we were going. Another couple stopped us and pointed to our shiny snow stakes, proudly strapped to the outside of the bulging rucksacks to let the world know that we were hardened mountaineer. I realised they were asking in a curious, semi-amused manner if they were in fact large tent pegs. I comforted myself in the knowledge that, looking in from the

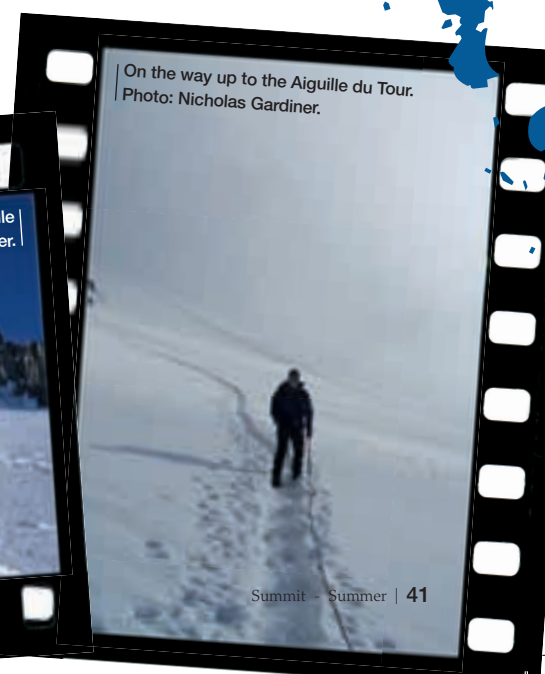
outside, our world of extreme awlpinism must seem peculiar.

A slight error was thinking that two hours was ample time for the trek from Argentière to the refuge – although it was merely 5 km, there was the additional matter of 1,500m of upwards toil up a rather steep moraine. The heat, height and hearty alpiniste's lunch conspired against me to make this foot-gnawing, knee-shuddering, lung-splitting, shoulder-burning haul up to the refuge a fitting overture to the week. My companion was moving rather quicker than I, and still only just

managed to make the hut in time for the second course of supper – at 7.30pm. I'm not sure this was 'guidebook time'.

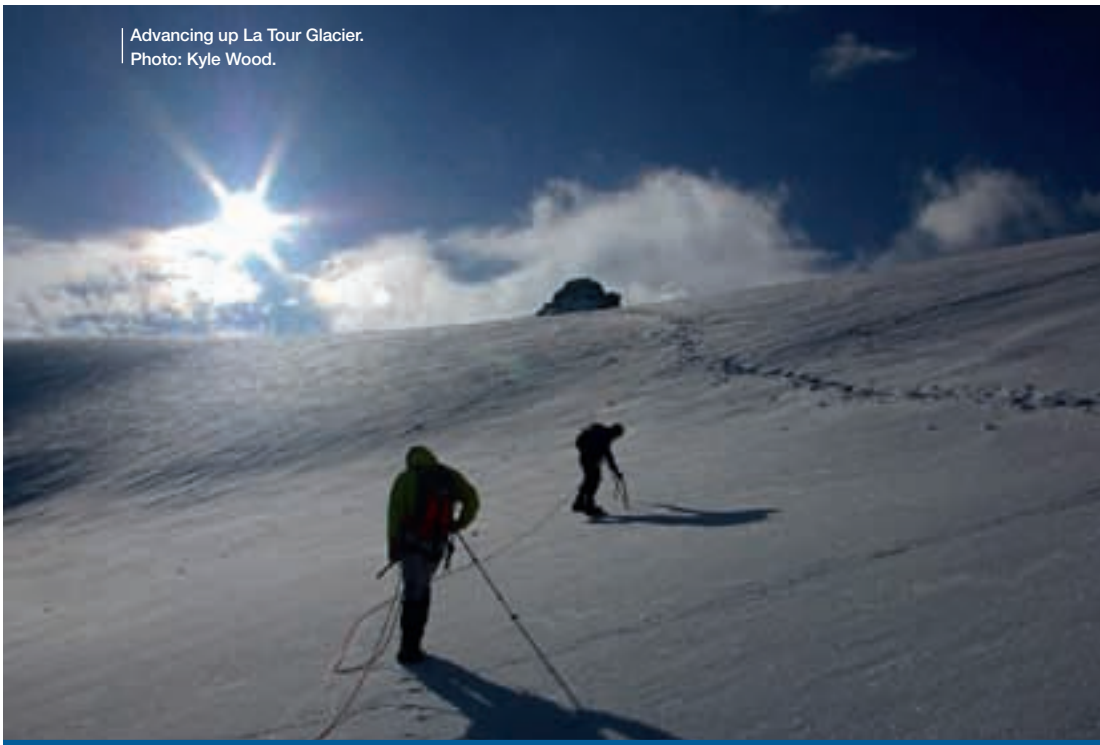
Lesson 4: hut etiquette

The Albert Premier Refuge may have been named in honour of the King of Belgium, but I doubt he ever stayed there. No, my friends, the Albert Premier does not do luxury. I must admit, after my previous experiences of





▶ alpine climbing



Advancing up La Tour Glacier.
Photo: Kyle Wood.

Alpine Refugios in Italy, I was expecting soft furnishings, a well-stocked bar, showers and three-to-a-room comfort. Alas, in our inaugural French hut, there were just some chairs and some dorm-rooms with six-foot wide shelves with numbers on the end –the sleeping

slots. As a courtesy the proprietors ensure that there are always at least two loud Germans in each room who will, with characteristic Teutonic efficiency, switch on all the room lights and walk around naked whilst everyone is trying to sleep. Take ear-plugs as a token nod towards sleeping, although being dug in the ribs every time your new found bedmate turns will ensure a restless night.

Lesson 5: pick a good first route

Our new-found alpiniste friend and Albert Premier co-resident had joked that hut etiquette involved ensuring you said a cheery “Good Morning” to one and all in your room regardless of the hour you were arising (his alarm went off at 1am). We elected for a leisurely 4.30am start, with the plan for us to enter our new alpine arena, suitably geared up at 5am. Breakfast was duly dispatched (hot water, milk powder and Weetabix), but our efforts to look slick

were punctured as my partner discovered he couldn’t find his harness. After several minutes of speculation as to whether it might still be gracing base camp (possibly being flaunted by felt-hat man), he trudged downstairs to his locker, before finally emerging, sporting said harness and a sheepish grin.

So off we set, trying not to follow the crowds (they’d already left anyway), and getting lost on the way to the glacier. In our ‘planning’, we’d selected the Aiguille du Tour as a suitable first peak. It offered glacier travel, a snow gully, was ten minutes into Switzerland (passports optional) and featured some bare rock clambering (crampons mandatory). A large contingent of mainly guided aspirants had all left the hut at approximately the same time, but finally getting into our stride, we managed to move faster than all of them and burned our way towards summit success.

On our way we even successfully employed some basic alpine skills: having roped up for the glacier, led up the steep gully and then moved together on the scrambling finale (although perhaps we should have taken some more coils as the rope between us was always getting snagged or stepped on, as one irritated French Guide pointed out). But success beckoned, and we had the top to ourselves, complete with inspiring views across to Switzerland. After much self-congratulation, we returned to the hut about 11am as the snow was becoming rather sugary with the heat, toasting our success with a bottle of Mont Blanc, a dreadful beer which comprised the remainder of the Albert Premier’s bar stocks.

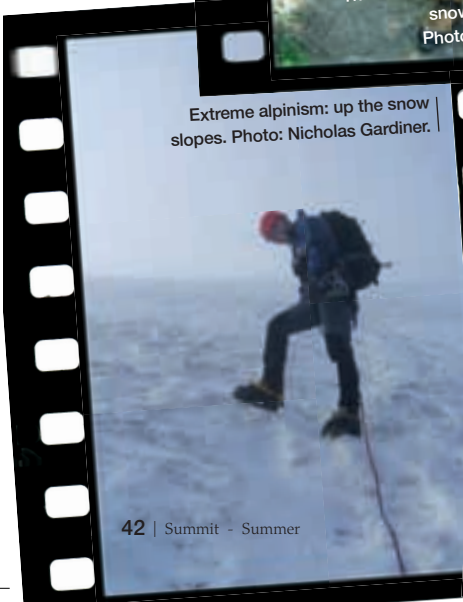
Lesson 6: you can’t change the weather

After this initial success, we seemed to manage to spend most of the sunny days lounging in the valley and all the bad weather days attempting (and failing) to get up high. A traverse of the Vallee Blanche? Too much cloud, Monsieur. A telepherique to the Rifugio Torino, perhaps? Non, il ne marche pas. Three precious climbing days sitting in the bright sun, exhausted, drinking tea and cheap claret? Absolument!

I now understand that you could spend two weeks sitting in tents and bars and not get around to doing a single route. We were reasonably lucky, getting in two routes in seven days – the previous month was apparently a washout. And lazing around at the campsite was not all bad news,



The author on the first day. Is that a snow stake we can see?
Photo: Nicholas Gardiner.



Extreme alpinism: up the snow slopes. Photo: Nicholas Gardiner.



About to encounter French Guides on the Petite Aiguille Verte approach.
Photo: Nicholas Gardiner.

especially if you liked people watching. It was fairly notable that our proprietor had segregated his campsite on the basis of nationality: no French were to be found (they were probably sensibly staying in swanky Chamonix apartments), the Dutch were ensconced in their smoking transporters at the bottom of the hill, and we were in amongst all the English speakers, on the least flat part of the campsite. I guessed our neighbours were all here to do the same activity as us, as most of them had various bits of tell-tale kit lying about their tents, and the characteristic clanking of climbing gear seemed to fill the evenings like humanoid Chamois.

Lesson 7: don't tangle with the French Guides

Our plans in disarray, we elected to tackle the Petite Aiguille Verte. This had two major advantages: it was a day trip up and back and it involved the Grant Montets telepherique (a hundred yards from the campsite with a lie-in friendly late-opening time). We squeezed into the second cable car and half an hour later were standing at the foot of our target, with about a hundred other climbers. Swiftly roping up (harnesses already on this time - we were now veterans!), we motored off up the snow slope to try and get out ahead on the ridge.

It was plainly apparent that the majority of climbers were French Guides and a lot of scared clients, including a particularly timorous lady who (in a fit of terror) lunged for me on the ridge. I was obviously flattered (understand these are not uncommon occurrences) but the existence of a 1,000m drop a few feet to my left did give me pause for thought. The ridge proved quite pleasant, but we realised that the better way was to drop down to the top of the snow slope, where the going was easier but busier.

It was here that we managed to encounter the terrifying spectacle of the French Guide in all his glory: those who effortlessly mix Gallic guile, a slight distaste of the English and an equally dismissive approach to his clients. In one particularly memorable exchange - with curled lip and wave of arms - we had our carefully placed ice-screw completely pooh-pooed. We spent the rest of the time trying to stay out of their way, only finally avoiding them when we elected to abseil back down the snow slope in what was surely the masterploit of our assault. Perhaps the only tar to our smugness was when one of these devilish Guides stopped to help unhook the ropes from around our chosen rappel block during our increasingly desperate retrieval attempts.

Lesson 8: come back for more

And that was about it. We had another day pottering around the valley, mixing in with the crowds in Chamonix, and a Saturday trying to find a crag hidden halfway in a forest. Then we drove back on the Sunday, tired but a lot savvier about the strange and now not-so-mysterious world of alpinism. We'll be back this year for more of the same, sans snow stakes and avec Italian Rifugios, and hopefully a little wiser. See you there. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

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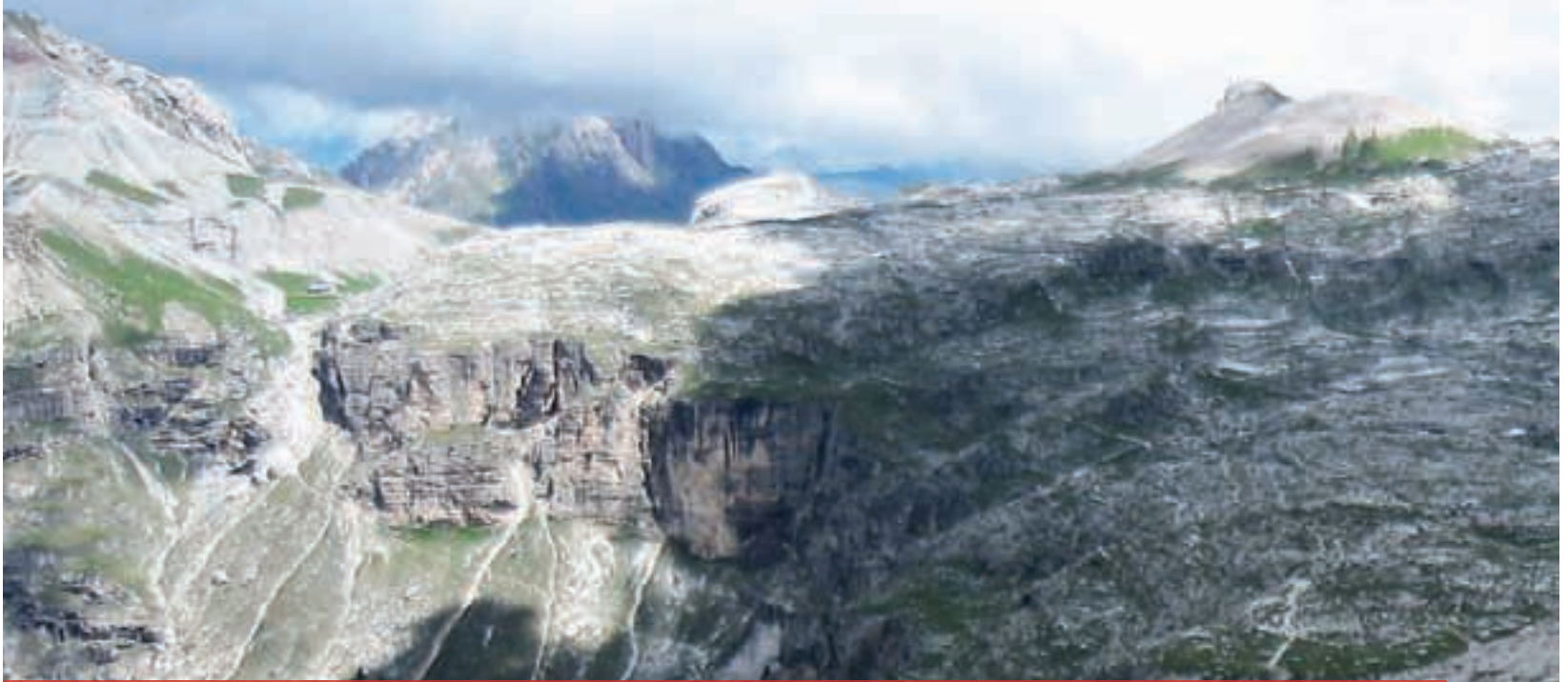
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► mountain running



RUNNING HIGH

Super-size your mountain running with a trip to the Alps. Vicky Wilkinson gives the lowdown on how to plan your ideal route – plus throws in a few of her own favourites.



For runners, the Alps are still very much a blank canvas; there are no official running guidebooks, and very few established or classic routes. It can be hard to get started – the vast choice of possible routes can be bewildering. Misreading profiles, or tackling an unrunnable gradient, can leave you forced to walk – or worse, ill-equipped in climbing territory.

Last year we spent a month touring the Alps, living in our van. We had the sole aim of searching out running routes, starting in Bavaria, making our way through Austria and ending up in the Dolomites. We ran through some awesome landscapes and found stunning peaks where running ascents are possible, and high passes deliver you straight into inspiring mountain territory. And, as the month passed, we became a whole lot better at identifying the landscape profiles that make for good alpine runs. So, if you want to super-size your running this year, what are the things to look out for?

Dealing with the scale

The vast alpine scale can be intimidating for runners. It's easy to get psyched out by the size or get lost in fine detail, so once you've identified the route that you want to run try breaking it down into key stages; you'll find it much less intimidating and be able to pace each section as you run it. Thinking in terms of basic profiles can help you to visualise your route.

Key profiles to look out for

Many alpine routes start with a **tree lined ascent** from the valley floor made up of long, switchback fire road. Keep a steady pace and you can gain a lot of height on these often dull sections, but be ready for the heat in the shelter of the tree line. **Plateau sections** cover ground quickly, helping you recover between climbs.

In **steepening cirques** the gradient can increase very fast. Along with increasing altitude, these profiles can be tough. Being surrounded by white rock (such as in the Dolomites) can lead to a reflective 'oven' effect in hot conditions – imagine a spider trying to climb out of a very hot bath tub!

Contouring traverses can often be found circumnavigating alpine valleys. These allow you to rapidly link routes together or provide a route home without losing too much height. Our routes in the Dolomites sometimes included dramatic mountain passes, again to link areas together.

Summits: the final sections to summits are often very steep and rocky, but narrow switchbacks can help you

maintain your pace to the finish. Pay careful attention to map contours before committing to your route.

Escarments can give the runner dramatic views and a sense of exposure, without the potential dangers and commitment of ridges.

Despite the scale, alpine routes can be surprisingly comfortable and fast compared to the UK. Of course, like climbing, a lightweight approach yields the best results: a rucksack can be a serious burden. Water is heavy, however much you need it, so plan to top up wherever you can find it.

Ready-made routes

Break yourself in gently and grab a taste of alpine running. Here are some routes that we made earlier:

Route 1

Hahlkogel summit (2,655m) from Huben. Ötztal, Austria
1,500m ascent. Map: Freytag & Berndt 251, 1:50,000

A long, switchback ascent through the forest up from the valley floor, breaking to open ground where you'll see the Hahlkogel Hütte. The run continues with shallow climbing across an open, grassy plateau, steepening to tight switchbacks on the summit section, with a very short exposed scramble on the final approach.

Route notes:

As soon as you break out of the tree line, you're rewarded with fantastic views across the neighbouring Tyrolean peaks. As you make the summit approach you're surrounded by rough, rocky peaks like ruined castles and great, sloping slabs which slide off into fresh air. The Hahlkogel summit itself dominates the valley below, with its iron cross visible from the village cafes. The campsite at Winkle (popular with kayakers) is good on weekends.

Route 2

Similaun Hütte (3,019m) from Vernago. Val Senales, Austrian / Italian border
1,308m ascent. Map: Freytag & Berndt S512, 1:25,000

Climbs steeply from the Lake at Vernago, initially on metallised track past traditional alpine farms into open

The long haul up the Sas Ciampac escarpment.
Photo: Harvey Wilkinson

The vast alpine scale can be intimidating for runners. It's easy to get psyched out by the size or get lost in fine detail

The tough final ascent in thinning air and poor weather to the Similaun Hutte.
Photo: Harvey Wilkinson



The summit of the Sas Ciampac escarpment.
Photo: Harvey Wilkinson



pasture. The ascent continues steadily through pasture then enters a steepening cirque. Here the route becomes increasingly rocky and finishes with tight switchbacks up to a col, where Similaun Hütte is situated.

Route notes:

There's nowhere to hide on this one – the climbing starts hard and doesn't let up. But you gain height through beautiful alpine pasture (where the streams provide plenty of opportunities to take on water) and ascend right to the hut, surrounded by the peaks of the Ötztaler Alps. We enjoyed the night at the hut with plenty of food, company and fiery Grappa. While the Similaun summit itself is not for runners, local guides advised us that it would be possible to run to the site where 'Ötzi' was found, the 5,000 year old 'Ice Man' discovered by climbers. An approach from, or continuation to, Vent via the Martin Busch Hut (north of the Similaun in Austria) looked possible.

Route 3

Sas Ciampac summit (2,672m) from Colfosco, Alta Badia, Italy.

1,200m ascent. Map: Tabacco 07, 1:25,000

Ascends out of Colfosco 'old town' on steep woodland switchback to the Col Pradat Rifugio. After a brief descent, the route breaks out of the tree line into a rocky cirque which steepens sharply to Forc de Ciampe (numerous alternatives are possible from here). Now the run briefly joins the Alta Via Dolomiti, then breaks off across a plateau before climbing to the summit of the escarpment, Sas Ciampac. It continues until rejoining the Alta Via at Forc de Crespeina. From Forc Cier descend steeply on rocky ground before descending gently through alpine meadows and a final woodland descent to Colfosco.

Route notes:

This run takes you through a wide, open landscape where mighty Dolomiti rock faces dominate. The giant limestone escarpment enables you to make your final approach across the top of a 700m rock face, surrounded by a 360-degree mountain panorama. From Ciampac summit you look across the valley to the formidable tabletop Sella range, and potential routes into the hidden high Sella plateau. Beyond Forc Cier, the landscape becomes almost lunar in character, with strange columns of rock

erupting around you. The rocky Colfosco campsite offers tough pitching for tents (take a mallet!). Routes into the High Sella are possible from here.

Route 4

Forcela dl Lech (2,486m) from Sas Dlacia, Lagazuoi, Italy.

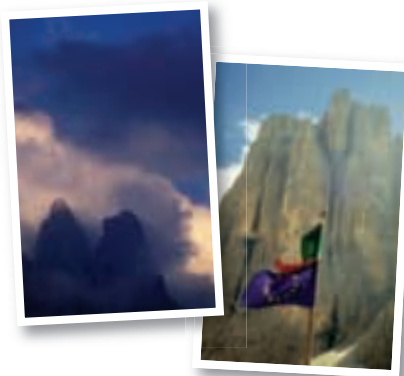
823m ascent. Map: Tabacco 03, 1:25,000

Join Dolomiti path 11 from Dlacia campsite, climbing steadily past the Alpina Restaurant, gaining height on steepening switchbacks until reaching the Col de Locia. The route continues to the DolomitiHohenweg climbing again through increasingly rocky ground, across patches of summer snow, up to the high pass Forcela dl Lech. Through the pass, the route descends on steep, fast switchbacks to the lake, then continues more gradually past the Refugio Scotoni before making a final descent onto hard track, rejoining path 11.

Route notes:

This High Pass route gives you a real sense of having travelled through the mountains. You climb into what seems to be increasingly isolated peaks until you are delivered dramatically through the heart of the mountain, where a completely new vista opens before you – laying out the peaks, lake and forest of the neighbouring valley. The tracks are very steep through the pass, but firm enough underfoot to inspire a confident, fast run. It's a detailed landscape to run through, overlaid with a rich history and a culture of mountain legend. The friendly campsite offers instant access to Falzarego, the pass of the 'false king' whose face you can see petrified into the surrounding peaks. Extend the route on to the Rifugio Lagazuoi and Val Travenanzes via Forc Travenanzes. ■

Vicky Wilkinson is a BMC member who has been combining UK fell running with alpine routes for ten years. A member of Ambleside AC, Vicky lives and works in the Lake District.



▶ mountain environment



When you're looking at the big view it's easy to forget about the small world beneath your feet.
Photo: Mike Hutton.

Underfoot and under threat

The tiny plants that cover our high wilderness areas are under attack – but do we care enough to save them? Barbara Jones takes a look at the battle beneath our feet.



Underfoot and under threat

When you're stomping along a mountain top, the last thing you usually want to do is look down at your feet. The views, the open sky, the majesty and the all-too-often driving rain keep your eyes and thoughts more at eye level.

So, if someone told you that underfoot was one of the most important and threatened habitats in the UK, would you believe them? Isn't this short, grassy mat with a few mosses and lichens all over the mountains? Grazed

by sheep and soaked by whatever pollutants the rain and clouds carry – what's so special about that?

To find that out, you need to get down on your hands and knees, backside in the air and take a close look at a marvellous mix of tiny plants (including our smallest tree) braving some of the most extreme conditions our climate can throw at them. The exposed summit plateaus of the Cairngorms, Ben Nevis, Skiddaw, and the Carneddau are places often so exposed that you wonder how anything can survive. But it does - this is the land of the 'montane' habitat.

This includes a number of types of vegetation, all with prostrate or low-growing plants: the woolly hair moss with its fringes of silvery hairs; light green Cladonia lichens stand out from the background; short, stiff sedges; dwarfed heather and bilberry and, if you look closely enough, the dwarf willow – a tiny tree keeping its head down close to the ground. In the UK this vegetation is best represented in Scotland, but some extends south to Wales, which holds less than 1% of the UK total. The English and Welsh examples are largely confined to the highest mountains and tend to be smaller, more fragmented and more degraded than those in the Scottish Highlands.

So why worry about this dwarf vegetation? Shouldn't we be more concerned about the rain forests and climate change, those big hitters of the environmental world? These are the glamorous issues, much more obvious and attractive, but montane heath? It's like conserving red squirrels or the glutinous snail – guess which gets the most votes! But we do need to be concerned for this mountain-top habitat, particularly in Wales and England, where it reaches its southern limit in the UK. Its fragility means that it has been badly damaged over the years from overgrazing (especially by sheep), recreational impact and atmospheric nitrogen deposition. A recent addition to this tally is the possibility that climate warming may be having an effect. All these combine to damage the vegetation cover; the important species are lost, common grasses invade or the soil is so exposed that it is completely eroded away.

In Wales the most extensive examples of montane habitat occur on the tops of the Carneddau, on the summit areas of Pen yr Ole Wen, Carnedd Dafydd, Carnedd Llewellyn, Foel Grach and Foel Fras. These are the most southerly examples of the habitat in the UK, occurring right on the edge of their range. This increases their importance: edge-of-range habitats and species are often the first to respond to the effects of environmental change and can act as early indicators – they are the canaries of the montane world.

A study on the Carneddau has shown a significant deterioration in the condition over the past forty years – montane heath is being converted to acid grassland, and we don't need any more of that! Some of the heaths are now in such a degraded state that, if conservation protection and management measures are not implemented in the near future, restoration may not be possible – resulting in permanent loss.

Stick to the footpaths and do your bit for preserving the upland ecology of the Carneddau. Photo: Dave Roberts.



So what does this have to do with you? As a recreational walker or mountaineer, what can you do, apart from keeping to the footpaths? Awareness and appreciation of the problem is half the battle here, as protection of this habitat might entail some difficult decisions. Remedial actions are urgently needed in the very near future to prevent the large, degraded sections from becoming irrecoverable, along with a long-term strategy for future management.

These approaches will need to involve management agreements with landowners to reduce grazing pressure. Fencing out the most severely degraded areas to remove grazing would be the most effective measure we could take (and for one area is probably its only hope). These are not easy options and landscape and access issues need to be considered alongside ecology. The land involved is among the most valued areas of perceived 'wilderness' in Wales and many hill walkers and mountaineers will be concerned and want to be informed.

Initial discussions have revealed some antipathy to the idea of fencing on even small parts of some of our summits, but consider the alternative:

the mountain tops becoming a desert of eroding soil and exposed bedrock. This is already the case on a number of mountains (just look at the top of Kinder Scout or Snowdon) – are you really happy for this damage to spread?

Any fencing would be temporary until such time as the habitat has recovered and agreements are in place to ensure future survival. At that time, the fences should be dismantled and removed. Consideration of the location of any fencing is critical, but it should be possible to site one or two sizeable grazing enclosures away from any main ridge in such a way that they would have as little visual impact as possible.

We know what to do, but if we don't take action soon then we could lose this important habit from Wales for good. Our world will have become just that little bit less diverse and attractive, and any claims we have to cherishing and protecting our mountains become just that little bit more suspect. ■

Barbara Jones is a climber and mountaineer and is the Countryside Council for Wales' upland ecologist. She is a specialist advisor to the BMC Access, Conservation & Environment Group.

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Is Portland by public transport possible?
Photo: Zara Maung.

We all know that we should leave the car at home. Yet it can be hard to see the attraction of going climbing and walking by public transport if you've got a car waiting in your drive.

We're all obsessed with getting from A to B, with B being the desired activity spot – whether it be a quick climbing trip to Spain or a madcap day out in the Peak. And I'm just the same, caught up in a climbing commuting trap – I still have a van that I use when I'm being lazy or can't persuade my friends to get the train. I've also had plenty of emails from people with families who remind me just how hard it is to get away climbing without the car when they have lots of other commitments.

So don't worry, this isn't an idealistic lecture on how we should all scrap our cars immediately, just a few thoughts on how we could change. I had the bad luck to watch some American TV recently; it was focussed on educating children about low carbon lifestyles. The irony of course is that the kids don't have a choice – they have to ride buses and bikes. But it got me thinking: maybe we should reverse the learning process and take a look at the things kids do – or, rather, they can't do. Is there anything we could learn?

Let's face it, getting on the train or bus to reach your climbing or walking destination isn't usually more practical, convenient or even cheaper than jumping in a car. But it does have some unexpected benefits, as I found out on a recent climbing trip to Portland.

It's safe to say, bussing it on Portland, we were in the minority. There were hordes of climbers clipping bolts, yet we didn't see a

single climber walking the streets or using the buses; we just saw them out by the cliffs and in the car parks. And, although some might argue that climbers are better-off quarantined like this, I thought that we could all be doing things a bit differently.

Firstly, Portland is a residential area so it's really easy to get around. There was a bus every fifteen minutes from the nearest train station in Weymouth, and many of the climbs were less than ten minutes walk from the bus stops. Whilst I didn't exactly feel that I was giving back to the community in a big way by getting the bus, the locals did seem a lot friendlier than when I've visited by car. There was no chance of stopping off for a big shop at Tesco before heading down either. We were forced to do things within walking distance where possible: going to local pubs, buying food and eating out locally.

Of course we had to carry our stuff around everywhere, which was a bit of a pain, but one bonus was meeting lots of locals – people saw us carrying our rucksacks around and asked what we were up to. A friendly pub landlord even offered to warm up Sunday dinner for us when we got back from climbing. It almost felt like people might recognise us the next time we visited – mostly because there are so few climbers getting around on buses.

Needless to say, there were lots of people on the bus who couldn't drive cars – namely elderly people and groups of overexcited children. People tend to have a go at kids for loitering and hanging around on buses and in the local shops – but if we all hung around in these places a bit more, we might be able to help build our local economies and

communities. OK, you might come across the occasional 'locals only' pub, but my bet is that there are plenty of rural businesses out there that would really appreciate some custom from visiting climbers and walkers.

To make things a little easier, I discovered a great way to plan your route wherever you climb or walk in the UK – simply go to www.traveline.org.uk. Type in the time and date of travel, your start position and destination (use the nearest village) and this website will set out your route for you. You can also print off any bus and train timetables you need.

I'm not suggesting you all sell your cars from scrap right away. But if you do manage to leave the car at home once or twice, you might discover a whole new side to your favourite climbing or walking area. ■

Got any tips for climbing and walking by public transport, or suggestions for a theme you'd like to see in this column? Email Zara at ecoclimber@googlemail.com.

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The 2009 Stanage bus (supported by the BMC Access & Conservation Trust) runs on Summer Sundays & Bank Holiday Mondays until 18 October:

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B O D Y W O R K S



British Team Member Adrian
Baxter working on his flexibility.
Photo: Alex Messenger.



Are you poised for success? Humphrey Bacchus explains why posture, poise and flexibility are the key to climbing well and staying injury free.

Climbing is a mixture of vision, power, core strength, technique, endurance and focus. It's been described both as vertical chess and vertical ballet. There is no sport quite like it - and those that pursue its charms and anguish are in for a life of challenges.

In working with climbers at my clinic, one of the things that I'm most concerned with seeing (apart from injury) is their lack of flexibility and poor posture. It seems that focusing on an increased range of motion is the first thing to be skipped – if time is tight most people opt for an extra route, not warm-down stretches. But in climbing a lack of flexibility can cause a decrease in efficiency and lack of fluidity in technique. And this often stems from postural distortions and patterns that have become deeply embedded into the physique of each individual, and their climbing styles.

Posture and sport

I often overhear people talking about their posture – or lack of it – and in some circles it's become a bit of a panacea for any ache or pain. Recently posture seems to have been lumped in with the phrase 'core stability' – something that has been

practically separated from functional biomechanics and elevated into a discipline itself. Yet good posture, or efficient structural alignment, is key in any sport since it allows a smooth delivery of power and function to the body. Put simply, faulty posture leads to faulty movement.

Inefficient movement will exhaust energy supplies and if we repeat these movements they become habit. In turn, this leads to postural changes that cause us pain, decreased movement and possible injury. Joint mobility and muscle balance will affect how we stand or move in every second of our lives. For example, an elevated shoulder, a pelvic rotation or a rounded back will inhibit the use of the opposite muscle groups or cause a compensatory pattern. These compensations can run throughout the whole body.

How we came to these postural compensation patterns can originate from our genetic inheritance, our developmental influences and structural asymmetries. Ergonomic stress and injury can also play a part. Such imbalances in our musculoskeletal system will not only decrease climbing performance but also lead to a higher rate of muscular strain. They may not show themselves in the early years, but will



Flexibility is the key to climbing well: Jacky Moore cruising Dragonfly (V5), Hueco Tanks. Photo: Alex Messenger.



Si Moore utilising some core stability on Spectre (V13), Bishop. Photo: Alex Messenger.

flare up further down the road when we ask a bit more of our bodies.

Good posture is as much about attitude as it is about muscle tone. Habit dictates use – it pays to focus attention towards good climbing practice and not being lazy. Calm, gravity-conscious poise and mental

clarity are three things that can improve our movement in profound ways. This can be as simple as utilising full diaphragmatic respiration – which so many of us struggle to do. As athletes there is a need to have quality of movement, not quantity.

The mystery of stretching

You'll rarely come across an athlete, trainer or therapist who doesn't extol the virtues of stretching. Benefits bandied around include: decreased injury, decreased delayed onset muscle soreness and improved performance. As a result, stretching is often included in pre-sport recommendations but there are still many misconceptions. There is a great deal of research examining stretching in sport but one thing is clear: stretching is very sport specific. And whilst there are many factors (such as increased training load, muscle imbalance and nutritional deficiencies) which can certainly increase the chance of injury, making a direct causal link between flexibility and injury is more problematic. In fact, there's not much evidence to suggest that stretching itself decreases the risk of injury.

What has been shown is that an imbalance in flexibility might lend an athlete to injury – this is a key concept because in sports there are often overused muscular units that develop 'hyper-tonicity', affecting the body's muscular-skeletal balance. For example, sports climbers typically

overuse the humerus adductors/ medial rotators, the wrist flexors, the elbow flexors and neck extensors. This leaves weakness, and the focus needs to be on stretching out the over-developed and dominant muscle groups whilst strengthening the antagonists. There are some established links between such imbalances and predisposal to injury: the pelvic position from hip flexors and hip extensors can play with and against the lower back muscles, and over-developed pectorals and shoulder internal rotators can leave weakness in the external rotator.

Sports essentially require a balance between strength, core control and flexibility. Some sports have a reduced load on the tendon unit (e.g. jogging or cycling) whereas others require what are called 'stretch shortening cycles' on the tendon unit. Climbing can have a high load on the muscle-tendon unit, especially in specific areas round the fingers, elbow and shoulders. As a result these tendons will benefit from stretching routines since with decreased load adaptability and flexibility, the tendon unit is more likely to be damaged.

Warming up prior to training and warming down are also rightfully advocated, before each and every training session or climb. A proper warm up will increase blood flow to the muscles, improve nerve action and decrease the energy needed for cellular reactions. This can lead to a decreased likelihood of muscle injury.

Improving climbing performance

So, what are the key concepts for climbing? What can you do to improve performance and decrease injury? What side of flexibility is worth working on? Each of us is entirely unique in our genetic inheritance, postural habits and climbing style. Each of us will have strengths and weaknesses, different mobility in joints and varying range of motion; it can be a hard job to determine what we need to address.

For climbing the key areas include the groin, hips, hamstrings and shoulder joints. And, like most things in life, making the most gains depends on quality not quantity. This means using your body effectively, not wasting energy or time training areas that are not needed, and thinking clearly about key goals.





Do you need help?

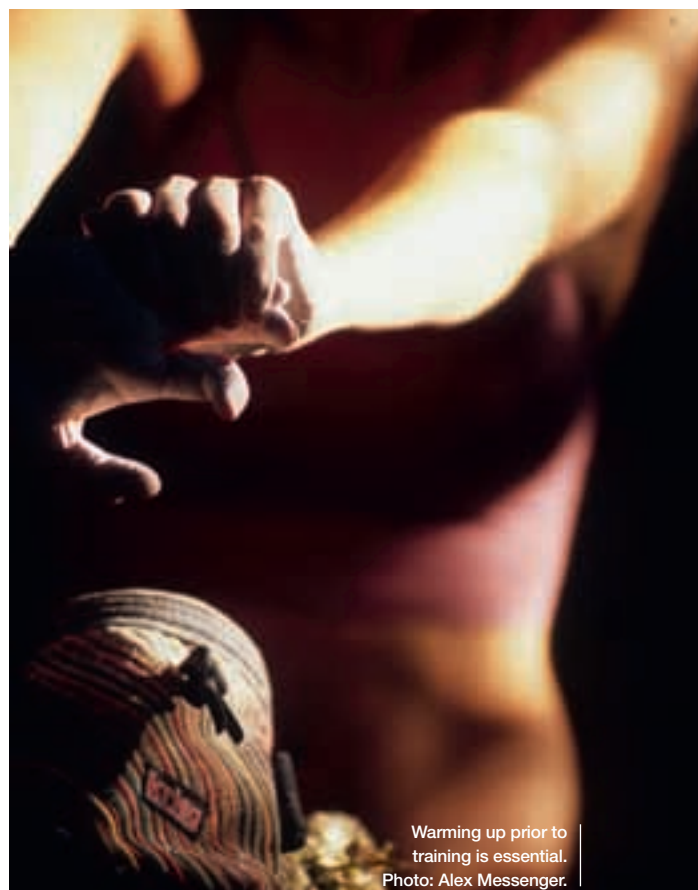
Good alignment promotes good movement. I like to think of alignment as balance, and this can be developed through individual awareness, core control and training programs.

Sometimes athletes need help and feedback with their bodies and how they move; old patterns of movement can be difficult to shift without direct approach from a therapist. Seeking out someone who understands the unique aspects of climbing, and who can address your body as an integrated, living, breathing entity will help re-pattern and release muscular and joint restrictions in your body, leading to more efficient and fluid movement.

This can be considered training, just as much as more bouldering or fingerboard work. Flexibility and

balance brings confidence and adaptability to our motion that this vertical sport so needs to excel. Treating injuries comprehensively as they come along and giving the body time to heal and recover is as much a part of training as actual climbing. Those who allow time to recover, retrain movement and increase flexibility invariably come out stronger – and I don't know any climber who doesn't want that! ■

Humphrey Bacchus is a Neuromuscular & Sports Therapist. He has worked within sports medicine and rehabilitation both in the UK and in the USA. He runs a company called MTB Works which works with climbers, off road triathletes, mountain bikers and adventure sportspeople. Clinics are in London and Oxford – see www.mtbworks.com.



Warming up prior to training is essential.
Photo: Alex Messenger.



Incorporate stretching as part of your training.
Photo: Alex Messenger.

Key movement points

- Keep movement as fluid and as continuous as possible for less energy expenditure
- Apply proper timing to your movements and use as direct a line of motion as possible
- The better the placement of hands and feet, the better force we can generate
- Keep in complete contact with the surfaces until the end of each movement

Key training points

- Increase your flexibility
- A warm up and warm down is essential
- Spend more time focusing on your postural weaknesses
- Treat injuries as soon as they come up. Don't climb through them – recovery is part of training!

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Competitions '09



Dutch powerhouse Jorg Verhoeven competing in the 2004 World Youth Championships at Ratho - come along in September to see the European Youth Series return to Edinburgh. Photo: Alex Messenger.

This summer promises some fantastic plastic action. BMC Competition Officer Rob Adie has all the details.

BMC British Bouldering Championships

11-12th July, Cliffhanger, Sheffield
Once again the BBCs return to the Cliffhanger festival at Millhouses Park in Sheffield. Britain's strongest boulders will all be lined up ready to compete, but who will walk away with the title? Last year saw over 100 competitors battle it out; Ned Feehally and Audrey Seguy were crowned senior champions whilst Jonathan Stocking and Shauna Coxsey took the junior titles. This year the junior event is on the Saturday, followed by the seniors on the Sunday. Entries are now open, so if you reckon you've got what it takes to pull down with the best, then why not enter? And even if you're not planning to boulder for Britain, make sure you come down to cheer them on and enjoy all the festival has to offer.
www.thebmc.co.uk/bbc and
www.cliff-hanger.co.uk

BMC British Lead Climbing Championship

18-19th July, EICA, Ratho, Edinburgh
The BLCCs are moving up north this year to take advantage of the huge new competition climbing wall at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, Ratho. The new wall overhangs by 12m - the only one of its type in the UK. Over 60 competitors tied on last year; the reigning senior champs are Gareth Parry and the unstoppable Audrey Seguy, whilst the multi-talented Jonathan Stocking and Shauna Coxsey hold the junior titles. This year juniors and veterans will compete on Saturday, with the seniors climbing on Sunday. Some wild routes are planned - so if you think you've got what it takes then get that entry form filled in. If you're not competing, be sure to come down to see some spectacular flyers. This year's event will be run alongside the Edinburgh Rat Race, so spectators will be able to watch

Britain's best climbers as well as competitors competing in the original urban adventure race - double the fun.
www.thebmc.co.uk/blcc

IFSC European Youth Series 19-20th September

The Edinburgh International Climbing Arena is also playing host to hundreds of young climbers from across Europe in September, for a round of the IFSC European Youth Series. Over 150 young competitors will make the journey to Edinburgh to fight it out on one of the steepest climbing walls in the world. The last time the BMC hosted a youth event in the UK was 2004, so it'll be amazing to see so much young talent in one place. As the host nation we can field a double-sized team, so 36 young climbers will be given the chance to represent Britain in September.
www.thebmc.co.uk/comps

PROFILE: JONATHAN STOCKING

Jonathan Stocking (16) is from Kilwinning near Glasgow. Although still at school, he has onsighted F8a+ indoors (and flashed F8a outdoors) and has won the British Lead Climbing Championships for two years running.



How long have you been on the British Team?

I became part of the British team in 2007, after I won the British Lead Climbing Championships (BLCCs). Over the past two years I've been competing in Europe and Britain.

What are your best competition results?

Last year I was ranked 4th in Europe and 4th in the World Cup in Australia. I have also won the BLCC two years in a row, the British Bouldering Championship and the Scottish Championship. This year I'm competing in the European Youth Series again; I'm now in the 'Youth A category', but still hope to be ranked within the top ten. I'm also planning to compete in the World Championships this year in France and would really like to gain a top ten placing.

How about outside?

My best onsight indoors is F8a+ and I've redpointed F8b. I've just got back from a trip to Spain, where I flashed several F7c+'s and an F8a called Primera Linea.

Where do you train?

I train at the Glasgow wall on weeknights, up to four times a week, and at Ratho on a Sunday. When I'm not climbing I do core conditioning work and go to the gym. I also use a fingerboard at home.

What's on the climbing ticklist for this year?

I plan on going on a lot of climbing trips this year: around the UK, France, Spain and Italy. I want to redpoint an F8b+. In August we're heading to the Dolomites to climb the famous Brandler Hasse route on the Cima Grande – it's a 17-pitch E5, which should be good fun. I'm also really psyched to do some hard routes in Scotland like Stoled and Hurley Burley.

And in the future?

I aim to push my redpoint grade to its limits. It'd also be cool to go to places like Hueco Tanks and the Buttermilks in America. I'd really like to keep competing when I graduate into the senior categories and to travel more, climbing around the world.

Thanks to...

I receive a lot of help from people like Neil Mcgeachy, Neil Buzby and my mum. I have also received grants from the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, The AFMT and the Birnie trust.

Jonathan is sponsored by Evolv, Prana and Metolious. He is also looking for further representation, so if anyone out there is interested in sponsoring one of Britain's best up-and-coming climbing talents, get in touch with the BMC.



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The PyB Column:

Alpinism has its hazards and gaining experience takes time - consider going on a course.
Photo: Steve Long.



Are you experienced?

It was one of best winters in years, and the Alps are still drowning in snow. Martin Chester reckons you should use it to your advantage.

Having wrung the last Euro out of the 'end of season' deals in Chamonix, the clocks have changed and the lifts closed. All thoughts have turned to evening cragging – or have they? Lurking out there is a small minority who refuse to let the winter slip away; even now they can be seen skinning up towards the summit of Mont Blanc, or whooping their way through the Bernese Oberland, desperate to extend the ski season.

But you don't need to be an expert ski-mountaineer to enjoy the Alps in spring. It's a little more complex to access but the months of May and June are definitely the connoisseur's choice: with the huts closed (except for winter rooms) and the lifts no longer running, the Alps are quiet and cheap. As you're reading this it may well be too late for 2009, but to whet your appetite for next year, here is my big list of 'things I wish I'd known about early season climbing in the Alps'.

Get bigger feet

"Water, water, everywhere, and not a drop to drink," it's a bit like that in early summer. With warmer days and crispy nights it doesn't take long for all that snow to yield some tip top conditions on the North faces – it's just getting

there and back that's the problem. So, early in the season consider getting some extra flotation – in the form of skis or snow-shoes. Trust me – it doesn't get much better than an early ski into the base of the route followed by several pitches of great ice and an abseil back down to the skis.

Get some help

Get fit well in advance, get mileage in and top up your skills if required. You won't be alone: our alpine preparatory courses in Wales have been selling like hot cakes this year. The dark arts of Alpinism can be daunting for us Brits: glacial travel, crevasse rescue and moving together. But these skills can be learnt before the big trip and practised in the UK.

Get some beta

You need a flexible and sophisticated plan – you don't have to spend long kicking around the Alps in spring before you realise that not all routes are the same. Spring comes early on the lower south-facing slopes, whilst the ravages of winter continue much later in those high, shady north-facing bowls. Sunny 'rockaneering' routes at low altitudes fit the acclimatisation bill perfectly; shady, frosty hollows and faces can be exploited later – often making safe an objective that would be inconceivable in these modern hot summers.

Get some experience

Early season Alpinism has its hazards – especially as you wait for those winter snows to settle. There's a tangible pride from completing a long-sought objective. But there's an even greater pride from drawing on all your experience and developing a calm sense of discipline. Gaining experience takes time, much of it can be learnt from others. It's easy to write off the 'sort of people' who get a Guide or go on courses, but do so at your peril. These people are budding alpinists, aspiring big wallers – their only crime is to be smart enough not to waste their time making all the same duff blunders that we all did! In the current climate, what better way to make the most of your precious time than to get an injection of skills, enthusiasm and passion to give you some direction. What are you waiting for? ■

Martin Chester, Plas y Brenin

Martin Chester is the Chief Instructor of Plas y Brenin and also the Publicity Officer for the British Mountain Guides (www.bmg.org.uk). Plas y Brenin (www.pyb.co.uk) is the National Mountain Centre based in Capel Curig, Snowdonia.



Recipe Corner:

Scrambled eggs in a bag

Craving a decent breakfast but left your frying pan at home? No problem, Amy-Jane Beer is here to kick off Summit's recipe corner.



Equipment:

- One pan - the largest you have with you
- Other equipment: Cook-in bag, wire bag tie
- Weight: 60–80g per person
- Prep time 10 minutes
- Fuel efficiency: Good
- Vegetarian

To make this work properly you need to use proper cooking bags. Regular food bags sometimes work but they're not meant to be heated, more often than not they split. It works pretty well with fresh eggs, but not with powdered.

Ingredients:

- 2–3 eggs per person
- Splash (25ml) of milk (fresh or reconstituted)
- 1 spoonful oil
- Salt and pepper
- Optional: small handful grated cheese

How:

Boil two mugfuls of water in a large pan. Put the oil in the bag and squish it around to coat the inside. Crack the eggs into the bag, add a splash of milk and season. Seal the bag top with the wire tie, expelling most of the air as you do so. Give the bag a good squish around in your fingers so that the eggs are well mixed. Lower it into the boiling water and allow to cook. Give it another squish after about a minute and cook until most of the liquid egg has gone. Open the bag, add and squish in the grated cheese if using, and serve. Use the hot water to make coffee to go with the eggs.

This recipe is taken from 'Moveable Feasts – what to eat and how to cook it in the great outdoors' by Amy-Jane Beer and Roy Halpin. Buy it today in the BMC online shop. ■



On The Ground:



One quarter of BMC members live in the London & South East Area. With over 17,000 people in his constituency, the new Chair of the Area needs to have plenty of enthusiasm, commitment and energy. The evidence suggests that Chris Lund has this in spades.

What do you love about London?

Driving, its good training for the head – a bit like being 20 metres above a dodgy RP for an hour a day.

Where do you go for fresh air?

North Wales.

Is it just me, or is the tube still scary at night?

There are a lot of scary things on the tube: Romanians begging on the Northern Line with sedated babies, close combat with bankers' armpits in the evening rush hour. However, the scariest thing I've seen was some chap skiing down the Angel escalator.

It's hard to manage a BMC meeting of 50 people.

How do you keep it interesting?

Relevant topics, no rambling discussions, getting everyone involved and great speakers. Plus I run it in a boozier!

You're the new head honcho of London & South East.

What's in the pipeline?

The aim for the year is to have a much more active area – to try to get more of a community and to get people interested in doing stuff together, whether that's volunteering in the youth squadron, climbing meets, or just coming along to the Area Meetings.

How do you expect your life to change in 2012?

I'll have a once-in-a-lifetime experience to go to the Olympics, and see dedicated athletes in action. I think we've a lot to learn from them, in more ways than one. Climbing is a physical activity as well as a mental one and as a group we should face up to that, come out of the Stone Age and learn more from those guys.

What do you think of Audrey Seguy as the new BMC Vice President?

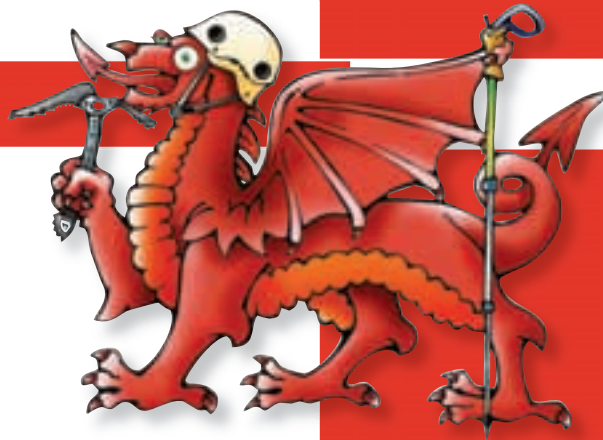
I think it's great for two reasons: it means that the standard of personal hygiene goes up at National Council meetings, and that the BMC is more representative of younger climbers – those that are interested in competitions, indoor climbing, bouldering, females and who haven't climbed 'Wrinkle'.

Read any good books recently?

Jerry Moffatt's Revelations

Chocolate flapjack, cream horn or apple slice?

The flapjack every time. ■



Eisteddfod

The Welsh-language festival of Eisteddfod is one of the largest festivals in Europe, but what has it got to do with the BMC? I imagine that most Summit readers would find it difficult to answer; some will have images of elderly poets sat in wooden chairs and old men, draped in sheets, mumbling druidic rhymes.

Yet in reality the National Eisteddfod of Wales is a showcase for all things Welsh, including sport. Held alternately in South and North Wales, this year it's on the 1st – 8th August at Rhiwlas on the A494, one mile east of Y Bala. So, why should a BMC member bother to go – especially the 99% of you who don't speak Welsh?

Well, you might actually enjoy the experience! There's plenty going on and a free translation service is available once you're in the venue. You might also want to visit the 'Mynyffa' (mountaineering) stand. Here the BMC have joined up with the MLT, Plas y Brenin, the North West Wales Outdoor Activities Partnership and Clwb Mynydda Cymru to promote mountaineering to the 100,000 or more visitors during the week.

The same consortium have also come together to enable the translation and publication of Steve Long's standard text 'Hillwalking' into Welsh. Alun Ffred Jones, the 'Minister for Mountaineering' in Wales, will launch it and present the first copy to a famous Welsh speaking mountaineer. It's rumored that copies will be on sale at a reduced price during the week of the Eisteddfod. It's also hoped to introduce the new BMC Access & Conservation Officer for Wales, and the MLT Wales Officer, during the event.

What else could you do after visiting the Eisteddfod? The National White Water Centre is just five miles north on the A4242. Or, far from the maddening crowds of northern Snowdonia, why not ascend Arenig Fawr, Aran Fawddwy or Rhobell? Besides opportunities further down the Dee valley near Trefor, you might also like to climb at Y Graig, above Llanuwchllyn. See you there! ■

Clive James
BMC Wales

Eisteddfod

Mae'r Eisteddfod yn un o wyliau mwyaf Ewrop, ond beth sydd gan hynny i'w wneud â'r CMP? Dychmygaf y bod y rhan fwyaf o ddarllenwyr 'Summit' yn cael trafferth i ateb y cwestiwn yma; bydd rhai gyda delwedd yn eu meddwl o feirdd hŷn yn eistedd mewn cadeiriau pren, a hen ddynion wedi eu gorchuddio â chynfasau, yn mwmian penillion yr orsedd.

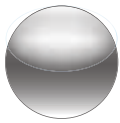
Ond y gwirionedd yw bod Eisteddfod Genedlaethol Cymru yn ddathliad o bopeth Cymreig, gan gynnwys chwaraeon. Cynhelir yr wyl yn y de un flwyddyn ac yna yn y gogledd y flwyddyn ganlynol, ac eleni bydd yr ŵyl rhwng y 1af a'r 8fed o Awst yn Rhiwlas ar yr A494, milltir i'r dwyrain o dref Y Bala. Felly, pam ddylai aelod o'r CMP drafferthu mynd yno – yn enwedig y 99% ohonoch sydd ddim yn siarad Cymraeg?

Wel, efallai y byddech chi'n mwynhau'r profiad! Mae'n yna ddigonedd o bethau yn mynd ymlaen ac mae yna wasanaeth cyfieithu ar gael am ddim unwaith y cyrhaeddwch chi'r lleoliad. Efallai y byddwch hefyd yn dymuno ymweld â'r stonin 'Mynydda'. Yma mae'r CMP wedi ymuno â MLT, Plas y Brenin, Partneriaeth Awyr Agored Gogledd Orllewin Cymru a Chlwb Mynydda Cymru i hyrwyddo mynydda i fwy na 100,000 o ymwelwyr yn ystod yr wythnos.

Hefyd mae'r criw uchod wedi dod at eu gilydd i'w gwneud hi'n bosib cyfieithu cyhoeddiad Steve Long o'r testun safonol 'Cerdded Bryniau' i'r Gymraeg. Bydd Alun Ffred Jones, y Gweinidog dros Fynydda yng Nghymru, yn lansio ac yn cyflwyno'r copi cyntaf i fynyddwr enwog sy'n siaradwr Cymraeg. Yn ôl y si bydd copiau ar werth am bris gostyngol yn ystod wythnos yr Eisteddfod. Y gobaith hefyd yn ystod y digwyddiad yma yw cyflwyno'r Swyddog CMP newydd dros Gymru, a'r Swyddog MLT dros Gymru.

Beth arall allwch chi ei wneud ar ôl ymweld â'r Eisteddfod? Wel, mae'r Ganolfan Dŵr Gwyllt Cenedlaethol bum milltir i'r gogledd ar yr A4242. Neu, ymhell o'r torfeydd lloerig yng ngogledd Eryri, beth am ddringo'r Arenig Fawr, Aran Fawddwy neu'r Rhobell? Neu mae rhagor o gyfleoedd i lawr dyffryn Dyfrdwy ger Trefor ac efallai yr hoffech ddringo'r Graig, uwchben Llanuwchllyn. Welwn ni chi yno! ■

Clive James
CMP Cymru



Events:

See www.thebmc.co.uk/events for full details and application forms for all BMC events

BMC FUNDamentals of Climbing Workshops

Various venues, July & September
Book now for the FUNdamentals of Climbing workshops, designed for those coaching climbing, especially those coaching young people. Dates: Climb UK (Rochdale) 8th July and Plas y Brenin (North Wales) 12th September.
www.thebmc.co.uk/fundamentals

Crag AttaK

Cheddar Gorge, July 4-5th
Crag AttaK plans to return to Cheddar Gorge this summer for a climbing festival, incorporating The Climbers' Club meet. Come along for 'summer access' to all routes including 'Coronation Street' and 'Crow'; the Gorge Crawl E-Point challenge; speed climbing competitions; and RockSport for beginners and children by Cheddar Caves & Gorge's RockSport team.
www.thebmc.co.uk/events

BMC British Lead Climbing Championship

EICA, Ratho, 18-19th July
The British Lead Climbing Championships are moving this year, up north to the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena (EICA) Ratho, to take advantage of the huge new competition climbing wall.
www.thebmc.co.uk/competitions

BMC Alpine Meet

Ecrins, 1st - 16th August
Make a date in your diary for the BMC Alpine Meet. Come along and sample some quality alpine walking and climbing. This time we're heading to the Ecrins Massif in France.
www.thebmc.co.uk/alpinemeet

IFSC European Youth Series - Edinburgh

EICA, Ratho, 19 - 20th September
The EICA is hosting a round of the IFSC European Youth Series climbing competition on the weekend of 19-20th September. Europe's best young competition climbers will compete on the new international standard climbing walls. This spectacular wall is the largest articulated wall in the UK, and can be set to overhang by 12 metres.
www.eica-ratho.com

Arran Outdoors Festival

Arran, 18th-21st September
An exciting programme of events is lined up for enthusiasts and beginners alike. Walk the hills with experienced local guides, learn about the history, geology, flora and fauna of this beautiful island or choose a sea-kayaking tour and experience Arran from a different perspective.
www.arranoutdoorfestival.co.uk

BMC Student Safety & Good Practice Seminar

Sponsored by V12 Outdoor
Plas y Brenin, 3rd - 4th October
If you're involved in running a student climbing, hill walking or mountaineering club then you need to book a place at this year's Student Seminar. The event gives senior post holders from university clubs the opportunity to improve their club practices and ensure safer enjoyment of our mountains. Qualified volunteers are also wanted, please contact jon@thebmc.co.uk.
www.thebmc.co.uk/studentseminar

Mountain Leader Training Association Autumn Conference

Plas y Brenin, 24 - 25th October
This weekend event promises to be stimulating, sociable and interesting. A programme of workshops has been devised, a small selection of which includes Coaching Processes, BMC Fundamentals, Disability Awareness and Bushcraft.
www.mlta.co.uk

Looking for climbing competitions?
See page 56 for full details



Gaz Parry competing in the 2008 BBC at Cliffhanger. All photos: Messenger/BMC.

BMC British Bouldering Championships at Cliffhanger

Cliffhanger, Sheffield, 11-12th July
The British Bouldering Championships will again take place as part of the Cliffhanger festival at Millhouses Park, Sheffield. Britain's strongest boulderers will be lined up ready to compete - who will be crowned British Bouldering Champion?
www.thebmc.co.uk/competitions



Introduce the kids to climbing on the mobile walls.



It's not just climbing - there are plenty of activities on offer.



The infamous Crag X pull-up competition. I



Hill Skills: Walking with young children

by Libby Peter

There are three things you need to remember about taking young children hill walking: make it fun, make it fun and finally, make it fun! Of course it goes without saying that it also has to be safe, and we'll come back to that in a minute. But if you're keen to introduce them to an activity that will provide a lifetime's enjoyment and health benefits then they need to find it inspiring, not torturous - it's essential that they have a back catalogue of happy memories of their first forays into the hills.

What age to start?

I, like many exercised-starved new mums, stomped up lots of hills with my little 'uns on my back. After a few disasters I soon learned how to wrap up my cargo snugly, have plenty of comfort stops (nappy changing, crawling around etc) and to carry a small rear-view mirror so I could take a peek without stopping. But this phase doesn't last, before long your portable babies are too big and independent to be confined to the backpack and you enter the go-slow phase. Toddlers are naturally



Younger children do best with short periods of activity followed by a rest. Photo: John Cousins.

adventurous and inquisitive and you can lay the foundations of future hill walks during this phase by extensive exploring at lower levels. 4-6 years is the perfect age to start 'proper' hill walks, given the right objective, weather, motivation and a strong team spirit.

How far to go?

A simple gauge that's often used for young children is a mile (1.6 km) for every year of their age. Of course many will exceed this with ease, whilst those who've never been encouraged to walk anywhere will struggle. The best plan is to be very open minded - have an objective in mind but a myriad of other options so you can be guided by enthusiasm on the day. A walk I've done regularly with 4-6 year olds is 8km and 450m ascent but only ever on perfect weather days when spirits are high.

What to carry?

In addition to the standard contents of my rucksack here's a list of essentials and extras.

- Group shelter
- Plenty of spare clothes and blister plasters
- Loads of little treats
- Camera
- Kite
- Special blanky or teddy
- Photo maps
- Drawing kit

Don't burden young children with a rucksack, although a small hydration pack works wonders - they can sip away and help carry the heaviest part of your load.

Motivation uphill and safety downhill

Treasure hunts, photo trails, flower spotting, stories, simple navigation, easy scramble bits, roping-up, follow-the-leader and taking turns as 'leader' are all great ways to take their mind off the sheer hard work of walking uphill. Downhill it's a case of slowing them down. Walking slowly, and in control, is hard work but essential before you venture anywhere more serious. The roly-poly descending technique is a great way to liven up the more tedious grassy descents!

Responsibility and decision making

This one's easy - it's all yours. Expect the unexpected and build in a huge margin of safety. Keep the numbers small and, whilst a team of peers makes for great motivation, be very cautious of offering to be responsible for your friends' children. Persuade the parents to come along too.

Exercise physiology of children

Young children resemble restless puppies on a hill walk: charging off at full tilt only to collapse panting a short while later. Children are not good at plodding slowly and their physiological differences explain why:

- They are less aerobically efficient
- Faster heart and breathing rates means more breaths to get the same amount of O₂, this is wasteful of energy and water
- Children's muscles use more fat than

Expert Q&A



Mountain Guide John Cousins is the Director of Training at Plas y Brenin. Every summer the centre is taken over by kids for two weeks, who sample a range of outdoor courses for young people. At other times of the year, Plas y Brenin delivers family multi-activity courses which deliver a bit of everything.

Q. How do people react to little kids in the hills?

A. Most people are delighted and probably wish that was how they had been introduced to the hills. Don't be put off though if some appear to react less positively or start giving you well-meaning advice. As the parent of a young child you get pretty good at risk assessments and are normally your own worst critic. You'll be building the experiences of your child progressively, in a way that many adults could learn from.

Q. Children's outdoor kit can be expensive. Are wellies or trainers sufficient?

A. This depends on the level of activity: wellies are the definitive puddle-jumping footwear but can give little kids blisters on longer walks, provide no ankle support and have a pretty thin sole. Some trainers can be nearly as sturdy as many kids' walking boots but there's no ankle support. Ebay is the place for almost limitless kids' clothing and equipment.

Q. Should I check my child for ticks after a walk?

A. If ticks are about then kids can

easily pick them up, so yes, check them but try and turn it into a game for them. Lyme's disease is definitely worth avoiding. There are lots of good little tools for removing ticks advertised in magazines or failing that try a pet shop.

Q. How do you start to introduce skills to young kids?

A. In the first place you don't have to. Kids are actually very good at walking, eating and drinking. It's the adults that seem to have unlearned so much of this. Their curiosity is boundless so introduce something new and just get ready for all the "whys" and the "can I try that?".

Be cautious of offering to be responsible for your friends' children - persuade the parents to come along too. Photo: John Cousins.



glycogen or glucose as fuel which requires 10% more O₂ and is less efficient

- Their limbs are not yet in kinetic balance with their muscles (think gangly colt)
- They have proportionally less body mass in muscle

All in all they are working flat out just to keep up with a slow walking adult. However, they do have a few ace cards up their tiny sleeves:

- They incur less of an O₂ deficit at the beginning of exercise, i.e. they get their 'second wind' quicker
- They have high anaerobic thresholds, similar to that of a trained adult endurance runner

So this explains why they go in for the kind of short, fast, repetitive bursts that most adults find impossible. But this is a double-edged sword; because they have low levels of lactic acid and therefore less built-in fatigue mechanism, they can push themselves (or be pushed) until they are overheated, dehydrated and distressed. In other words they are prone to crashing and burning.

Heat regulation

Children produce more heat per kg than adults but their thermoregulatory system is poor, and they have proportionately greater skin surface area, so have a faster rate of overheating or overcooling – thus they are much more susceptible to both heatstroke and hypothermia.

In summary

Younger children do best with short periods of activity: 15-20 minutes followed by short rest and a small drink of 75-100ml. Don't expect them to plod, just let them go puppy style, in short bursts with lots of rests. Be very cautious on both very hot days and on cold, windy or wet days and take the time to stop and adjust layers of clothing. And of course – have fun! ■

Mountain Guide Libby Peter wrote the Mountain Leader Training publication Rock Climbing, has co-authored a rock climbing DVD and regularly writes for the climbing press. You can contact Libby through her business Llanberis Guides.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Young people: Climbing, Hill Walking and Mountaineering - a parent's guide.

This free guide is ideal for newcomers of any age. Complex or specialist terms as well as the different sorts of activities that are practised under these headings are clearly explained. Also includes sections on child protection, parental responsibility, indoor climbing and competitions, the nature of clubs, awards and qualifications and the role of the BMC.

www.thebmc.co.uk/parentsguide



Llanberis Guides

Libby Peter is part of Llanberis Guides – offering rock climbing guides, climbing courses and mountaineering instruction in Snowdonia.

www.llanberisguides.com

Plas y Brenin

The National Mountain Centre, based in Capel Curig, North Wales, offers both taster courses for kids and multi-activity courses for families. The ideal way to introduce your children to climbing, hill walking and more.

www.pyb.co.uk





Climb Skills: Climbing as a three

The climbing week is simple. Monday is for rest: with fingertips too thin to even handle a cup of tea, it's time to relax. Tuesday is for thinking: ideas for the forthcoming weekend start to emerge. Wednesday is for planning: guidebooks are scrutinised and partners phoned. And Thursday? Thursday is for panicking if you haven't got a plan – it's time to beg, plead and crash another team's party.

Climbing as a three can be a wonderfully sociable experience, but does require some thought to ensure that the party are both kept safe and manage to progress at an efficient pace. In this article, I'll look at two different methods for operating in a team of three and evaluate their pros and cons.

Method 1: ropes in series

'Ropes in series' is perhaps the easiest and safest of the two techniques. As only one person is climbing at any one time, belaying and stance management becomes clearer and easier to manage. It is, however, slower and so less appropriate for longer routes.

How it works: The leader climbs the pitch on one rope, placing protection as required. The leader then builds a stance and belays the second climber. As the second climber follows, they drag a second rope attached to the third climber. The second climber must unclip the leader's rope and attach the second

rope through the leader's protection – this ensures that the second rope is kept in the correct line of the climb, essential if the pitch traverses at all. With the leader and the second at the stance, the third can now be belayed up the pitch, stripping the protection.

Method 2: ropes in parallel

'Ropes in parallel' can prove exceptionally efficient: an experienced party of three will lose little or no time against a party of two. However, it does require careful thought and practice to avoid knots and twists in the rope and ensure that all are kept as safe as possible.

How it works: The leader climbs, towing both ropes; great care must be taken to ensure the ropes are kept separate – they should run like parallel tram lines up the pitch. The ropes are attached individually to the second and third climbers. The second will be positioned closest to the lead climber and will belay the leader on both ropes. The leader must place adequate protection on both ropes to ensure the safety of the second and third climbers. If protection is sparse, both ropes can be attached to a single runner by means of two separate quickdraws, taking care to ensure that the ropes don't cross.

At the stance, the leader will belay both second and third climber simultaneously. This can be done directly from the central point in the belay by means of a plaquette, or indirectly from a belay device attached to

Ropes in parallel: Elfyn Jones and Tim Neill climb The Mongoose. Photo: Ian McNeill.



the lead climbers rope loop. Belaying two climbers at once is a demanding task requiring total competence. The belayer must be able to operate the ropes independently in ascent and descent, allowing the second and third to climb at their own pace. There must be total confidence in the belayer's ability to hold both second and third should they fall simultaneously.

The second and third should depart in a staggered order, allowing enough room to climb freely. Always consider the distance of a

Expert Q&A



This issue's technical expert is Mountain Guide Martin Chester. Martin is the Publicity Officer for the British Mountain Guides. If you need the voice of a mountaineering expert then contact Martin at media@bmg.org.uk.

Q. My mates advocate climbing as a three on big routes –surely it slows everything down?

A. If you're organised (and on the right routes) then climbing as a three can be even quicker than a pair. It's all about divvying up the jobs: when seconding one of you should set off while the other strips the belay; if the first to go cleans all but the crucial runners, they can 're-rack' the leader whilst the last one is still climbing; and get the leader climbing whilst someone else sorts the ropes. Voila – quicker than a pair every time.

Q. What's 'block leading'?

A. If you're out for an afternoon of cragging then you can decide who leads what. But on big routes it can be more efficient to lead in blocks of five or six pitches; the leader gets their eye in for a spell out front and, when you've finished your bit on the sharp end, you get a proper break as the least active passenger.

Q. How do I stop the ropes tangling?

A. Let's be honest here – anyone who claims they never get their ropes twisted on big routes is telling porkies. You will get ropes twisted; the secret is in taking the twists out as quickly as you put

them in. At least when you climb as a three the seconds can climb round each other – try to remove any tangles like this towards the end of each pitch. And, when you do untie to swing leads, pull the ropes through and make sure the next leader is starting with a clean slate.

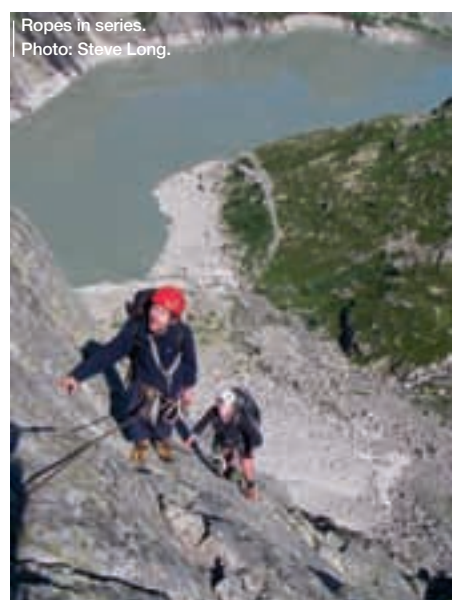
Q. I've tried keeping the ropes in parallel – but any tangles seem to get snagged on the runners.

A. If the runners are crucial then think about clipping the ropes in separately, and be vigilant with the twists, but if the route is straight up then clip both ropes into the same quickdraw – the seconds can just remove their own rope.

potential fall including rope stretch – I would suggest no less than five meters spacing. Great care should be taken at the stance when attaching the second and third climbers to ensure the ropes don't become crossed – it is important to maintain the same running order and positioning of the party.

As the second and third climber will be operating on a single rope you should be thoughtful about its diameter, but with modern single ropes available measuring as little as 8.9mm it's possible to operate safely and unhindered.

When a tiny ledge has to house over one-hundred meters of rope and three climbers it



can get pretty confusing. Stance management requires a clear system, considering the following points should make the experience more efficient.

Stance Management

1. The direction of the next pitch will dictate who stands where. The leader will need to be closest and first to depart, with the second and third positioned appropriately.
2. A sling or two will allow the belay to be brought to one central point. This will allow each climber to attach themselves individually via a clove hitch and locking karabiner. Carry a few more eight-foot slings and screw gates for this.
3. Ropes must be pulled back and stacked neatly so the leaders end flows from the top of the pile.
4. The climber on the stance nearest the leader must belay when the leader is climbing. This will avoid the ropes crossing in front of party members and potentially ensnaring them in the event of a leader fall.
5. When you wish to change the running order, use a sling larks-footed through your harness belay loop and clipped into the central point of your stance. This will offer a quick and efficient means of attachment whilst untying and re-tying from the ropes.

Plaquette belay devices

Plaquettes, magic plates, guide plates and reversos can make the simultaneous



belaying of two climbers easier and safer if used correctly. However, once loaded they can be nearly impossible to release and lower a suspended climber. Be considerate of the nature of the climb: if it's steep and overhanging, where a fallen climber could end up swinging free from the rock, only use a plaquette with extreme caution. And, when trying to release a loaded plaquette, always have a firm grip on the live end of the rope.

Pete Rowlands is an MIC and aspirant IFMGA guide. He is currently employed as a Specialist Instructional Officer at the Joint Service Mountain Training Centre where he delivers mountain training and assessment to the British Forces. Pete also offers private guiding, instruction and coaching. To find out more visit www.summitguides.co.uk.

Q. What if the leader 'forgets' to protect the seconds on a traverse crux?

A. We've all been there – totally focused on the crux, all too absorbed in protecting ourselves. So, if the other second looks set for a nasty pendulum, just set off first, taking their rope with you. You can then clip your mate's rope into the crucial runners (keep a quickdraw on your harness clipped to their rope if you're worried about reaching it). You leave the pitch safe to follow and they can set off once the job is done; it's a team event!

FURTHER INFORMATION

British Mountain Guides

www.bmg.org.uk

Need your skills updating? Find a Guide at the British Mountain Guides (BMG) – the national association that trains and assesses international Mountain Guides in all forms of climbing, mountaineering and ski mountaineering.



Rock Climbing Essential Skills & Techniques

£16.99

Packed with essential information and techniques, this is the official handbook of the MIA and SPA schemes. Includes information on rope management when climbing as a three.

Available from www.thebmc.co.uk/shop.





Tech Skills: Camming devices

by Dan Middleton

Camming devices have revolutionised rock climbing since their introduction in the late seventies. They protect the previously unprotectable, whether cruising a Stanage VS or setting an El Cap speed record. Yet some climbers never learn to fully trust cams, or worse, have blind faith in them – expecting them to hold regardless of the placement. Let's take a closer look at how cams work, so you can get the most out of them.

How cams work

When a camming device is placed in a crack, friction between the aluminium cams and the rock keep it in place and resist movement in a fall. Any downward force applied to the stem (for example, when holding a fall) is transmitted via the axle, through the cams, translating into a large outward force onto the rock.

Whether the cams slip or not depend on two things: the angle the cams contact the rock with (the camming angle) and how well the cams and the rock stick together (the friction coefficient). If the camming angle is too large for the friction coefficient, the cams will slide out without expanding. In fact, the characteristic shape of cam lobes is because this shape keeps the camming angle the same throughout the expansion range.

Camming angle vs. expansion range

Well that's easy, you might think; keep the

camming angle small and the device will work in slippery rock, even in flared cracks. This is true, but it creates another problem: as the camming angle is made smaller, the expansion range also decreases. A smaller expansion range means that not only do you need more devices to cover the same range of crack sizes, but each device is also more likely to expand out of its usable range when loaded. This is called being 'tipped out' and can lead to the device sliding out – because the cams cannot expand any further. The solution is to compromise, and most devices have a camming angle close to 14°. This gives a useful expansion range whilst holding in parallel cracks and even in some slightly flared cracks when the rock has good frictional properties.



The camming angle on a cam.
Photo: BMC.

Keeping put

Whether the device stays in place, or slides out, is almost independent of the load applied to it.

Give it a good sharp tug when you place it; if it stays put, it's likely to remain in place during a fall. This also helps to seat the device by crushing any weak surface crystals in the rock – if the rock is crushed during loading, the device can fail to hold (for this reason, always check the crack carefully for soft or loose areas). Devices which maximise the contact area will reduce the stress on the rock – this becomes more important for softer rock types and smaller cam sizes: smaller cams have to distribute the force over a smaller contact area so rock failure becomes more likely.

Which design?

Get a room full of gear geeks together and they'll argue over the pros and cons of different cam designs for hours. It's easy to forget that a well-placed budget cam is more likely to hold than a badly placed one of the most expensive brand. Paying extra tends to buy you better durability and usability, but none of these are much use if you don't use the tool correctly. Some designs increase the expansion range without affecting the camming angle – double axles and eccentric cams for example. Whether these appeal is rather down to you – some people like to carry just a few devices with a wide range, others prefer to carry more and so concentrate on buying lightweight devices.

Care and maintenance

Actual breakages of camming devices are rare; failure usually results from poor placement or rock quality. But still, regularly check stems for

Expert Q&A



This issue's technical expert is Richie Patterson. Richie climbed for thirty years before bad shoulders forced a slowdown. He originally worked in Outside before moving to Wild Country as Sales Manager – where he helped to develop new products including Zero cams. Now the Marketing Manager for Wild Country, there are even whispers of a climbing comeback on the horizon...

Q. The sling on my cam is worn and furry – how do I replace it?

A. Return it to the manufacturer for service, assessment and possible replacement of sling. However – dependant on age and condition of the unit – this may not always be possible, due to CE guidelines.

Q. I'm buying my first lead rack. What size cams should I get?

A. This depends on the rock and type of routes you enjoy but a great start would be sizes 1, 2 and 3, or 0.5, 1.5 and 2.5. Wild Country sell both as starter sets!

Q. Do any cams walk less than others?

A. Yes. Single axle cams walk less than double axle and four cams walk less than three.

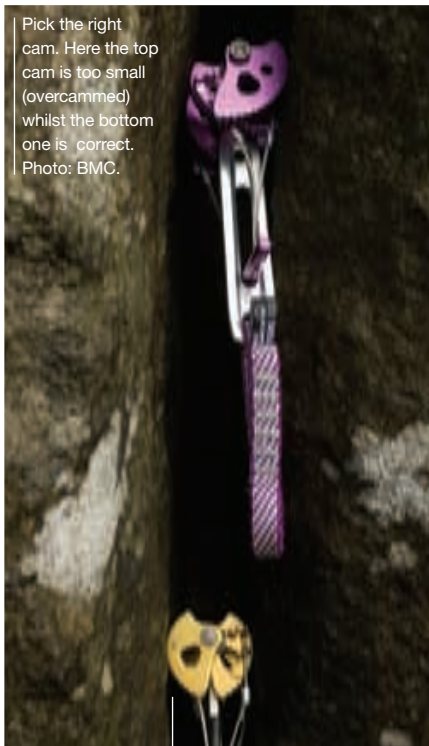
Q. When should I retire my friends?

A. Each manufacturer is required under CE to provide an obsolescence guide date and information. Most say ten years for metal parts and five years for textile components. However, like any piece of gear, if it looks bad then it probably is – so retire it.

Q. My mate reckons that cams don't work very well on limestone or slate. Is she right?

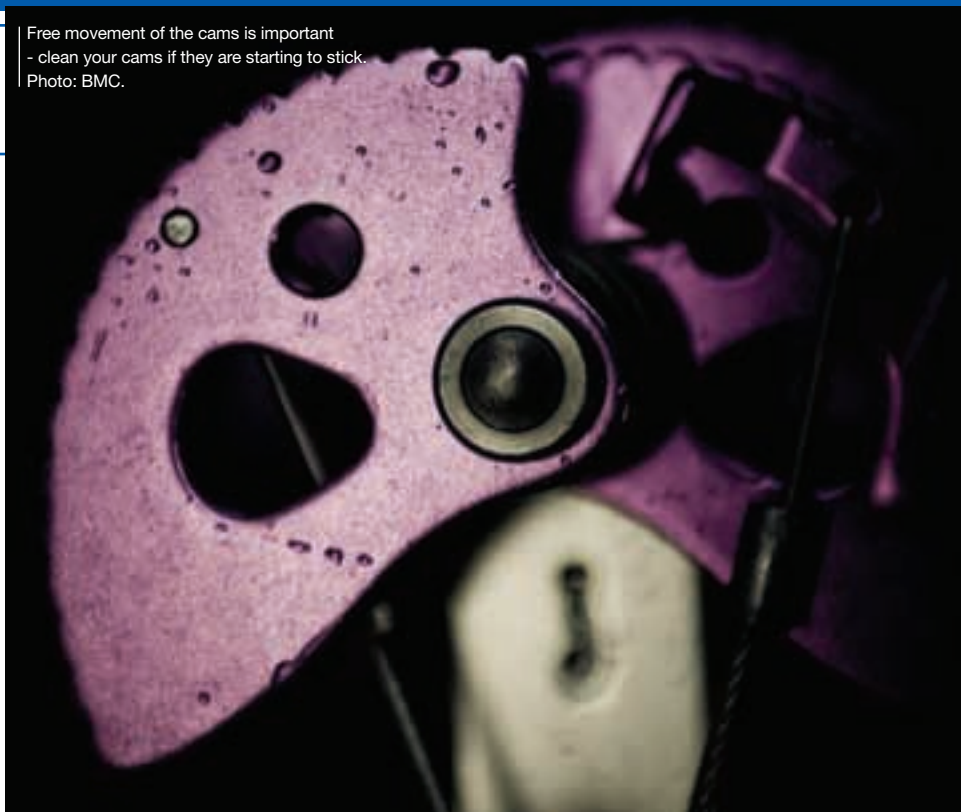
A. Yep. Both are low friction rocks. Slate is also an oily rock

corrosion and broken strands and retire if damaged. Free movement of the cams around the axle is important. A good soak and scrub in warm, soapy water, followed by a rinse and drying should help. A light squirt of a lubricant (such as WD40) into the axle area should free up any movement – wipe away any excess. Flat spots on the cam lobes usually indicate the device has held a big fall so retire it. Check the condition of any slings, these can sometimes be replaced. Trigger wires can be damaged – replacement kits are normally available.



Pick the right cam. Here the top cam is too small (overcammed) whilst the bottom one is correct. Photo: BMC.

Free movement of the cams is important - clean your cams if they are starting to stick. Photo: BMC.



Strength and standards

Devices sold in the EU must conform to the EN12276 standard. The UIAA125 standard (which is optional) has identical strength requirements. Testing confirms only the mechanical strength: 5kN minimum at 1/4 and 3/4 expansion; 1/2 for small cams. The holding power is not tested at all. Beware of budget devices sold on the internet without EN or UIAA certification – you have no guarantee of either adequate design or of acceptable quality standards.

force is much greater than the applied force. This means that cams can cause flakes and crack edges to break – bear this in mind when placing them. A well-placed cam has the stem in line with the direction of loading, and is in the middle of its expansion range. You may need to extend it to prevent it from walking into a wider part of the crack or to prevent it lifting out of position. And finally watch out for wet, dirty or icy rock: they may have very poor friction... ■

Learning to survive

The mechanics of cams mean that the outward

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

and self lubricating under pressure. If you do use a cam in slate or limestone try use it like a nut; try to find a more wedged placement to aid the cam's work.

Q. I've seen some monster cams. Do I need cams bigger than a size 4?

A. This depends on the sort of route that you're drawn to. You won't need super-size cams for 99.9% of British climbs, but when you need one, you'll really need one. Only you will know the answer.

Q. I'm off crack climbing in the US. How many cams should I pack?

A. Beg, borrow or steal as many as you can. Then add some more. American cracks are legendary and they eat cams – sometimes only one size will be needed for the whole route.

FURTHER INFORMATION



Wild Country

www.wildcountry.co.uk/hintsandtips/understandingcams

Wild Country produced the Cam Book for more help with cams. Now out of print, extracts are available on their website.



Tech Skills articles

www.thebmc.co.uk/techskills

Read more Tech Skills articles on the BMC website.

Continental Drifter

Consider yourself a long-distance walker? How about tackling the USA's Continental Divide Trail – 3,000 miles of wild walking from Canada to Mexico. Andy West did, and survived to tell the tale.



Andy West reaching the end at Antelope Wells, five months after starting. Photo: Andy West.

Yellowstone National Park. Then, skirting the edge of the Tetons, I soon entered the Wind River Range – a massive ridge of granite peaks heading south for nearly 100 miles. My experience in ‘the Winds’ was slightly marred by a knee injury, but after a week of hobbling I soon got back to normal speed, saving me from having to hop the last 1,500 miles!

Whilst resting my knee, I bumped into an American couple and hiked with them for many days. Without meeting them it would have been solo for the rest of the trip. The lack of other hikers along the trail was surprising. Beforehand an American hiker had told me that he’d gone for nearly 2,000 miles without seeing another thru-hiker. I’d found this hard to believe, but it’s a fact – just 12 people finished the southbound hike in 2008. After ‘the Winds’, the trail went through the semi-desert Great Divide Basin – finding water was a primary concern. Fortunately being late summer the temperature was now dropping off and despite 30-mile dry sections, reliable water sources had been installed for the cattle.

Eventually the barren landscape transformed into aspen and pine forest, confirming that I’d crossed into the third state, Colorado. Much of the 800 miles of trail in Colorado was above 10,000 feet, with the highest point being Parry Peak (13,391feet). Despite being hard going, the trail passed some beautiful ranges and on a clear, sunny day I hiked over four 13,000ft mountains. Someone once said that “all lightning storms are born in the Rocky Mountains,” and there’s certainly an element of truth in this. With the trail staying very close to the actual divide, you’re a sitting duck for storms; on numerous occasions I had to drop down rapidly as thunderstorms closed in for their lunchtime rumble. .

I will admit that I was glad to reach the final state – New Mexico – with only another 700 miles of trail to go. In Colorado my daily mileages had dropped well below 20 miles per day but in New Mexico I was soon racing along, clocking in my longest day at 37. Reaching the final 300 miles, I now had one last big challenge: the Gila National Forest and Wilderness area stretched to the south for over 130 miles. This is a wild, untamed area inhabited by cougars, black bear and even wolves. As the days got shorter I had to start hiking before dawn, and carried on into the night despite the cougar warnings. By making noise and staying alert I never did see one of these creatures, but I’m sure they saw me.

I finished my adventure at a remote border control called Antelope Wells on the Mexican border on November 20th. In just under five months I’d walked over 2,700miles. Finding one defining moment is tricky but the feeling of hiking along the divide ridgeline, being able to see for up to 100 miles in every direction, was fantastic – you feel like you are on top of the world.

I’d recommend the trail to anyone. In fact I’d recommend following your dream to anyone, I don’t regret it for a second. ■

Andy is currently on another challenging adventure in North America – find out more at www.andywestactive.com.

*I*d always dreamed about an adventure, but in the end I thought stop dreaming and just do it. It was a committing decision – to leave a steady job, sell my house and car, all to complete the challenge of a lifetime: the Continental Divide Trail.

Starting at the Canadian border, this marathon trail winds its way down the Rocky Mountains for 3,000 miles – passing through Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico – before finishing at the Mexican border. Completing it in one season is a race against the weather: southbound hikers have to reach the high Colorado passes 2,000 miles away before the winter snows hit. You have to walk an average of 20 miles a day, six days a week, for five months.

On June 28th 2008, I started walking in Montana’s scenic Glacier National Park before entering the Bob Marshall Wilderness area to find 120 miles of road-less backcountry. I was lucky to have company on this section, teaming up with an experienced Dutch ‘thru-hiker’. Thru-hiking is the stateside method of long distance hiking; you carry all your supplies and equipment for each section and when the trail crosses a road, hitch off to restock your food (and maybe sneak a shower in a motel).

The Continental Divide is not just home to hikers, it’s a rare wildlife corridor stretching down America. Wild animals gave plenty of excitement along the way: black bears, mountain lions, elk, deer and the infamous grizzly bears. Soon after starting I encountered my first grizzly bear near a small town named Lincoln, and my heart stopped.

After six weeks of hiking I came to the second state, Wyoming, offering 500 miles of diverse trail from semi-desert areas to high granite mountains. As soon as I crossed the state line I was trekking through the largest supervolcano on land: