

# summit:30

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summer 2003

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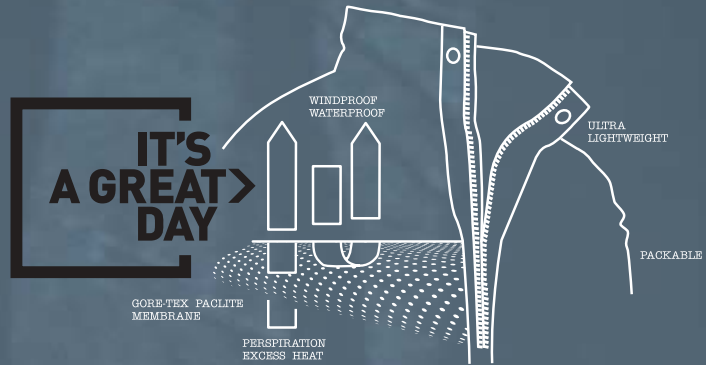
Scotland  
Via Ferrata  
Expeditions  
Alpine 4000  
Nick Bullock  
Andy Kirkpatrick



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**WELCOME TO ISSUE 30**

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

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

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**EDITORIAL**

Contributions for Summit should be sent to the Editor at the above address or alex@thebmc.co.uk. 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.

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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. The BMC publishes a wide range of safety and good practice advice and provides training opportunities for members.

**Welcome to the summer Summit.**

...sun, sun, sun... yes summer well and truly came early this year with the best spell of April weather in living memory - for most of us almost a month of uninterrupted blue sky. Amidst the heat wave came the annual extravaganza otherwise known as the BMC AGM. Here the fireworks went off as 120 club and individual members descended on an unseasonably hot and steamy Buxton to debate the future of the BMC, the bubbling issue of commercial vs definitive guidebooks and most contentiously, the BMC's membership subscriptions for 2004. To cut a long story short - the meeting called for an EGM later in the year to hammer out the subscriptions issue - the BMC is now working closely with club and individual members to agree an acceptable membership package. But anyway, less of that...

...Easter got me thinking of access issues again as I drove north and spent a few days wild camping in a dry and balmy Glen Etive. The Scots have achieved an excellent result with their access legislation (the Land Reform Act) and at Easter the crowds seemed to have come out to celebrate. A day on the Aonach Eagach Ridge in shorts and t-shirt with a light breeze, perfect visibility and a steep descent to the awaiting Clachaig Inn was a perfect reminder that if you get the weather in Scotland - there really is no need to go overseas. Later that afternoon a fire swept down Glen Coe, a rare occurrence so early in the year and no doubt started by a careless match or cigarette end. Derbyshire and Yorkshire locals will be all too aware of the many fires on the moors over the Easter period and we owe some thanks to the National Park Authorities for resisting pressures to introduce precautionary access restrictions - as have been used in the past.

This issue of Summit has a distinct mountaineering flavour with articles on Via Ferrata in the Dolomites, Scottish mountain walking, tips for moving fast in the Alps, the expeditions round up and Ken Wilson's definitive tome on the Alpine 4000 metre peaks. There is even an article on the rarefied art of falling by that exponent of the art Nick Bullock! Lets just hope that the April heat wave proves a good omen for a dry summer.

Enjoy the hills

Dave Turnbull  
 Chief Executive

# contents

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## features

- 14: Harm's Way**  
Andy Kirkpatrick nearly gets himself into trouble again. This time on Ben Nevis.
- 18: Tales from the Top Shelf**  
Nick Bullock on the painful art of falling.
- 24: Pocket Rocket**  
Introduction to a brand new set of Scottish walking guidebooks, and the crazed man behind them.
- 28: French Style**  
Tips to speed up in the Alps this summer.
- 30: Alps 4000**  
Ken Wilson is on a mission to classify 4000m peaks.
- 36: Extreme Ironing**  
Via Ferratta - what you need to know.
- 39: Ian Vickers Profile**  
What's he up to now?
- 40: Yo!**  
The Simon Woodruffe interview.
- 42: Climb 2003**  
A look back at the biggest comp of the year.
- 44: Expeditions '03**  
Who's going where and doing what.
- 50: A+**  
How climbing's improved school grades.

## regulars

- 6: News**  
**10: Access News**  
**12: Stuff**  
**43: Events**  
**54: Letters**  
**62: Last Thoughts**

## special offers

- 24: Pocket Mountains**  
Exclusive offer to win a complete set of the new Pocket Mountains Scottish walking guides.
- 47: Ajungilak / Mammut Competition**  
Don't miss this! Win one of three Ajungilak Kompakt Speed Light sleeping bags worth £165!
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## Disquiet on the Western Front

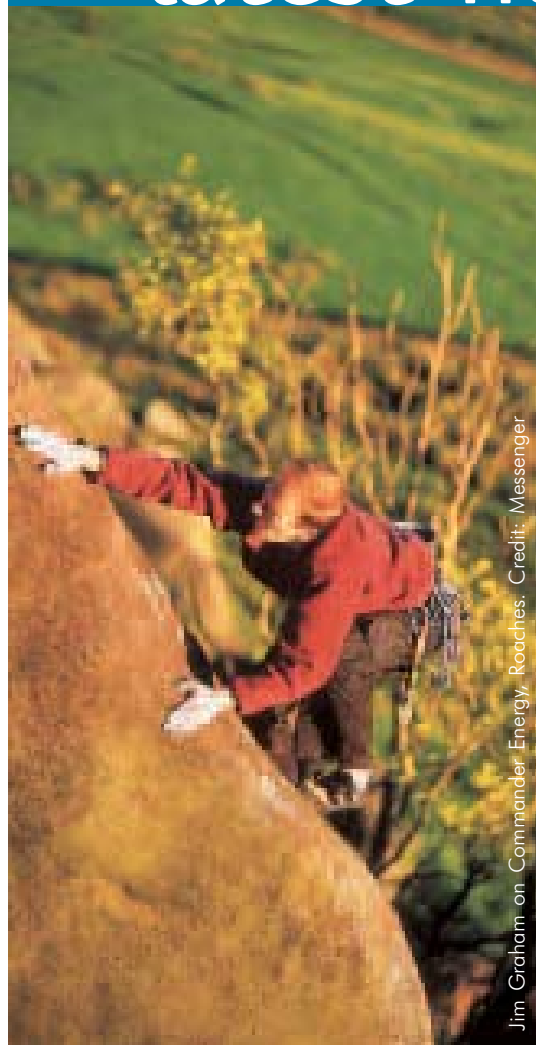
Just when you thought it was all quiet on the guidebook front, another drama has crept up. The imminent publication of the new Rockfax Western Grit guide has ruffled a few feathers, and highlighted some interesting points about the "definitive guidebook record". For the first time, Rockfax have produced a guide which may directly threaten the viability of traditional, definitive guides. Rather than being selective, it is essentially a definitive guide to those crags and parts of crags deemed most commercially viable. And although perhaps perfect for some visitors, this could cause longer term problems, since as they offer climbers so many climbs at the most popular crags, there may be little incentive for people to purchase definitive guides. There is also the very real worry that the volunteers so vital in the production of definitive guides may lose interest once these 'selected' guides are on the market.

Rockfax argue that they are merely selective with a larger selection than normal, and that climbers will still want the definitive guides. However a quick look at the figures shows that in areas such as Kinder over 70% of the total routes feature, rising to 100% at crags such as Hobson Moor. On the one hand this is good news for climbers, with a greater

choice of products on the horizon, but on the other, it has the potential to undermine the future production of definitive guides.

There is of course no single answer here, and everyone has their own opinion, interest, and preference. However these continuing debates highlight the need to come to a conclusion about the "definitive record" of climbing in the UK. Should this record be available to anyone at no cost - in effect, can the work of volunteers be used by any commercial publisher without constraint? And if there was some control over the information, how would this be managed - perhaps by some licensing scheme? And last, but by no means least, is it actually necessary to preserve this record? Would it actually matter if popular selected guides concentrated climbers in certain areas whilst outlying routes and crags fell into quiet obscurity?

Two things are however clear. Firstly that disputes between commercial and definitive guidebook producers are not in the best interests of either party or climbers as a whole, so some sort of long-term agreement must be reached. And secondly that the BMC Guidebooks must take some lessons from Rockfax, and embrace the web and new technologies if they want to stay in the game.



Jim Graham on Commander Energy, Roaches. Credit: Messenger

## Fireworks at BMC AGM

The BMC's 2003 AGM in Buxton was the best attended for many years and according to several old stalwarts was also amongst the liveliest. The day started with a debate on 'The Future of the BMC' followed by the main AGM business then the National Open Forum. Mark Vallance took over from Dave Musgrove as BMC President and Louise Thomas was welcomed as new Vice-President. Gordon Adshead resumed his role as Treasurer but the bulk of the discussion focused on the proposed subscriptions increases - primarily the result of significant increases in civil liability premiums.

More than anything, the AGM demonstrated the significant role of the major clubs in setting the direction of the BMC - despite the fact that individual members

now out-number club members. The Alpine Club supported by several senior clubs led the opposition to the subscriptions increase on the basis that clubs needed more time to discuss the implications of the membership options and also needed clarification of how their subscriptions money was spent. After strenuous debate it was agreed that an EGM would be held later in the year to re-visit the issue after a period of consultation between BMC officials and affiliated clubs. The BMC accepts that the AGM resolutions placed the clubs in a very difficult position and we are firmly committed to working with all clubs and individuals to develop a membership package that suitably reflects the needs of all members.

## EGM Date & Venue



Mark Vallance calling for a tight rope on Super Crack

**The BMC is calling an EGM at 12pm on Sat 25 October to agree membership subscription rates for 2004. All club and individual members are invited to attend the meeting at the BMC Office, 177-179 Burton Rd, Manchester, M20 2BB. The agenda and associated resolutions will be published in Summit 31 in September. See you there!**

## ABC decide to ACT



The Access & Conservation Trust (ACT) is delighted to welcome the Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC) as Gold level supporters of the Trust. The Association represents British climbing centre managers and owners on issues such as safety, quality and national developments, and you can view more information at [www.abcclimbingwalls.co.uk](http://www.abcclimbingwalls.co.uk). The Access & Conservation Trust also thanks the Climbers' Club and the Yorkshire Mountaineering Club. Both these clubs have been long term supporters of the access work of the BMC, and continue to demonstrate this in 2003 with ongoing support for ACT. See the ACT website [www.accesstrust.org.uk](http://www.accesstrust.org.uk) for more details about ACT.

## On for Gold?

There's been lots going on recently in the competition world. The International season kicks off properly very soon with the first World Cups in Imst (Difficulty) and Ekstrinaburg (Bouldering) - good luck to the British Team members who will be attending, namely Adrian Baxter in Difficulty and Gaz Parry and Malc Smith in Bouldering. The first semi-official Junior International took place over the weekend of 26/27th April and had a large British contingent when a minibus full of Junior Team members shot off to Marseille following on from a few days training in Fontainebleau. Results from this will appear at [www.icc-info.org](http://www.icc-info.org). Finally, Jemma Powell has recently been awarded the Chorley & District "Sports Personality of the Year award". Because of this a £300 grant was given to the BMC, which was spent on sending the junior team to Fontainebleau - so well done and thanks Jemma!

Across the pond we also saw some fantastic results from 'Brits' at the famous Phoenix Bouldering Competition, probably the biggest competition of any kind in the world. The Under 13 categories were won by Tyler Landmann and Laura Griffiths. Laura is a Brit living in the USA and Tyler is an American living in the UK but he has applied for a UK passport so we'll claim him as one of our own! Ex-Pat Wills Young was



Jemma Powell - cruising to the Junior Bouldering title at Climb 2003.

also flying the flag, coming second in the men's seniors.

In other news, competition climbing has been invited to the prestigious World Games in Duisburg, Germany in 2005. Seen by many as a stepping-stone to full Olympic status, the World Games features a relatively small number of sports. The first possible opportunity to get into the Olympics would be 2010, when Jemma will be 22 - could she be one of the first to bring a gold home?



## Wall Accidents

As part of the response to the current insurance problems at walls, the BMC is developing an accident reporting system. The system will allow on-line reporting of accidents without creating more work for the walls. Hopefully analysis of the accident reports will be able to highlight areas of concern. The system is currently being set up and will be piloted with the members of the Association of British Climbing Walls (ABC). The scheme and the on-going analysis of the figures is being partly funded by the ABC, so many thanks to them. The ABC is also contributing towards the costs of creating a new registration form that it is hoped will reduce the number of claims being brought against walls - claims that whether successful or not invariably lead to increased insurance premiums and therefore increased admission costs.

## Technical Chair?

After 16 years of very dedicated service, Neville Macmillan is resigning at the end of 2003 as the Chair of the BMC's Technical Committee. As there is no immediately obvious successor to this role the BMC would be interested in hearing from anyone that may be interested in becoming a member of the Technical Committee with a view to becoming Chair. If you are a keen climber with experience of chairing meetings and an engineering or technical background that includes writing technical reports and would be interested in finding out more about the position, please email a brief cv outlining your experience to Ian Hey, [ianhey@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:ianhey@thebmc.co.uk).

## Racial Equality

This March the BMC successfully achieved the Preliminary Level of "Achieving Racial Equality: A Standard for Sport" - a joint initiative of Sport England and the Commission for Racial Equality. The award of the Preliminary Level coupled with the BMC's signing of the Racial Equality Standard for Sport last year emphasises the BMC's commitment to ensuring that racial discrimination does not enter into climbing and mountaineering activities in any way, shape or form.

## On top of the World!

To mark the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the first ascent of Everest, the Helly Hansen National Mountaineering Exhibition is holding a unique exhibition about the world's highest mountain. Bringing together an outstanding collection of Everest equipment, original film footage, personal accounts and awe inspiring photography this is the most complete account ever displayed.

Plus, between the 18<sup>th</sup> May and 14<sup>th</sup> June, Everest mountaineers - with experience that spans fifty years of the mountain's history and including members of the 1953 expedition - will talk about their adventures. All visitors to the exhibition can enter a great competition to win a KE Adventure Travel trip to Everest Base Camp. For details call 01768 868000 or visit [www.rheged.com](http://www.rheged.com)

## Mount Everest Malt

The first British woman to reach the summit of Mount Everest is to donate the proceeds from the sale of her own bottles of Glenmorangie single malt whisky to benefit the Himalayan Trust. Ten years ago Glenmorangie Distillery sponsored Rebecca Stephens on her successful Everest bid, and she was presented with a cask of new whisky spirit. This special cask is now fully mature and Glenmorangie has named it the "Mount Everest Malt". A bottle will be presented to members of the 1953 Everest team, with the remaining bottles being sold to benefit the Himalayan Trust. Anyone interested in reserving a bottle of this very limited edition (400 bottles) of Glenmorangie Mount Everest malt should contact the Glenmorangie Distillery Visitor Centre on 01862 892 477. The minimum price is £50 per bottle (+p&p) but donations above this amount are encouraged. All proceeds will benefit the Himalayan Trust.

## Get Setting

The BMC will be running a Competition Route Setting Course sometime in late June. The course will be held over three days at the yet to be opened National Rock Climbing Centre for Scotland, (Ratho). The course will be very intensive and is intended for experienced route setters only with the ability to set and test climbs/problems suitable for British Championship events. Full details are available from [graeme@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:graeme@thebmc.co.uk).

## Mooning Around

Ben Moon's been busy in Hull! Rock City climbing wall has just opened a new bouldering area; Ben Moon designed, Ben Moon Problems, and Ben Moon Holds. It's called, of course, the Moon Bouldering Wall.

## Alpine Ski Club Grants

This year the Alpine Ski Club (ASC) awarded several grants to ski-mountaineering expeditions, and they are keen to publicise the awards for next year. The awards are open to ski mountaineers and tourers from both in and outside the Alpine Ski Club, or the Ski Club of Great Britain. Application forms are obtainable by sending an s.a.e to: The ASC Awards Sub-Committee, Mrs Jay Turner, 22 Hatton Court, Hatton of Fintray, Aberdeenshire AB21 0YA. Tel 01224 791037. Alternatively email grants@alpineskiclub.org.uk, or see www.alpineskiclub.org.uk.

## Alpbase.com

Jerry Gore has just set up an interesting looking new venture in the Ecrins Massif, Southern French Alps. Alpbase.com is a new concept in activity holidays, set up for those who want all the information and support to go skiing, hiking, climbing or biking. They offer chalet accommodation for up to seven, and can provide all the essential information to help you get into the area very quickly. They also offer guiding all year round. Check www.alpbase.com for more.

## Injury Research

In cooperation with the Sheffield Centre for Sports Medicine, the BMC's High Performance Steering Group (HPSG) has just started a major survey into the incidence of injury in adolescent climbers. This survey will hopefully lead to a better understanding of how young climbers should train and increase awareness of injury prevention.

## HB buy Troll

HB Climbing Equipment is pleased to announce the purchase of Troll Climbing from Bacou Dalloz. The two companies will maintain their identities and operate as separate brands, but by combining resources and technologies will be stronger, benefiting customers and end users. HB Climbing are also pleased to announce that Graham Desroy will now head up the combined sales of HB and Troll. Graham is widely known throughout the outdoor industry as an enthusiastic climber and wearer of appalling Hawaiian shirts.

## Wall Debate

As part of the BMC Annual Gathering there was a workshop and debate on the insurance problems facing walls. Key issues included whether the BMC should develop an accreditation scheme, attempt to train expert witnesses/insurance representatives as to the nature of our sport, develop signing in procedures and how to discourage the current climate of litigation prevalent in society today in the climbing world. An interesting discussion!



The Whillans Hut. Credit: Messenger.

## CHIPS for tea

The BMC has just starting a new initiative; the Climbing Huts Information Project (CHIPS), aimed at increasing the benefits to local people from climbers and walkers visiting North Wales.

Many climbers, mountaineers and hill walkers who visit north Wales stay in club climbing huts, and can become very self-contained. They bring their own food and drink, use their own cars to get around, and so make little economic contribution to the area, despite valuing it highly.

But BMC research shows that many visitors are willing to do more. And CHIPS – supported by funding from Adfywio, the National Trust, and the Access Conservation Trust (ACT) – is hoping to equip each climbing hut in northern Snowdonia with an Information Pack.

Local businesses are being encouraged to provide information, and the pack will also include information about the natural and cultural heritage of the area, plus practical details about local public transport and services.

The research is being undertaken on the BMC's behalf by Rural Resources – a Welshpool based consultancy. Rural Resource's director Steve Evison, says that they are getting a very positive response from local businesses. One local trader said, "it's great to hear someone is doing something", whilst another said, "things like this are a real help, its so much better than people bringing all their stuff with them".

Ken Taylor, who is managing the work for the BMC says "This is an important area of work for the BMC. We recognised the problems faced by many remote upland communities before FMD made matters worse. But FMD highlighted how big a contribution visitors make to places like Llanberis and northern Snowdonia. Even so, we feel that members can make a bigger contribution – economically and in other ways. That's why we set up CHIPS."

The BMC will monitor CHIPS over the next year, to assess what impact it is having, and may extend the idea to other areas of the country if it seems to be successful.

## Management Committee Summary

**For the 11th April 2003.** Reports were given by each of the Area Committee representatives regarding current events and issues in the areas. The Honorary Treasurer summarised and circulated the 2002 Annual Accounts and reported a deficit of £129,220. He advised that ownership of the Mountaineering Exhibition had been transferred to Westmorland who had taken on all the assets and liabilities of the exhibition. Discussion arose over the proposed subscription options for the AGM and the constitutionality of the 2002 AGM minutes.

A report was circulated from the Helmets Working Group concluding that there was no reason to change the current BMC position. 2 new clubs were accepted for membership. Discussion arose over the current Western Grit Rockfax dispute and the format of the proposed 2003 BMC Questionnaire. The next Management Committee meeting is on 25 June 2003 at the BMC Office. The agenda and papers for the meeting will be circulated on 29 May 2003 in time for the next round of Area meetings.

## Area Meetings Calendar

BMC Area Meetings Calendar for 2003								
2003	LAKE DISTRICT	NORTH WEST	LONDON & SE	MIDLANDS	NORTH EAST	PEAK DISTRICT	WALES	YORKSHIRE
Jun	Friday 6 <sup>th</sup> The Golden Rule Ambleside 7.30pm Clare Bond	Monday 16 <sup>th</sup> Black Dog, Belmont 7.30pm G.Alderson tbc	Tuesday 10 <sup>th</sup> Francis House Francis St. London 7pm Clare Bond	Thursday 12 <sup>th</sup> Railway Hotel Hinckley 7.30pm Graham Alderson	Monday 9 <sup>th</sup> Whickhams Thorns Gateshead 7.30pm Ian Hey	Thursday 19 <sup>th</sup> The Don Whillans Memorial Hut The Roaches 8.15pm G Lynch	Wednesday 11 <sup>th</sup> The Welsh Institute for Sport Cardiff Start time – 7pm Bute Suite 2	Monday 23 <sup>rd</sup> Leeds Wall Gelderd 7pm
Sep	Friday 26 <sup>th</sup> The Golden Rule Ambleside 7.30pm	Monday 22 <sup>nd</sup> BMC Office Manchester 7.30pm	Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> Francis House Francis St. London 7pm	Thursday 25 <sup>th</sup> The Rockface, Birmingham 7.30pm	Monday 15 <sup>th</sup> Whickhams Thorns Gateshead 7.30pm	Thursday 18 <sup>th</sup> The Grouse, Froggat 7.15pm	Saturday 10 <sup>th</sup> Venue to be confirmed	Monday 29 <sup>th</sup> Leeds Wall Gelderd 7pm
Oct								
Nov	Friday 21 <sup>st</sup> The Golden Rule Ambleside 7.30pm	Monday 24 <sup>th</sup> BMC Office Manchester 7.30pm	Tuesday 25 <sup>th</sup> Francis House Francis St. London 7pm	Thursday 20 <sup>th</sup> The Rockface Birmingham 7.30pm & AGM	Monday 17 <sup>th</sup> North Briton Pub Aycliffe Village 7.30pm	Thursday 27 <sup>th</sup> The Grouse, Froggat 7.15pm	Saturday 22 <sup>nd</sup> Venue to be confirmed	

Dates and venues may be subject to change. Please check website on a regular basis



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## Fell Fence Foxed

A proposed 8km long fence will now not be erected across one of the Lakelands least visited and wild areas.



Credit: Stuart Andrew

The proposed fence was to run between the Caldbeck and Ulldale commons in the north of the National Park, as agreement could not be made between the two sets of commoners over stocking levels. The Lake District National Park Authority and English Nature were supportive of the fence on grounds of habitat improvement on one of the commons which was to be stocked at a lower level.

The resulting public inquiry, to which the BMC submitted written evidence, took on board many of the BMC's points which were also made by the Friends of the Lake District and the Open Spaces Society. The inquiry decided that the fence would greatly impair the sense of freedom and feeling of

wilderness of the area, would result in a sharp divide - highlighting the habitat differences between the two different grazing regimes, and it was thought that shepherding would provide an equally adequate solution.

This was an important case that could have resulted in a precedent for increased fencing in many of Britain's Upland areas. It sends a clear message that habitat improvements must be made in a fully sustainable and environmental and landscape friendly manner. Interestingly the cost of the public inquiry is now likely to have been unnecessary as the other commoners are now ready to sign up to the same agreement, and lower stocking levels.

### PEAK DISTRICT

#### Ring Ouzels latest

A number of Red Data Listed Birds, including Ring Ouzels, are currently nesting on the North Lees (Stanage) Estate. A range of low-key measures have been introduced to help protect these endangered species. These involve keeping to the main paths from designated parking areas, some temporary directional signs, and keeping dogs on leads at all times. This year the National Park Authority and the BMC have agreed not to suggest any more wide ranging restrictions. We have also agreed that some carefully targeted short-term measures may additionally be necessary.

#### Access day out

On the eve of the BMC AGM, Access Representatives from as far as South Wales, Dorset, and the North East turned up on a rather fine and sunny afternoon to find out more about the Stanage Forum process and the management of the Stanage and the North Lees Estate. Matthew Croney, the land agent from the National Park, and local Access Rep. Henry Folkard, who has been representing the BMC on the Forum, were on hand to discuss some of the management issues and measures to enhance the conservation and recreational value of the site.

### SOUTH

#### Chipping in at Harrisons

Croyden MC has again helped out at Harrison's this year by dragging cut wood to be chipped to provide mulch for foot-path and ground erosion work at Harrison's Rocks. The club spent a day collecting wood which has subsequently been chipped for use to help stabilise the ground erosion at the base of the cliff.

### Blacknor, Portland

The landowners at Blacknor Fort are currently unhappy about climbing on their land. If you climb in the Blacknor Fort area, be aware that you may be asked to leave.

### WALES

#### Gogarth wave wash off

Following a recent incident where a climber was washed off Gogarth while traversing, it's worth noting that large waves do occasionally occur even in calm conditions, whether due to passing boats or natural causes. Be aware and consider roping up even when on easy ground.

### YORKSHIRE

#### Woodhouse Scar clean-up

The Yorkshire area team had a clean-up day and evening on April 2<sup>nd</sup> at Woodhouse Scar. This crag in its urban setting suffers from rubbish and other problems and it's hoped that a climbers and residents group can be set-up through the council to help look after this crag. If you are interested in being involved email [clare@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:clare@thebmc.co.uk)

### ACT

#### Portland and Wales

The Access and Conservation Trust (ACT) has agreed to sponsor new projects in Portland and Wales. The Portland Project is for interpretation panels informing climbers of the main areas of conservation concern and best practice. The Welsh Project is a rural development project co-funded by the Welsh Tourist Board, the Countryside Council for Wales and the National Trust. The project aims to put information packs in climbing huts and bunkhouses in North Wales, encouraging climbers, hill walkers and moun-

taineers to spend more money locally and to use local services and facilities.

### SCOTLAND

#### Scottish Outdoor Access Code

The Scottish Outdoor Access Code will underpin the access section of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act. It is now available for consultation and can be downloaded from [www.snh.org.uk](http://www.snh.org.uk). Comments can be emailed to [soac-consultation@snh.gov.uk](mailto:soac-consultation@snh.gov.uk)

### IRELAND

#### Ulster Way reviewed

Northern Ireland's Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Angela Smith, has encouraged people to go out and enjoy Ireland's natural resources. A review of the Ulster Way has resulted in the Environment and Heritage Section (EHS) of the Department of the Environment being given the remit to coordinate the Ulster Way after years of neglect. The minister said: "This review has demonstrated that there is significant popular demand for the continuation of the Ulster Way, I have therefore decided that EHS should fulfil the co-ordinating role that has been missing for the last few years". This will require sufficient support and impetus from the District Councils to improve and maintain the individual stretches of the route. More information can be found on [www.countrysiderecreation.com](http://www.countrysiderecreation.com).

### FIND OUT MORE

For the latest access info on more than 600 crags in England and Wales - check out the Regional Access Database (RAD) on [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

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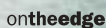
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Photograph: © Chris Benington Picture Library

[www.mountain-exhibition.co.uk](http://www.mountain-exhibition.co.uk) [www.rheged.com](http://www.rheged.com) Call: 01768 868000

The Helly Hansen National Mountaineering Exhibition, RHEGED, Redhills, Near Penrith, Cumbria (follow brown signs for RHEGED from junction 40, M6)

## James Owen. Mountain rescue



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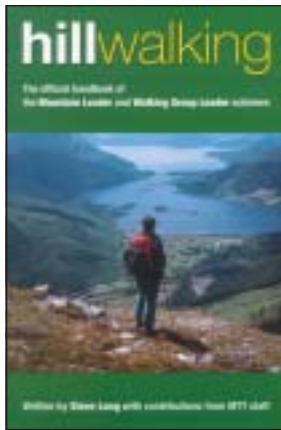
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This new book published by the Mountain Leader Training UK (formerly known as the UKMTB) is the first in a series of handbooks that will support the mountain training schemes. This is the first time the boards have produced an "official handbook" to complement a scheme's syllabus, and will be an essential buy for all candidates as well as current holders of the ML and WGL awards. However it's not just good news for them, since it also looks set to become one of the best general publications for anyone with an interest in hill or mountain walking. Hillwalking is available from all good bookshops or from the BMC.

## 365

### Bouldering on Dartmoor

365, (48mins), £16.99

Perhaps one of the least explored bouldering areas in the UK is exposed in a new video, combining close up action with great scenery, "traditional" weather and even cream teas. More information and shots from the film can be found at Luc Percival's website - [www.365bouldering.com](http://www.365bouldering.com) - so take a look, and pass the jam.

## Between the rain

Dringo, (61mins), £18.99

This appropriately titled film by Mark Reeves reveals some of the cutting edge climbing from North Wales activists over the last couple of years, squeezed into those "weather windows" that we all know and love. Bouldering, trad, sport, big walls, and silliness, it's all here in plenty, so if you want a look at the current scene in Wales, then get hold of a copy - available at [www.planetfear.com](http://www.planetfear.com) or from GreenShires.



## Staffordshire Grit

BMC, £9.99

OK. It's not the new guidebook yet, but if you keep getting lost at the Roaches, then you'll be pleased to know that the Staffordshire guide has just been re-printed. This is



the classic guide for the area and has been unavailable for some time. But don't worry, the Staffordshire team are still working on the completely new and improved guide, which will be due out later in the year. Buy this one to fill the gap, or, hell, just buy both, since your mate is bound to run off with one anyway. Available from all good climbing shops or direct from the BMC.

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## Olympus µ-400

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The Olympus Mju series of cameras have long been a favourite of climbers, being light, easy to operate, and producing great results. In fact a quick quiz in the office revealed that staff had owned a total of 20, of which 16 are sadly still missing in action at the base of sea cliffs. So that's why it's great to see the new digital Mju 400. It looks like the old favourite, has a strong metal splash proof housing, chunky buttons, and can be easily operated one-handed. The zoom lens is 35-105mm (35mm equivalent), and a max image size of 2048x1536 pixels (4.07M) means prints up to A3 are game on. All in all, it's desirable.

The Mju is available from the Digital Camera Company ( [www.digital-cameras.com](http://www.digital-cameras.com) tel: 08707778550), one of the largest online retailers of digital cameras. They also offer a hassle free printing online service called Photodeal, and are offering an introductory offer of five free prints.



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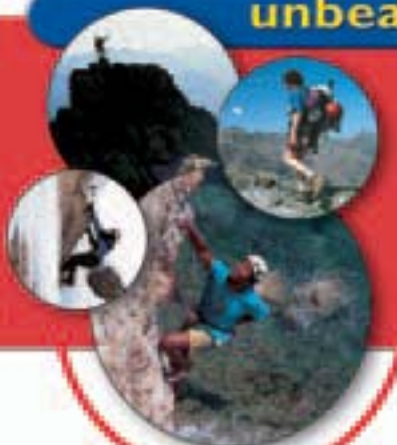
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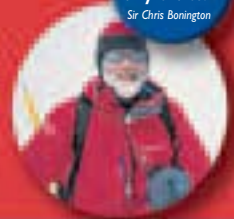
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# HARM 'S WAY

**"Don't you just hate it when you suddenly get the crazy idea to solo something - when you know you just have to follow the impulse?"**



I pulled my head back into the tent from the gathering dusk outside. Rich Heap and Ben Pritchard looked up from tea and biscuits, cosy in their bags after our walk back up the Ben that afternoon to our small green tent pitched beside the CIC hut.

"No," they both replied and returned to their dunking.

"You know," I went on, *"the one where you suddenly think 'I fancy soloing that' and the next thing you know you can't help yourself..."*

"No," they repeated, not even raising their heads.

I looked back out of the tent and watched the tired and wet climbers trailing past on their way back down. And I thought about the war that had started days before. I thought about all those defeated - or soon to be defeated - people who would give anything to live, while thousands of miles away I sat in total safety and contemplated the exact opposite.

I turned my head and looked up at Zero Gully, one of the few routes left on the rapidly stripping mountain, and wondered how bad conditions were up there. It was warm even in the wind and the river was running strong. It would be a stupid thing to do. We'd been filming Point Five and Smith's over the last two days and even with dawn conditions the routes had been like climbing out of a defrosting freezer.

"I've just had the mad idea of soloing Zero," I said, wanting to explain what I'd been babbling on about. There was a pause. "Talk me out of it will you?" I went on.

They looked up again and said nothing, they were filmmakers after all and this is their bread and butter. Crazy stunts make great footage. I picked up the guidebook and tried to take my mind off the idea; the thought of being alone in the dark on a classic route, maybe being on the summit

in time to see the sun setting, to climb with myself again. No. It was a stupid idea.

"I'm off," I said, stuffing on my boots and hastily grabbing my axes, head-torch and crampons.

"Quick Ben!" said Rich, suddenly animated. For a second I thought he was going to tell Ben to wrestle me to the ground. "Grab the camera and film him!"

Once I was ready I sped off before any excuses entered my head, shouting back that I was sorry if I died and ruined their film. It only occurred to me later that those doom-laden words would of course have made a fine ending.

It was still light at the bottom of Zero Gully. I was roasting, and the snow was wet and a worrying amount of debris was clattering down. Suicidal soloing conditions. I knew it was stupid to even try, but didn't want to fail just because I'd given in to weakness rather than rational self-doubt. I moved up. Thirty feet gained and not one placement that would hold my axes. The slush bulged out from the passing of many climbers and the ice on the walls, which would have offered the possibility of bypassing the crud, was melting and detached.

"Don't do it," said the dominant voice within my head, backing up the warning by flashing up an image of my daughter. I listened and climbed carefully back down. Not wanting to go back to the tent yet, I traversed round to Hadrian's Wall. By now it was fully dark and the line looked forebodingly steeper than I remembered.

"I'll just climb up and see what the first few feet of ice are like," I murmured to my inner council. Tthink, tthink, went my tools. The ice was soft but secure enough to climb. "Just go up a little way," I promised myself, "I can always climb back down."

Up I went, splashing up the steep slabs, moving left to skirt an exposed angled rock band, the ice was thin and my picks rebounded several times, the ice vibrating when I hit the right spot. The thought of the whole lot coming away crossed my mind for a second, but was quickly bundled away for later analysis.

The only way over the rock step was a short vertical trunk of gargoyled ice, which looked too fragile for comfort, but with no other choice I moved up carefully but quickly, eager to get over this and onto slabby ground above. Placing my feet as best I could, I inched them up, not keen to pull too hard on my tools, very aware that this was not good solo territory, as ice de-

bris rattled down on my helmet, filling my open jacket. The sudden slowing of pace steamed up my glasses, which, with my feet out of view of my head-torch, only made this delicate bit of climbing even more awkward. All the voices within my head went silent apart from one, that calm inner voice, choreographing me through the moves. It was apparent some kind of inversion was taking place on the mountain, as the ice was getting poorer by the metre, which only helped to draw my attention to the black void beneath me, the steep gully below, and the rocks beyond.

Blindly stabbing my feet I planted both axes in decomposing snow ice and started to pull, now close to escaping the trap, wishing as I did so that I'd brought a rope and some gear for a self belay. Without warning the ice buckled beneath me, and to my horror I felt my feet go with it, falling straight-armed onto my tools. I closed my eyes and felt the force enter through my hands, travel up the shafts and into the picks and out into the ice beneath them. I felt the ice give as the picks began to slice through.

*I could feel myself falling backwards, not touching anything for a hundred metres or so, just spinning, almost believing I could make it, how I could take the hit and survive. I felt a million and one emotions run through my head - not one of them good, and when they had passed I knew I was dead...*

The picks sliced through the ice for four inches, slowed, and lurched to a stop and held fast. My brain turned over and rebooted, checked I was still alive then slowed my beating heart to rolling thunder. Dead calm I pulled up and placed my feet higher, stepped up and replanted an axe on easier ground above and pulled onto the slab.

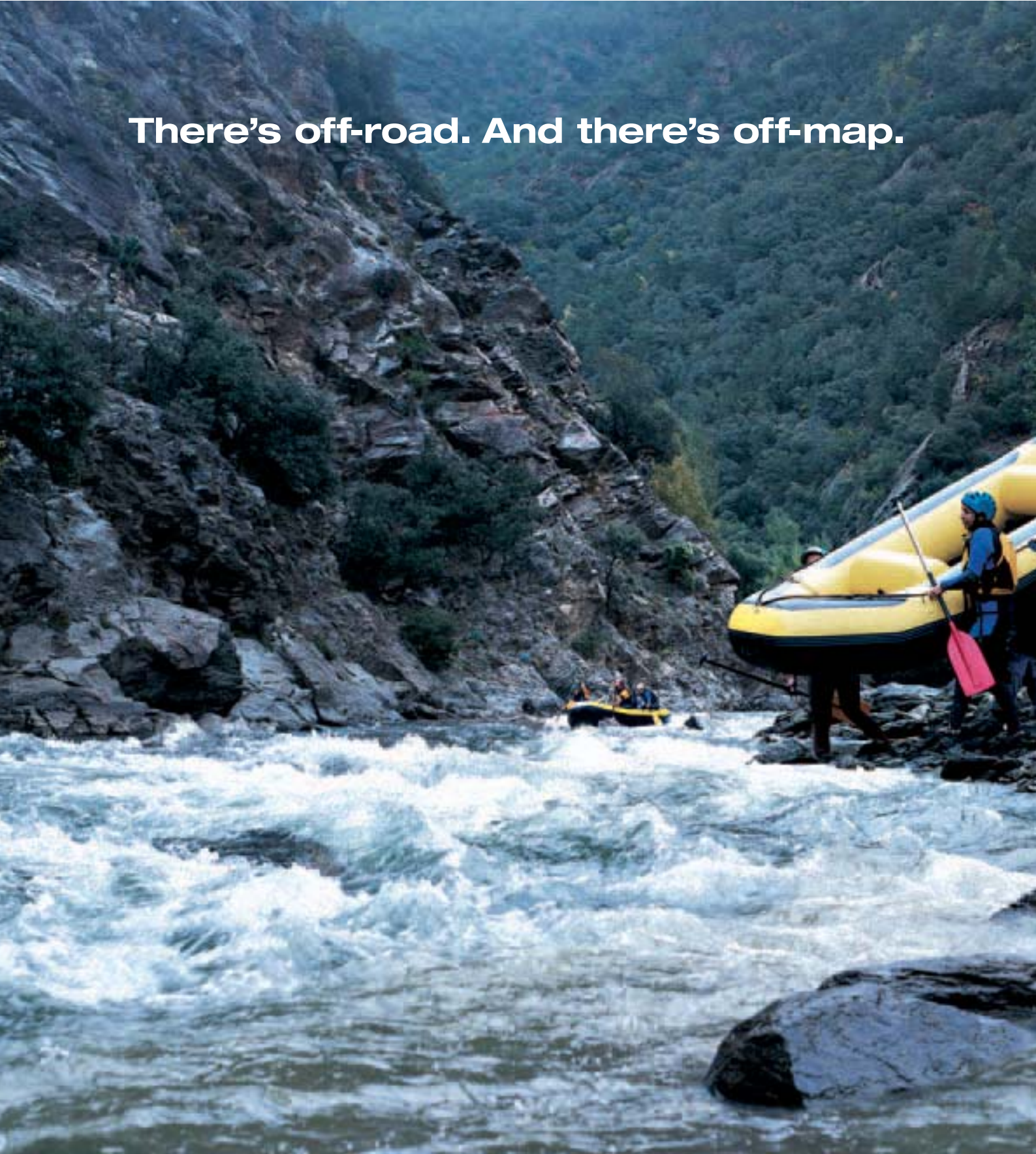
I sat crouched there on that sheet of ice for a long time, my head-torch like a single star in the black night of the Ben. I thought about a lot of things, the thoughts coming like speeding cars out of the night. Life. Selfish death. Luck and stupidity. I thought for the first time about my younger brother, fighting in that war, about his wife and his two children and his life. I thought about risk and empty excuses that mean nothing when you're too dead to speak them.

Finally I calmed down and thought about what lay above and what lay beyond, and promising myself that I would be more careful, and to any gods that were listening this was it, I planted my axes once again and moved onwards. ||



"I thought  
about risk  
and empty  
excuses that  
mean nothing  
when you're  
too dead to  
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# TALES from the top shelf



Nick Bullock is one of the UK's leading mountaineers and no stranger to wild situations. But sometimes he even scares himself. Welcome to the the deep, dark recesses of his onsight obsession.

**P**umped as a skunk, I press on. No understanding of grades, protection, technique, rock types, routes or first ascentionists to avoid. Fuelled with daring accounts from Bonington, Boysen, Brown and Whillans, I push it out in an attempt to sprint to the top. All, who have gone before, will me on. I fight, and stay longer than many would.

Feeling indestructible, I had left the Canadian secured to several pieces of gear, perched on the airy, large ledge of the crevasse stance. Twenty metres above the ground, the fingers of afternoon sun didn't reach far enough to warm this dark corner of the Roaches Lower Tier. He'd struggled on the first pitch for some reason, I think the unprotected roundness may have played a part. Wedged beneath a huge chock-stone, bulging and overhung I knew the fun was about to begin. A fist-sized crack split the roof, it was clear the technique needed to surmount this monstrosity was the much-read-about jam. Bring it on! I wanted desperately to emulate the exploits and experiences of the 50's grit gurus. Matinee. HVS 5b. First ascentionists; Joe Brown and Don Whillans. A jamming test piece, enough to strike terror into the heart of many a seasoned climber. Not me though. Comfortably ignorant, I didn't understand the subtleties involved.

The guidebook writers' dark sense of humour also passed over my head. Having just climbed Elogy, an E2, this climb will be a walk in the park. Redundant shiny new gear hung from my harness. No idea how to use it, no need to use it - *the climb is only HVS!* Pushing a hand into the crack, bunching my fingers I make a fist. Twist the hand until it hurts. Leaning out, and back, from the painful jam, I stretch to peer above, the bulging chock inches from my nose. Reaching above, I loose an arm into the flared off-width. Camming elbow and wrist making an arm-bar - it holds, just. Pushing knees, thighs, feet, ankles, anything into the damp depths of the fissure below and out of sight, I attempt to lighten the load on the upper body. I manage to free the lower hand. All of my weight comes onto the upper arm. Slowly, the arm jam holding me in position starts to creep out. Desperation sets in, I try to find a hold above by ramming the left arm into the even wider crack. Where have all the holds gone? Turning the palm of the left hand one way and bunching knuckles does nothing to help my situation. I try it with the hand in the opposite direction and still it does nothing. I don't do this. I can't do this. *I don't know how to do this!*

A mad last-ditch effort, twisting the right arm even tighter into the crack. Blood oozes and runs. Squirming, thrutching, trying to keep my knees spragged. Like a caterpillar, knees to chest, oh god, the bloody arm is slipping. Legs shoot out from beneath. My inadequate arm bar and hand jam fail. I'm spat out; arms fly to the side. The massive chock stone I had only just surmounted disappears into the distance. The Canadian dives for cover taking in as much rope as he can. Missing his head by inches as I hurtle past, my feet hit the ledge on which he is now sprawled. Flipped upside down, my full bodyweight comes onto the rope, a parabolic pendulum. Smash, a resounding thud into the rock below the belay.

My back takes most of the impact, but my un-helmeted head quickly follows and is whip-lashed into the unforgiving rock. Unconscious for a few seconds, stars and bright light explode in my head. I come round and am unceremoniously lowered into the arms of several off duty policemen. They had witnessed the whole debacle, and suitably impressed by the length of fall, especially as there are so many gear placements, insisted on driving us to the A&E. Seven head x-rays later, and a few stitches, I'm discharged with the instruction not to climb for a week. A good weather forecast and a mad for it attitude put pay to that though, and the next day we weave our way to Wales, seeking further adventure.

This was the first large roped fall I had taken, and it was a surprise to find that climbing with a partner was probably more dangerous than without! Having a rope played curious tricks on my mind. I had started to climb by on-sight soloing, so when the chance to climb with a partner arose, I felt very safe, even if the rope ran straight to the belayer without any gear in-between. I had taken the odd, small tumble while soloing, and had several lucky escapes. A stubborn attitude mixed with a background of gymnastics and weight training found me repeatedly wanting, devoid of the climbing skills needed to continue the climb and escape the wild situation to which I had exposed myself. Learning the art of down climbing or jumping was a lesson learnt quick.

Coming from a non-climbing background the technical aspects of how to go about protecting one's self by top roping or shunting routes didn't enter into the early Bullock climbing career. Living in Leicestershire, without a climbing wall or a strong social scene, made the normal avenues of learning unavailable. I really did start to climb with a fresh innocent attitude. I had a guidebook, a pair of sticky shoes, a chalk bag. Combine that with determination and a large library, and the climbing world didn't know what was about to be unleashed! A climbing day would generally involve running to the crag, a quick read of the route description, and climb. If I was lucky I got to the top. On many an occasion I didn't, forced into a horrific down-climbing epic, reaching the ground a quivering wreck, but the buzz was terrific. These lovely, innocent, and ethically pure years were exciting, but not without further misfortune.

Camping at Tremadog the following summer I eagerly waited for my partner to arrive. I bounced around the campsite, behind Eric Jones's cafe, filled with joy and enthusiasm. The previous day I had led my first E3. Comes the Dervish at Vivian Quarry, in Llanberis. Flushed on success, I needed to push harder now, strike while the iron is hot. My partner for the day, experienced, middle-aged and very safe suggests starting on a HVS, Silly Old Sod. A HVS! Way beneath a man of my calibre, after all, haven't I just led E3? In an attempt keep the peace, I reluctantly agree. Slipping and sliding in the mud on the steep approach we arrive at our climb. The Fang, HVS 5a. Quickly, wasting as little time as possible on this climb without an E in its grade, I volunteer for the first pitch. No sooner had the Silly Old Sod tied on, I'm away. The description for the first pitch has a crack mentioned, so when a crack appears directly in front of my face, I follow it. I place a large wire into said crack. It rattles and moves around, but, no problem; I'll soon be high enough to make it redundant! Higher still, I place another two wires, but not used to standing around, messing with gear, my arms burn. Climbing beneath an overhang I press on, pulling myself above, sure in the knowledge a jug waits.

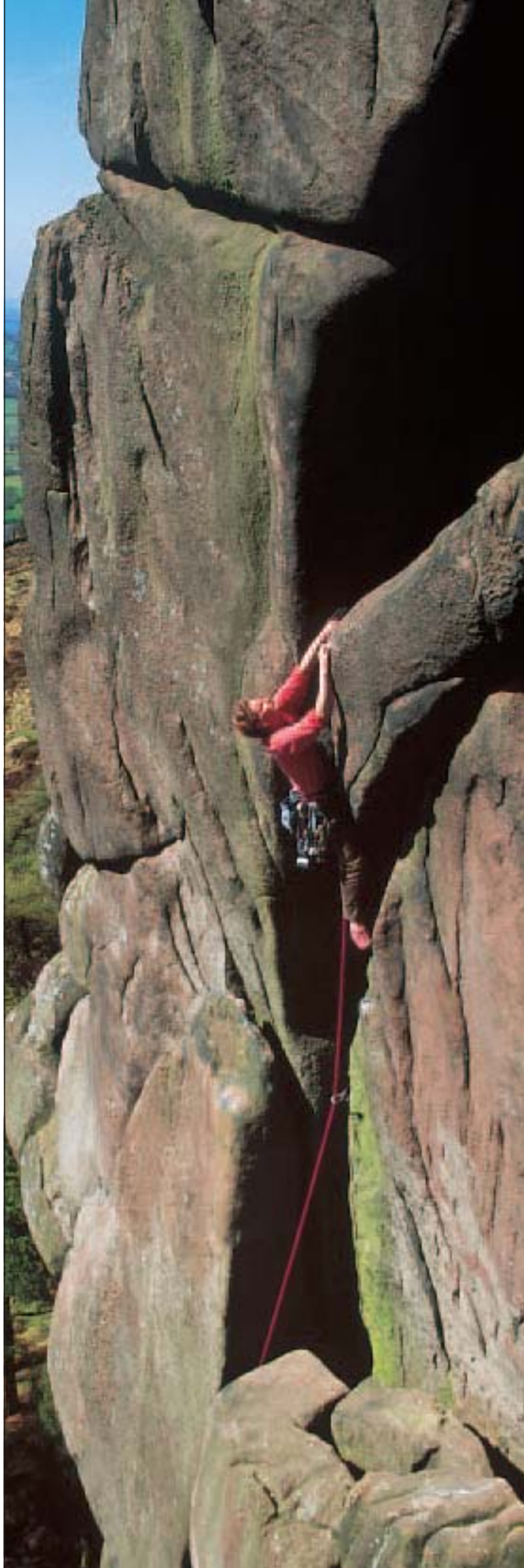
Unfortunately, the jug doesn't materialise. And to make matters worse, the holds are even smaller. Hanging around trying to make sense of the moves to come, I can't believe I'm finding this so hard, but defeat isn't an option. The lesson of giving in gracefully is one I hadn't learnt (and still haven't!). Adopting my now well-practised down-climbing technique, I use the sharp sides of the wet crack below the overhang to push the soles of my feet. This relieves some weight from my arms. Grunting and panting, I lower back to the salvation below the overhang. Grasping tight, fingers turn pale, squeezing the life from the bigger holds, wedged beneath the step in a body-jam, I frantically shake the lactic acid from my burning forearms. The Silly Old Sod suggests giving in, does he not know I don't do that? "No, I'll have another look." This is HVS, I'm an E3 leader. Silly Old Sod. Setting off again, the pressure from below to back off causes me to speed up.

Knowing I can't back off a HVS, the shame of it, I pull once more over the roof and find nothing new. Crimping hard onto tiny holds, I frantically look around, eyes dart, left to right, up, down. Sweat on my forehead runs down the ridge of my nose then free falls, unnoticed, fifty feet onto the gnarled tree roots. The damp mildew of the forest floor invades my senses. I have to lower again, but the fruitless search for a haven of good holds has left my forearms drained of energy. Feet skitter around, trying to latch onto the sides of the crack. The water seeping from the crack runs over the footholds, friction is at a minimum; it will have to do. I lower myself taking all of my weight with my feet, they hold for a second then shoot off, fingers, numb from gripping too hard, snap open. I shoot down the face. My forehead clatters into the sharp edge of the overhang knocking me out immediately. Limp, unaware, my body continues its downward dance, all of the wires unzip, except the first one. Hitting the root covered, earthy forest floor, a resounding hollow thud is heard around the crag. I slide head first down the steep, muddy, rock strewn gully stopping thirty feet below.

### "Slithering down to my prone body, the Silly Old Sod fishes my tongue back from the depths of my throat."

Slithering down to my prone body, the Silly Old Sod fishes my tongue back from the depths of my throat. Bleeding all over where the ropes have skinned me, other climbers have rushed over to help. They carry me down to the road where I'm bundled into a car and whisked to Bangor A&E. Three days later I come out of my comfortably numb existence, the drip is removed, and I try to make sense of what happened. The climb I'd mistakenly thought was the Fang was in fact a climb called Extraction. A gnarly E2 5c with a reputation for spitting people off and unzipping gear. That was OK then. Battered pride restored. The reason for the lack of holds above the overhang now becomes clear, and combined with a blasé attitude I didn't stand a chance. Maybe a less gung-ho attitude in the future will be adopted. Maybe. Maybe.

(RIGHT) Matinee, a classic HVS 5b struggle at the Roaches. Richard Crane is about to enter the jamming crux. Credit: Niall Grimes.



# TALES from the top shelf...

Three years pass, the learning curve is steep, a few big, scary falls along the way. But still in one piece, the fire inside burns as strong as ever. E5's are now de-rigueur, even a few E6's. On-sighting is where it's at. North Wales has become the favourite hunting ground for pushing the grades. Dinas Cromlech in the Llanberis Pass most suited for climbers with steel fingers, forearm stamina and the ability to push it out above minimal protection. Romping up the steep, purple, heather covered hill, I follow the giant steps of Tim Neal, the sun shines, the crag is dry, and an exciting day beckons. Both of us have ticked nearly all of the routes on the fantastic open-book walls of the crag, and the previous evening of guide-book study saw us delving deep, reading the small print in a hunt for the more exotic. We had come up trumps - Ivory Madonna, E5 6b, a rising right to left girdle of the Cromlech walls starting at Cemetery Gates, first climbed by Ron Fawcett in 1980. If the name of the first ascentionist excited me, the route description took me into ecstasy, *"an adrenaline pumping 20-foot sequence of 'brick-edge' climbing enables non-flyers to gain the sanctuary of Cenotaph Corner"*. Red rag to a Bullock. Quickly scampering up the polished rock step, we made base camp below Right Wall. Big Tim asked if I wanted the first pitch, the crux pitch, the bold, potential monster lob pitch. Hell. Do pigs like truffles?

## "Big Tim asked if I wanted the first pitch, the crux pitch, the bold, potential monster lob pitch. Hell. Do pigs like truffles?"

Some strange masochistic and warped trait in my psyche was taking over. My climbing had been heading in this direction for some time. People climb for a variety of reasons. Exercise, the gymnastic movement, the social side, to name but a few. I climb for all of these, but especially the head games, the ability to cross the barrier inside my head, push it out above suspect gear, climb technical, difficult moves at my limit. I have been accused of chasing big numbers, of not enjoying the environment. Wrongly so. But how are others expected to understand? The very type of climbing the sane shy from is what attracts me. I do not question why others go out and climb well within their ability, although I don't understand it. But what I do know is that there are never queues for my kind of route.

I solo the start of Cemetery Gates. Weave through the overhang, place protection, then relax. Let the lonely, leftward shuffle begin. Easy climbing, if climbing can be described as easy when you're facing the chance of a terminal cratering, follows. There is even gear. As I climb through the line of Precious, another Fawcett route of the same grade, I remind myself I climbed this route only the previous year. A head strengthening tactic. Into Right wall, my second E5, *so many since*. More subliminal head strengthening. Slowing down now as the mighty Lord of the Flies approaches, my first E6, climbed last year, no peg, a crucial nut placement gone, crater potential from the crux guaranteed, led with ease. That's what I tell myself anyway. But there was no sleep that long night before. I know this rock intimately, now on small but positive finger jugs, and looking right, the ropes run away without interruption. Like a washing line on a windy day. The small ledge just climbed is good for heel hooking, and I rest my arms whilst contemplating the climbing to come. The small pockets to the left belong to Lord, and I know the gear is terrible. A large crozzled pocket smothered in chalk teases with the chance of protection -

it's useless, but I have to try. The chance to psyche up while placing these meagre RP's will help. Fiddling. Finally the excuse to delay the inevitable is completed.

A man on a mission. No fear. No worries. No brain. No going back. Two moves into the sequence the sky-hook pocket, which protects the crux of Lord, is above. I unclip a hook and place it in the pocket lip. And in an attempt to stop the ropes flicking it out, weight it down with large wires. A shake of the arms, and the head, a dip in the chalk bag, a try to fathom the sequence required. Another dip into the chalk bag. Commit for Gods sake, turn the head off and commit. The holds are tiny but positive, a match on a match. Swing the left foot high, aiming for a foothold the thickness of a ten pence piece. Lock off with the right arm. A side-pull for the left hand is an arm length and an inch away; pull with the foot for the extra reach. Got it, rock-over placing all weight on the left foot. Oh no, this can't be happening. The footholds have run out, a foot swap is the only way, but I'm holding a razor blade. Just do it, I skip feet, it works. Bunched up with nothing for my left foot and paper edge holds for my outsized fingers, I snatch a glance ahead.

Cenotaph Corner is near, a move away, one more foothold, one more handhold. Deathly quiet falls onto the crag, or is it in my head? A climber on Cenotaph Corner is just above. I can whisper sweet nothings in his ear. Then he's gone; he fades into the distance, I wave farewell. Leaning forward reaching for the corner my feet shoot off, I plummet. Flying down to the right the rock is a blur. Big Tim's ledge grows large, it fills my vision. Spinning, an Exocet, my course set. I flashback to the gang of grubby kids growing up in a North Staffordshire market town. The mills and mines long closed. Perched in the tree, which leans over the dirty brook, they dare each other to jump from higher than before. The rope hangs straight down from the branch it's tied to, curves back up in a great loop to the kid holding it's end. Count to three and launch, acceleration, gravity pulls. The loop in the rope allows free fall, freedom, escape. But distance and time destroy the fantasy. Rules apply, knots creak and tighten, the tree complains, gradually the kid comes to a stop, now who dares to jump from higher?

Big Tim throws himself backward in an attempt to shorten the amount of rope paid out. It works, just. I whiz past, missing the ledge by inches. Greetings to the big guy as I fly past, leaving his company as quick as I arrive. Strange how some things from school re-emerge when you least expect. Every action shall have an equal and opposite re-action. My journey of discovery continues with a vengeance. The party climbing Cemetery Gates are looking distinctly un-happy as the Bullock bomb heads in their direction, the leader holds on hard and prepares for impact. I gracefully swing to greet him, introduce myself then wave goodbye. This is fun, whooping and laughing I sail across the right wall for a second time. More, again, More! The crag is in uproar; it's a blast. I look up and notice the rope holding me for this roller coaster ride is passing through a single point of suspension, which happens to be the sky-hook. Hypnotised I watch the hook swivel in the pocket following my progression. Whispering, scared my voice will shake it loose, I ask the big man to lower me, carefully.

Experience gained from falling, climbing, more climbing, and more falling has given me an in-depth understanding of when to push and when to hold back. Unfortunately, my head often overrides the catalogue of epics stored in the dark recesses of my mind. Skin of the teeth escapes or last-ditch dynos before plummeting to a horrible death are conveniently forgotten. Tomorrow is another day. All that matters is surviving today, to come out mentally stronger, to push harder tomorrow. And it works. Sometimes.

This forgetfulness does have a down side. Some very scary times have occurred by casually forgetting factors such as an early season inability to place gear or just plain not knowing when to stop. Combine either of these with a driven personality, and well, you've got a recipe for trouble. It was on such an occasion that I found myself at Stoney Middleton one early season with Bruce French. Now Mr French is often a steadying influence in the mountains, especially when my puppy dog enthusiasm throws unforeseen hardship in his direction. But take him rock climbing in Britain and things can change. Good weather, the short walk in, a cell phone signal, a single pitch climb - all remove his normal stress factors.

(LEFT) Nick Bullock on Ivory Madonna, E5 6b - where *"an adrenaline pumping 20-foot sequence of 'brick-edge' climbing enables non-flyers to gain the sanctuary of Cenotaph Corner"*. Credit: Tim Neal.





Then, he turns from a cautious Dr Jekyll, into Mr Hyde, the Evil Belaying Bastard.

The warm up for the day had been Wee Doris, not the easiest E4 by any stretch of the imagination. A climb French pointed to, your lead he'd laughed. I'd slithered my way up this very polished, technical, Tom Proctor test piece, reaching the top pumped stupid. The second climb of the day was also a Proctor classic, Bubbles Wall, and the third, a swift second of Scoop Wall. It was now a dangerous time, bursting with confidence from three very good routes. Now should have been the time to call it a day. The sun might still be shining, but the climbing must have sapped my arms...*mustn't it?* Be a shame not to add one more route though, *wouldn't it?* The Evil One sat contented, his climb in the bag, the pub would be open for a long time yet.

The decision was left to me. Back to Bubbles Wall then, I'd spotted a great line there earlier - Black Kabul, an E5 6a first climbed by Jerry Moffat. Mr French, now transformed into the Evil Belaying Bastard, devoid only of cape and stove top hat, encouraged with abandon. I should have read the warning signs, but of course, I didn't. And again I fell, hook, line and sinker. But in a year when my first route was Linden at Curbar, this climb didn't really cause concern. It had spaced but good gear, a high crux and a run out. No worries. A great big pocket offered protection before heading off into the sea of nothing, and there weren't any ledges to hit on the way down, a steal.

It started by climbing a crack line to the right, just above a large hole at the foot of the crag, the entrance to one of Stoney's underground tunnel systems. I minced around it's wide mouth, avoiding mud and nettle patches. A cold stale breeze emanated from the bowels of the crag. Just stepping onto the climb and making one move to the right immediately placed me fifteen feet above the ground. The Evil One stood to the side belaying, he was at the same level and fixed me with an evil stare, "get on with it Bullock, the pubs waiting!" The crack was vile. Polished and dusty, just the sort of thing to fall off and wreck months of confidence building. I placed a bomber wire and pressed on. At the top of the crack now, but the moves to reach the pocket looked steady. There's even a small break to shake out on while studying the crux, no problem, just push on. That was the Bullock of old philosophy. The more experienced Bullock though, occasionally stopped to draw on some of those hard won lessons, *sometimes*. This was one such occasion, and before setting off a sinker number seven was placed high in the crack.

The Evil One's dream of pub relaxation was disturbed by the appearance of his girlfriend and daughter. The pair, both climbers, sat down in preparation for a climbing display par excellence. And leaving the crack, the left traverse was great. Lock off, heel hook, pull. Feed the left hand beneath the right, stretch out into a balanced position and place gear before rocking over to the pocket. Superb, forget the danger, the trivialities. In the zone.

Evil One's girlfriend quietly explained to the daughter the reasoning behind some of my actions. Why I had placed gear high in the crack, the reason I now placed a piece of gear on the second rope to protect the hard move. It felt nice to show my honed skills to the younger generation, to be a role model, something to aim for and aspire to. But the warm feeling I now felt in my stomach was tempered slightly by the nagging heat generated in complaining forearms. Pushing the thought of dwindling arm strength to the back of my mind, I continued, it would never do to show the child failure.

It was a long, powerful reach for the pocket. Easy if attacked with gusto but impossible to reverse. One last shake of the arms and I was there. The large, heavy cam now off my harness and buried in its depths. A perfect fit, jaws over-cammed to get it past the entrance, but once inside they opened out to press tight against the roof and floor. Confident it was solid I studied the crux section. The climbing looked fiery with a really long move half way through to reach an obvious hold. I couldn't see if the hold was good or bad. Leaving the pocket was a repeat of the move to reach it. As before, it would be impossible to reverse. The ground covered was difficult to read with no gear. Too late to back out now though. And backing out wasn't an option. Some people can accept failure easily, not me. I had gear at my feet, a smooth fallout zone, and months of climbing under my belt. Run away to fight another day? Bullshit! Go down fighting, that was my motto. Fired up on adrena-

line and the fear of failure, I asked for an evil eye to be kept on my progression, and set off with anticipation of the battle to come, relishing the control, drawing strength from fear. The voice in my head screamed back off, run away! This was going to be a skin of the teeth affair, my arms told me so. I joked with the ground support, asked for mobile phones to be at the ready.

The first move away from the pocket was powerful. An energy sapping move; the hold I aimed for, placed all of my hopes in, was abysmal. Small, crimpy, and facing the wrong way. I had to use it though, no going back now. Taking it with the left hand an inch from my nose balanced me enough to slap for a better hold out to the right. It was good, although, horror of horrors; the footholds had disappeared. The next move was the long reach spied from below. I recognised the moves in an instant. I needed to lock off powerfully while smearing the right foot on nothing. Lurching quickly into the move, before losing any more strength. I smeared the right foot as high as flexibility would allow. Pushing the foot as hard as possible onto smooth rock and pulling with the right arm, I stretched out. Standing straight, using the full length of the right arm to pivot, I was short by an inch! Using as much power as I could possibly muster I jumped my right foot even higher. Unfolding my body for the second time I knew this was make or break. Pushing, smearing smooth on the right foot, and pulling hard enough to rip the crimp from the wall, I stood.

I was at full stretch. The power drained from my arms in an instant. Shaking with the force generated to hold such a powerful position, I slapped for the hold. The relief at hitting it vanished in a second. It was rounded, not the crimp I had hoped. Not even a flat top. Pinching with as much energy as my forearm would give, I threw my right arm in a windmill action to join the left. One hand on top of the other. Bloodless fingers, head screaming, eyes wide, my brain hit overload. Feet needed to be run up the rock, but there are no footholds. I'm spent; I've given everything and have nothing else to give. Decision made, control and sanity return, "I'm coming off." The cam is quite far below but the extra distance will cushion the fall as the rope stretches. The female contingency are excitedly talking, a chance for the daughter to witness the reliability of modern protection. I throw myself back, pushing to give myself clearance. In a flash I'm whizzing down. My eyes fix onto the cam as I fly past. The rope comes tight, I wait to slow. The rope stretches, and the cam rips straight from the pocket. Holy smoke, I'm in for a big one now!

**"The rope stretches, and the cam rips  
straight from the pocket.**

**Holy smoke, I'm in for a big one now! "**

The cam exploded from the pocket, catapulted into space. I'm snatched from the hand of safety, my speed increases and the ground looms closer. I see The Evil One trying to take in as much rope as possible. As a last ditch effort he runs backward and jumps. The wire placed a year ago in the top of the initial crack line might just save me. The rope tightens, ten feet from the ground and still I plummet. The rope stretches, five feet, three. I hit the muddy ground impacting with both heels, the rope is fully stretched, I surf the mud, the evil one is catapulted into the air. The ground disappears; I'm over the cave entrance above the hole with air beneath my feet. The base of the crag approached fast. The bushes of nettles cushion my crashing into the rock. My fifty-foot skydive comes to an end. The Evil One hangs half way up the face. I hang below ground level. Obviously there is a God! I begin to crawl out of the pit, fighting the bushes of nettles, slipping and sliding in mud. Legs of jelly. Popping my head above the edge of the hole, a gopher on the prairie, I look up and ask the onlookers if they have any questions, now the Bullock master class of modern climbing techniques has finished. II

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Nick Bullock would like to thank MEF/BMC, Mammut and Rock + Run for support. Also thanks to Mark Goodwin and Ken Wilson for starting him on this literary nightmare (his choice of words!).

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# p o c k e t   r o c k e t

This time last year, Nick Williams was an Edinburgh IT consultant who only got out in the hills at weekends. Now he's jacked in the nine-to-five to bring out an innovative new set of Scottish walking guides. **Alison Medland** finds out how he did it.

**T**o most of us, the idea of giving up a successful business to camp rough and live on oatcakes for the best part of a year is not particularly appealing. For Nick Williams, 33, it is just one more twist in an unorthodox career.

As author of the first six Pocket Mountains walking guides, three of which are published in June, Nick represents a new, younger face in the Scottish mountain writing fraternity. In the 20 years since he began mountaineering, he has built up a respectable portfolio of routes, with expeditions to Russia, Pakistan and China and plenty of climbing in the Alps and Scot-

land. This was interspersed with periods of study in China and Ukraine, a spell in the French army, several stints as an interpreter, two years working in Hong Kong and, more recently, a career as head of an Edinburgh IT company.

It was Nick's unquestionable focus on any project he took on, however, that persuaded Robbie Porteous, a young Scottish publisher, to approach him when he was looking to commission a new author in 2001. Robbie had an idea for a series of walking guides in pocket-sized format that would fill the gap between the coffee table book and the purely functional guide that

could be taken into the hills. Between them, the concept evolved into a series of six pocket guides covering the Scottish Highlands and Islands, each encompassing 40 circular routes with colour photography, maps and local information. The mission for Nick was to finish most of the routes within the year.

In the last 12 months, he has spent 180 days walking and has lived in the hills for three to five days at a time, covering up to 30 miles and three different routes daily. Working to a typically Scottish budget, he camped wild - sleeping in the car when the midges were bad and living on oatcakes,

(CLOCKWISE) An Teallach from Destitution Road, Gruinard Bay, and Beinn Alligin and Loch Torridon. Just some of the great images in these new guides. All credit: Nick Williams.





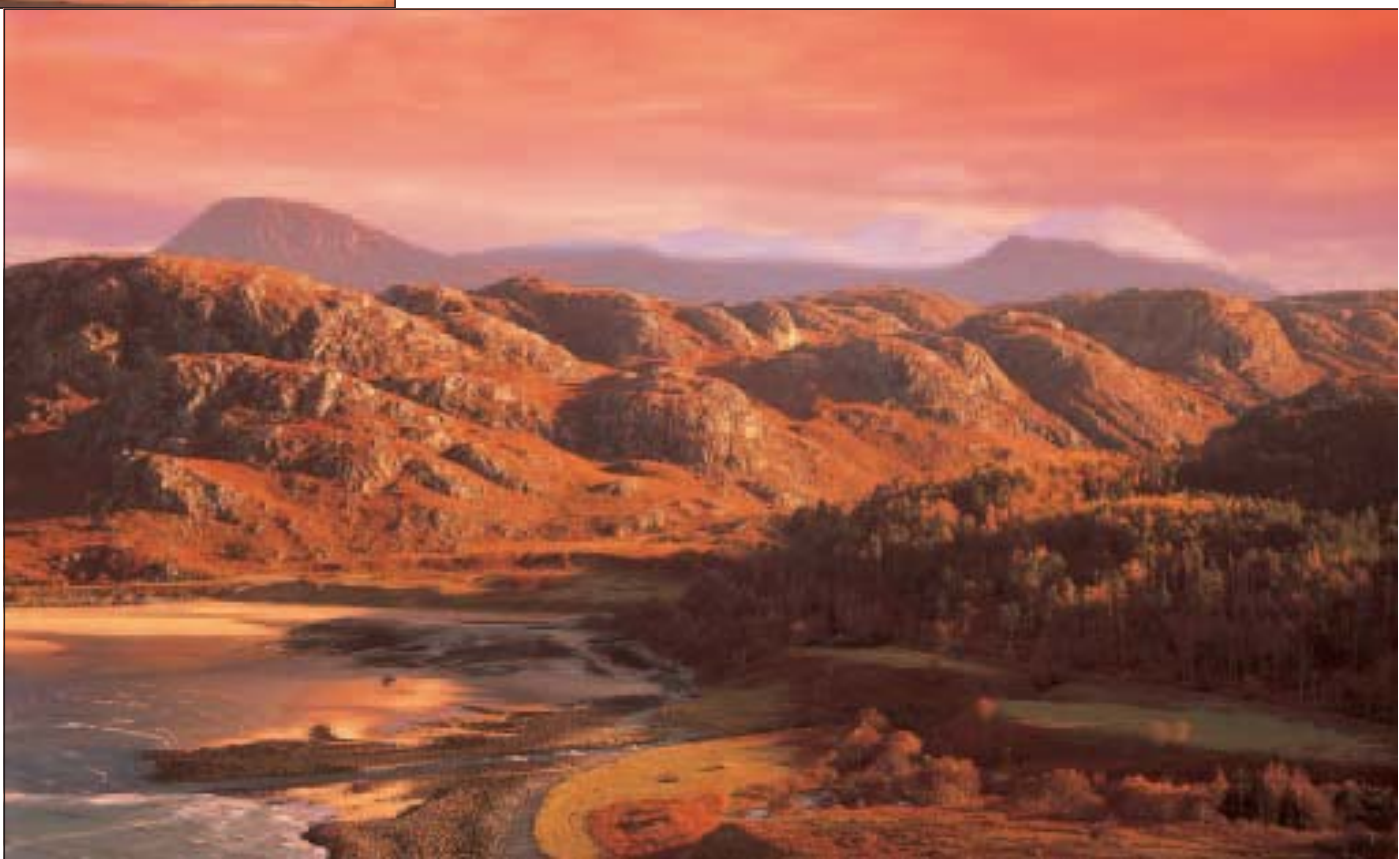
**“The solitude was hard to deal with at times, but I did learn a lot about the behavioural patterns of sheep.”**

tinned fish and porridge. “I had this rule for myself that if I left the car I had to do the walk. That was especially tough in winter when I was thigh-deep in snow or in torrential rain and maybe I hadn’t seen anyone for days. The solitude was hard to deal with at these times, but I did learn a lot about the behavioural patterns of sheep.”

To meet the deadline, he ran many of the routes with little gear except a camera. “Coming back to rest and eat and then having to set off on another walk after half an

hour was really hard. It wasn’t uncommon for me to leave Edinburgh at 5am, do two circuits in the Northern Highlands, and then bivvy out for an early start the next day.”

“Only one thing was worse than doing multiple routes, and that was getting to the end of a walk and realising I’d have to do it again.” As he mapped out the routes and scoped the area by car and bike first, this happened on just a handful of walks for each book. But having devised the routes to minimise damage to the environment,





Carn an Rìgh from Glas Tulaichean. Credit: Nick Williams

discovering that the southwest ridge of Carn Liath was badly eroded, for instance, was enough to send him back to find an alternative.

On the first day of autumn, thinking he was behind schedule, Nick swam Loch Maree to save time on the eight-mile approach to a walk in Letterewe Forest. "I planned to cross at the narrow 800m point which was dotted with islands – and even then I was nervous – but I couldn't get access so I swam from the car park with my gear buoyed up by a thermarest in a survival bag. It was great, but I found out later it was 2km across."

Always more climber than walker, Nick moved to Edinburgh in 2000 so he could spend his weekends cragging in Glencoe, the Cairngorms and further north but he had become increasingly disillusioned with having to chase the weather. "Walking isn't so weather dependent and it's great for me as a climber to know where I can go if I want a wet weather alternative."

"I really thought I knew and loved the Scottish hills, but I've realised that I was as guilty as anyone else of having misconcep-

tions about things like the weather which is much, much better than people believe. Doing these walks opened my eyes to what a fantastic landscape this is and how there is always more to discover. My best moments have probably come in the late afternoons when the light is particularly moody: I've never found anywhere in the world with the same quality of light as Scotland."

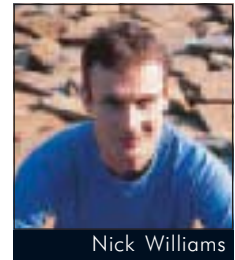
The first three Pocket Mountains guides cover the dramatic corries and rounded hills of The Cairngorms, the gentle moorland and craggier peaks of the Southern Highlands, and the wild and remote country of the Northern Highlands. The guides cover all of the Munros and most of the Corbetts, but they also contain many other less celebrated hills and routes of varying length and difficulty. Nick's climbing background has given him an eye for adventurous routes with exposure, scrambling and remoteness, but he is not interested in writing for the select few.

"A lot of the books out there concentrate on the Munros, but many of the people I've spoken to are disillusioned with the culture of elitism which is pretty endemic in bagging. It's a great challenge if

you want to do that but it excludes many fantastic areas, and a lot of the traditional routes on the high mountains have become eroded. Hopefully, by creating circular routes we're helping to minimise the impact the walker has on the environment, and increase people's enjoyment at the same time."

The Pocket Mountains guides to The Cairngorms, Southern Highlands and Northern Highlands are available from June, price £5.99.

But to sample one of the great walks, you don't have to wait at all. Just turn to page 52, for the first of four exclusive pocket mountains walks in Summit. And of course, don't forget to enter the competition below for a chance to win the full set. First person to tick them all wins...er, a day out with Nick swimming across Loch Maree! ||



Nick Williams

# Competition



Pocket Mountains are delighted to offer Summit readers the chance to win three fabulous guides. To enter, send us the correct answer to the following question. The first ten correct entries drawn will win a set of our first three walking guides published in June.

### What is The Cobbler's other name?

Answers on a postcard please, with contact details, to Pocket Mountains Ltd, 14 Belford Road, Edinburgh, EH4 3BL, to arrive by Friday, 27 June. Normal competition rules apply. Prizes will be announced in Summit.

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# French Style

So how do the French move so fast?

Top tips for avoiding unplanned bivvies this summer, by Rich Cross.

The tiny speck you've been casually observing on the glacier below is suddenly grappling for space on your belay ledge. He's treading on your ropes, having a quick smoke whilst he takes in through his magic plate, and you just know that in a minute or two he's gonna overtake...without even saying *s'il vous plait?* Déjà vu?

Traditionally the average Brit has had a rough deal in the Alps, being thought of by the continentals as slow and inept. In part this may be true, Brits who are technically very good on home ground can find it hard to adjust from the belt and braces approach to the alpine 'risk management' techniques. The skills for moving safely but quickly in the Alps don't come overnight, but there are a few tips and techniques that can help:

## > Be fit

It goes without saying that fitness and acclimatisation are essential for efficient mountain travel. Training in the UK to make the most of your trip should focus on cardiovascular as well as specific climbing fitness. Training can continue into the trip by indulging in some backbreaking hut walks (compulsory in Switzerland!), which can also save cash en-route to a climb. But once you are back in shape exploiting cable cars will put you at the bottom of your chosen route feeling fit and fresh, if a little guilty, rather than virtuous but knackered. Acclimatisation is a complex issue and always needs to be dealt with sensibly to avoid debilitation/death. A gradual build-up at the start of any trip with a couple of nights spent sleeping high in huts will help greatly. Even at modest elevations an unacclimatised party can be severely hindered, so don't be blasé.

## > Have knowledge

In the mountains knowledge is power. Gather as much information about your climb from as many different sources as possible. English guidebooks can often be outdated as glacial activity and rock falls alter the state of both routes and approaches. Try local guidebooks, magazine articles, other climbers, local guides offices, and web discussion forums. Armed with confidence you can now carry the correct gear, anticipate the line and conditions, and so travel faster.

## > Light is right

Other than accessible beta, the other biggest aid to the modern climber is lightweight gear. In the Alps light is usually right, and you'll have the satisfaction and efficiency of movement that comes from a simple approach. Weight can be shaved from every part of your kit, from wire gate karabiners to light leather mountain boots and polystyrene helmets. One of the easiest weight savings to make is by having a light rucksack and waterproofs. Bearing in mind you'll usually be climbing on a "Beau Temps" forecast, leave the Scottish body armour at home. Shop around for lightweight breathable coatings or Paclite Goretex for good emergency protection.

## > Have a plan

Think carefully about your logistics and have a clear-sighted plan for every outing. Include timings, approach, descent and what you need to take etc, but temper your plans with realism. Only by climbing inside your technical limits will you be able to travel efficiently and safely. Conversely, being overly

cautious and bringing bivvy gear 'just in case', will almost certainly result in you using it. As ever, the harder and more committing the climb, the finer the line you will have to tread, and the more pure judgment and experience will come into play.

## > Climb harder

Sorry but it's true. The single biggest aid to speed is pure fluid climbing ability. Anyone can learn all the tricks in alpinism, but the fastest are usually also the most technically gifted. So if you want to improve, train harder, try harder and get out more.

## > Time's ticking

Think about time management down to the last detail to reduce dead time on the stance. When on pitched ground everything needs to be done whilst belaying, including eating, drinking, and looking at the topo. Using a self-locking magic plate means you can take your hands off the rope to achieve this whilst still safely belaying the second.

## > Use your strengths

Always play to the strengths within your partnership. Plan ahead and try to make sure people lead on the ground that suits them best. This is especially important on mixed routes that may involve several different styles of climbing. Maximise the combined skill of the team to keep movement fluid.

## > Block leads

On long pitched routes consider block leading. This technique is very popular in places like Yosemite, and involves one person lead-

ing four or five pitches consecutively before the second takes over. This way the climb can be broken down into a number of blocks, which can offer many advantages:

- Psychologically, four or five blocks can be easier to deal with than the thought of 25 swung leads.
- The leader can get fully psyched or 'into the zone' for their block.
- The second can chill out and rest for a couple of hours at a time.
- The leader can study and get mentally prepared for the next pitch above, which can help to speed up route finding.
- No one is sat on a belay ledge for too long, so you stay warmer and don't stiffen up.
- If little gear is placed on a pitch the changeovers are very fast, as the second only has to pass back the gear they extracted rather than swapping an entire rack.

### > Changeovers

Keep belay changeovers speedy and efficient. Three minutes saved on every belay will save an hour over 20 pitches - easily the difference between beers in the valley or a night sitting on your rope! An efficient racking system really helps here, and bandoliers can be useful for swapping things like quickdraws. Rope management is crucial and if leading in blocks the ropes will need to be restacked so the leader's ends come from the top of the pile again. With a little practice (and again with the help of a magic plate) you can start to restack the ropes once your second is 5-10m below you. When they ar-

(TOP) Jules Cartwright looking stylish.  
(BELOW) Guy Willet on Traverse of the Chamonix Aiguilles. Not being picky, but the BMC would of course usually recommend wearing a helmet in the Alps.  
Both credit: Rich Cross.

rive the bulk of the rope will be organised with just the bottom 5-10m lying the wrong way up in a separate pile. Try it out, but don't forget to take in on your poor mate!

### > Move together

Develop the all-important but often misunderstood skill of moving together. This is a technique that improves greatly with experience, so practice on easy climbs in the UK. Your ability and confidence will dictate the standard of ground you are prepared to move together on, and the nature of the terrain will dictate the length of rope between each climber. Remember that it's all about compromise, you can never be 100% safe - the idea is that you should be safer than when soloing, but faster than when pitching. The trick is knowing when to swap to this technique from pitched climbing, and managing to do so efficiently and without tangles.

### > Simul-climb

The ultimate moving together skill, "simul-climbing" involves moving with most of the rope out on technical ground that would normally be pitched. Prussic devices such as Tiblocks are placed on runners above crux sections to hold the second should they fall and prevent the leader being yanked off! Other runners are placed as sparingly as you dare to conserve the rack and increase the distance you can travel before regrouping. This technique requires lots of practice to perfect, and careful thought in using the Tiblocks to prevent rope damage. Limitations are the size of your rack, rope drag, and your ability to climb confidently without a belay! This is a great thing to practice on ice couloirs with the occasional bulge, as there are no rope drag issues. Simul-climbing has resulted in some awesome speed climbing achievements well documented in the press, and is a great tool to have in your alpine skills box.

### > Find your way

Adopt a common sense approach to route finding. Climbers in Britain are very pampered by detailed blow-by-blow route descriptions. Alpine guides may have one small paragraph for a vertical kilometre of climbing, so the incentive is for you to interpret it properly. Use the information to guide you but be prepared to take a step back and ask yourself "if this was my route where would I have gone next?" This often solves route finding problems, but if not don't be afraid to look round the corner before committing yourself to an uncertainty. Five minutes exploring can save hours of wasted time battling up the wrong line.

### > Rope work

Keep it simple. Using plenty of long extenders and twin or single ropes (where appropriate) is cleaner, faster, and prevents those sneaky French guides from threading in between your double ropes! Consider climbing on a full weight rope and carrying a thin line

for pulling on abseils (5.5mm dyneema is often used). This is a specialist technique but does have advantages when you have to haul, aid or jumar, and is often used on hardcore mixed routes in the Greater Ranges.

### > Take cams

Borrow a technique from Yosemite speed climbers. Carry a good rack of cams on long pitched routes, they are much faster to place and clean on smooth granite than nuts. Also keep a good look out for fixed runners and belays which can be used quickly, but remember, always check pegs and tat!

### > Mixed skills

Learn to climb rock quickly and efficiently wearing crampons. For Scottish mixed experts this should be no problem. It is a real skill, but can save hours of fiddling around changing footwear when faced with technical bare rock sections.

### > Look after yourself

Make sure you don't become too tired or lazy to eat and drink properly. Have lots of snacks and fluids easily accessible - camelbaks are good in warm weather - to ensure a steady flow of carbs. Also try to stay cool when climbing to prevent overheating and dehydration, then just add a layer to belay in.

### > Speedy rappelling

Have a safe and efficient system in place for abseiling - hours can be saved if the descent is slick and quick. Take a cows tail to clip into belay stations quickly, and use an autoblock prussic for safety. Make sure you're both active all the time, e.g. while one is pulling the ropes, the other can be threading the next anchor. And keep communications simple, some teams use a simple yodel to mean "rope free, come on down", as it's easy to distinguish from other teams on the mountain and can still be heard in bad weather.

### > Take cover

Remember, no matter how fast you move, you need insurance in the Alps. Alpine insurance from the BMC starts from just £38 for 10 days. See [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk) or call the office on **0870 010 4878**.

### > Overtake more

Finally, practice your overtaking skills - and hey - have fun. Since that's the whole point to start with!

Rich Cross operates at the highest standards in Scottish winter climbing, the Alps, and the Greater Ranges. Based in Sheffield, he is a member of the British Association of Mountain Guides. For advice or business enquiries visit [www.richcross.co.uk](http://www.richcross.co.uk) or email [guiding@richcross.co.uk](mailto:guiding@richcross.co.uk)



# 4000

Ken Wilson explains how 4000m peak-bagging has been revived, with a recent UIAA ratification offering a fresh spin to classic alpinism.

What exactly makes a summit? An awkward question to answer, especially in the Alps where the number of 4000m summits can fluctuate wildly depending on what criteria are applied. For a long while 4000m peak collectors, the alpine equivalent of Munroists, worked from the 1989 Karl Blodig (Dumler) list of 61 peaks. But this had its weaknesses, mainly an over-zealous coverage of the Monte Rosa summits, whilst some quite assertive subsidiary summits on other major massifs, e.g. Breithorn, Grand Combin, Grandes Jorasses and even Mt Blanc had been overlooked.

So, when the UIAA (Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme) decided to rationalise this list in 1994, their findings were pounced on by 4000m peak addicts. To their relief, they found that most of the anomalies had been removed. Two extra summits had been noted on Grand Combin, one on Liskamm, four on the Breithorn, four on the Grandes Jorasses and four on Mont Blanc. In addition the sharp rock pinnacles of the Diables Ridge of Mont Blanc du Tacul were also accorded summit status. However by these means the Blodig list of 61 peaks was increased to 83, which of course made attaining all of them a considerably greater task.

## Peak proposals

Some of the new UIAA peaks (e.g. Pic Luigi Amedeo and Pts Marguérite and Hélène) merely reinstated old Blodig summits to the list from which they were unaccountably dropped. But equally there is no reason why anyone need adhere to this greater list. A strict interpretation of true mountains to be climbed, using a minimum col depth of 100 metres, gives a list of 51 mountains (notable casualties being Lenzspitze and Nordend). The carnage would be far greater if the col depth was fixed at 200 metres – a mere 33 summits (with no satellite peaks of Mont Blanc, Monte Rosa and Nadelhorn, no Bishorn, no Dent du Geant and – to the great relief of many – no Aiguille Blanche).

## Imperial measures

A further element of interest could be added if "imperial preference" was adopted by including the eight peaks that exceed 13,000ft but do not reach the 4000m level. These are Piz Zupo (which when linked with Piz Palü makes a fine expedition), Fletschhorn (which greatly improves the Lagginhorn trip), Mont Mallet (adjacent to the Rochefort Ridge), the Meije (one of the finest alpine ascents), the Gletscherhorn (crowning point of the Lauterbrunnen Wall), Schalihorn (between Weissshorn and Zinalrothorn) the Eiger (ruined by the Mittlegi fixed ropes but still interesting in a traverse to the Mönch), and the elegant and rarely visited (except by Italians) Grivola.

***"As climbers increasingly trot off to dry tool in some new world winter fleshpot, it's all too easy to forget that a short drive from the Easyjet reached Geneva or Milan are some of the finest and most historic and challenging mountains in the world."***

## Bagging them

Thus far there has not been a continental version of Munroists lists of successful 4000m baggers but no doubt at some stage someone will attend to this. At present most mountaineers are happy to add to their 4000m list as and when circumstances allow and do not let 4000m peak-collecting affect other alpine activity. But, as with the Munros, there is no doubt that the institution of a "list" creates an almost infectious "desire". I know many fine climbers who are discreetly ticking-off peak after peak, and no doubt having a wonderful time in the process. If one is not careful this can become a sterile task, particularly if one gets caught up with large groups making conventional ascents, but there are many ways of varying an ascent to make it more interesting and avoid the crowds. A ski ascent, a winter ascent, a variant on the most popular way and even well judged solo ascents – all offer ways of making an otherwise routine climb infinitely more interesting.

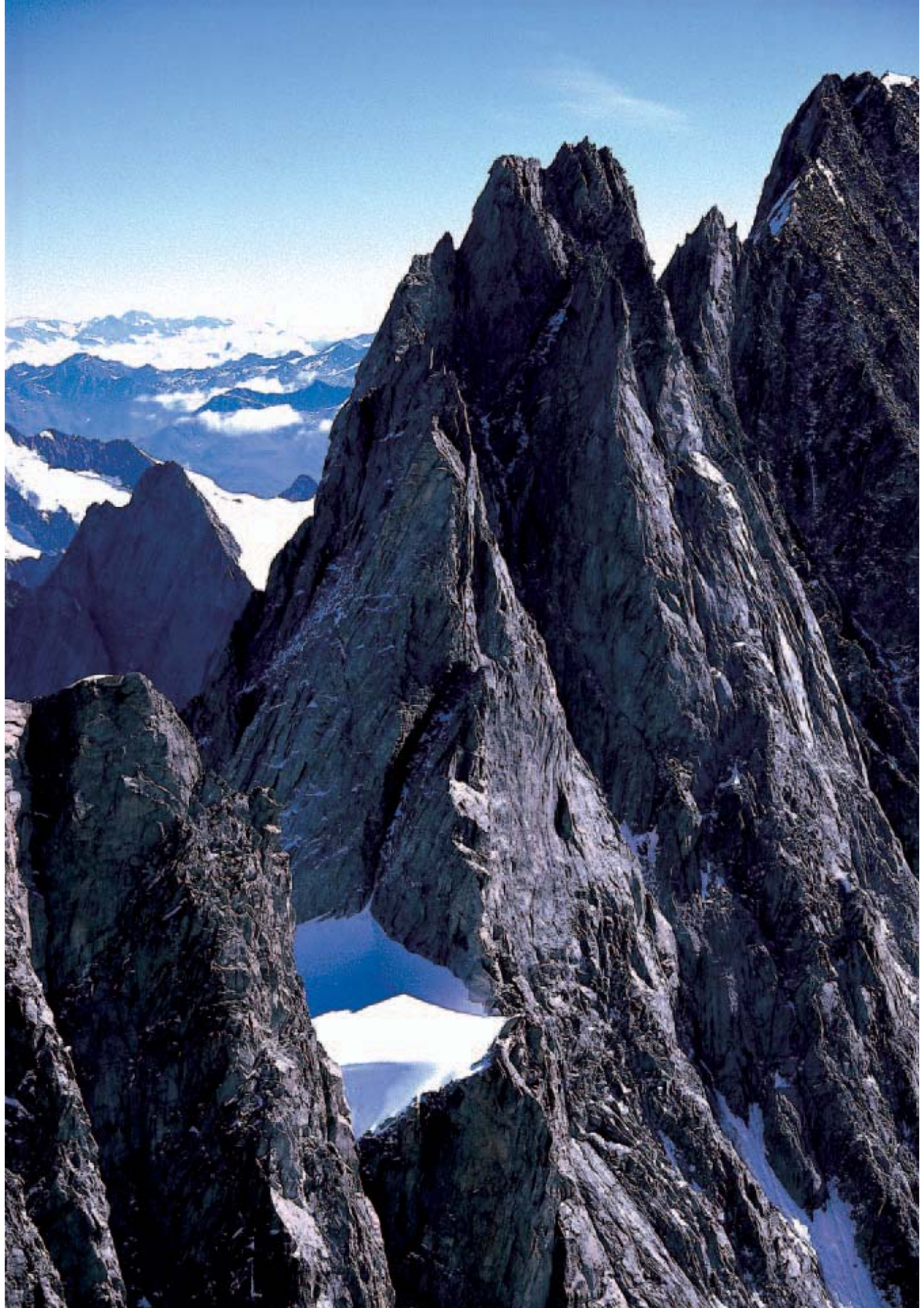
Even a very popular peak like the Matterhorn can be tackled in a manner to reduce the crowds. In his forthcoming new edition of *The Alpine 4000m Peaks* Richard Goedeke suggests that (in good weather) an able team might start from the Hörnli Hut after day-break (well behind the tourist crowds) and solo the climb up to the Moseley Slab. Around this point one should encounter the fastest (guide led) descent parties but with careful timing (taking a well-judged breakfast stop etc) it should be possible to pass most of descending groups between the Solvay Refuge and the fixed ropes (though some congestion will surely met there). By the time one begins the descent, the mountain should be relatively quiet.

Two climbers that I know tackled the mountain in blustery conditions with patches of snow at points along the route and intermittent cloud. They had the peak to themselves and enjoyed a marvellous experience akin to a routine ascent of a Scottish winter classic, albeit much longer. They were rewarded on the summit when the clouds blew away revealing a fabulously turbulent view. They returned with a great respect for the Hörnli Ridge and those that climbed it in 1865.

## The hardest new peaks

The new UIAA summits will compel climbers to address the fabulous Diables Ridge of Mont Blanc du Tacul. This is a really fine rock climb with a number of very powerful sections with climbing up to IV+ and two passages of V. This sounds reasonable until one remembers the height which makes the climbing much more demanding, a factor increased when climbing in boots and carrying sacs (though these days many alpinists change into rock boots). Unfortunately Armand Charlet's wonderful 5a free pitch on the Isolée (done without pitons) now has fixed protection, but pitons or no pitons, this is still the scene of a great episode of Alpine history. Its difficulties are reduced a little as, in contrast to earlier sections of the traverse, sacs can be left at the start and retrieved afterwards. Sacs can also be taken off for the final precarious grade V arête on Pointe Carmen which is good to know. The same cannot be said about the great diedre on Pointe Mediane which is V if taken direct, though here, some devious IV and IV+ variations can be used.

(RIGHT) The western summits of Grandes Jorasses seen from Dôme du Rochefort. The Canzio Bivouac Hut is sited on the snowy Col du Grandes Jorasses as a base for tackling the West Ridge. This goes diagonally left up the slabby face (left of the obvious runnel) before striking up to the summit of Pointe Young. Reaching Pointe Marguérite involves a descent into the big gorge/couloir on the right (south) flank and some technical slab climbing to round its flanking buttress to gain the smaller couloir leading up to the twin summits. The climb was first done in 1910 by Geoffrey Winthrop Young, Humphrey Owen Jones and Joseph Knubel after the failure of their friendly rivals – the Ryan/Lochmatter trio. Credit: John Allen





Mont Blanc and its satellites at dawn in a view from the start of the Rochefort Ridge. *Credit: John Allen*

This side of the photo shows (left) the dark pinnacle of Aiguille Noire. The tracks leading to the Torino Hut are obvious below it (middle distance) and the snowfield (centre), down to the Col de Peuterey and then over Grand Pilier d'Angle and steeply up the high ice slopes to Mont Blanc de Courmeyer. Below this high ridge of Mont Blanc (taken on the early ascents) lead down to Col de la Brenva and right to Mont Maudit, its famed Frontier Ridge route slanting up across its steep slopes. The Pilier du Diable leads up to them from the Glacier du Geant. The Pilier du Diable is just discernable high on right of the couloir. The Grand Capucin is the tallest of the peaks in the distance.





er Dames Anglais pinnacles to its right mark the start of the Peuterey Ridge. This leads up to Pointe Seymour King and Pointe Güssfeldt on Aiguille Blanche  
point is the Brenva Face and below that the smaller Tour Ronde the main peak on the Frontier Ridge. On the right side of the photograph the summit slopes  
e from the Col de la Fourche below. Mont Blanc du Tacul is on the right with the Aiguilles Diable pinnacles obvious on its left hand ridge. The Couloir du  
the rock buttresses at the base of the Diable Ridge.

To the right of the Diable Ridge, at the other side of the Couloir du Diable, is the little known Pilier du Diable that Goedeke has identified as a peak at least as prominent as several other UIAA promoted summits (one of seven additional peaks that he proposes – all of which conform to the new criteria). The front face of this remote pinnacle (a fine TD rock route) was first climbed in 1963 by the Italian quartet of Enrico Cavaliere, Pier-Giorgio Ravaioni and Eugenio and Gian-Luigi Vaccari. Goedeke suggests an easier and quicker way of reaching the summit by climbing the couloir (often serious) and mixed ground behind the Pilier to reach its col and thence gain the top by a 40m climb. The finish would then head up the face above to link up with the final section of the Boccalatte Pillar. If neither couloir or hard rock climb appeals the pinnacle could be reached by an abseil descent with a re-ascent up the tough final pitches (IV and IV+) of the Boccalatte.

### The only living climbers to have made a alpine 4000m peak first ascent?

If the Pilier du Diable does become an accepted 4000m summit there will be several new factors to consider. Will it rival Aiguille Blanche as the most difficult 4000er to reach and then contrive an escape? Will Cavaliere, Ravaioni and the Vaccari brothers be recognised as the only living climbers to have made the first ascent of an Alpine 4000m peak, taking their places alongside Balmat, Paccard, Tyndall, Whymper, Stephen, Croz et al in a very exclusive Club?<sup>3</sup>

### The traverse of the Grandes Jorasses

Almost as fabled as the Diable Ridge is the complete traverse of the Grandes Jorasses with either a start or finish along the Rochefort Ridge (to take in the four new UIAA summits). This was one of Geoffrey Winthrop Young's greatest "projects" (done in 1911 with H.O. Jones and Joseph Knubel) and one that had defeated the powerful Ryan/Lochmatter trio. If one was to add to an east/west traverse, an approach up the Hirondelles Ridge, the scene of Adolphé Rey's celebrated (1927) grade V crack pitch, then traverse would have even greater interest. By contrast the technically more challenging West/East traverse will involve an early morning ascent of the cold and unfriendly North-West flank of Pointe Young – serious grade IV rock climbing, often iced, which is described with considerable respect by those who have done it.<sup>2</sup>

### More modest fare for simple souls

But the new peaks do not all involve these higher standard excursions. The Grandes Jorasses summits can all be reached by climbs of lesser difficulty from the Rocher du Reposoir. The four new Breithorn summits can each be reached by routes of moderate difficulty. The inclusion of Liskamm West as a summit opens the possibility of a separate ascent for those who may not have done the complete traverse. The climb from Quintino Sella hut to the south not only involves an approach from Italy via the German-speaking enclave of (the paradoxically French-named) Gressoney la Trinité, but also

gives a beautiful ascent by the long and steadily steepening WSW Ridge from the Felikjoch (a sort of Valais Midi-Plan traverse). Such an approach would (for British climbers) spice up an ascent of the 10<sup>th</sup> highest peak in the Alps.

Liskamm West might also be tackled from the Swiss side either by approaching the Felikjoch by the heavily crevassed Zwillinge Glacier or, more logically, by climbing the North-West Spur and then descending the WSW Ridge. This Liskamm version of the Brenva Spur was first climbed on a blustery morning in 1902 by Mrs Rhona Roberts Thomson (from Bournemouth) with the guides Christian Klücker and Christian Zippert. Klücker's führerbuch records that Rhona Roberts Thomson, yet another enigmatic female to emerge from alpine history, went on to traverse the Matterhorn on what must have been a fine alpine season for 1902.

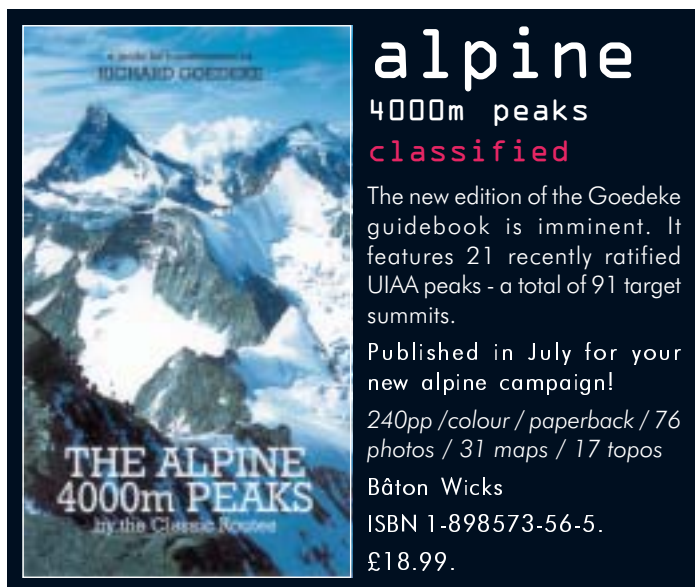
In his guidebook Richard Goedeke has proposed seven additional summits that he feels should be included if the UIAA criteria is to be taken objectively (though even the UIAA list also has a subjective aspect). In addition to the Pilier du Diable, Goedeke notes rock towers, at least as prominent as those on the Tacul, on the Lauteraarhorn, the Rimpfischhorn and the Weisshorn. All of these might have been traversed on conventional ascents of the mountains by slightly harder routes. But the Lauteraarhorn Towers suggest a fine direct rock route by way of the East Face Rib. In the same manner the Grand Gendarme on the North Ridge of the Weisshorn could be approached and descended by the attractive Younggrat from the hospitable Cabanne d'Ar Pitetta above Zinal. These two examples give a very clear illustration of the revitalising effect of the new summits. Goedeke also draws attention to Il Naso on the Liskamm (a prominent little snow peak) that might easily be taken in on an ascent of Liskamm East. He also proposes Pic Eccles on the South Face of Mont Blanc. This can be climbed with little difficulty from the Eccles Hut (possibly prior to Mont Brouillard or Aiguille Blanche ascents) or in the process of an ascent of the Innominata Ridge. Goedeke's final suggestion is that Pointe Seymour King (the usually climbed Aiguille Blanche top) should have summit status along with the slightly higher (and often bypassed) Pointe Güssfeldt.

All these adjustments will certainly revitalise the attention on one of the great classic challenges. As climbers increasingly trot off to clip in the Costa Blanc or dry tool in some new world winter fleshpot, it's all too easy to forget that a short hire-car drive or train/bus trip from the Easyjet reached Geneva or Milan are some of the finest and most historic and challenging mountains in the world. These can be climbed in any manner one prefers but even the most modest ascent can be highly adventurous. Add in evocative approaches, superb huts set in fabulous positions and the nearby valley bases of Switzerland, France and Italy and one has a formula for profound and memorable climbing ... a far cry from packaged clipping on a crowded boltedrome ... fine stress free exercise, no doubt, but a long way from the "profundity trail". But then, as Mick Fowler reminded me the other day ... 'well Ken, what it is all about is "no pain, no gain"'. II

## The "51" list

A slimmed down list of 4000ers with minimum col depth of 100m.

Mont Blanc	4807m	Rimpfischhorn	4199m	Dürrenhorn	4035m
Dufourspitze	4748m	Aletschhorn	4195m	Allalinhorn	4027m
Zumsteinspitze	4563m	Strahlhorn	4190m	H. Fiescherhorn	4025m
Signalkuppe	4556m	Dent d'Hérens	4163m	Weissmies	4023m
Dom	4545m	Breithorn	4164m	D. de Rochefort	4015m
Liskamm East	4527m	Jungfrau	4148m	Dent du Géant	4013m
Weisshorn	4505m	Bishorn	4153m	Lagginhorn	4010m
Täschhorn	4490m	Breithorn East (West Twin)	4139m	Aig. de Rochefort	4001m
Matterhorn	4478m	Aiguille Verte	4122m	Les Droites	4000m
Mont Maudit	4465m	Aiguille Blanche	4112m		
Parrotspitze	4436m	Mönch	4107m	The "Imperial Eight". Peaks below 4000m that	
Dent Blanche	4356m	Barre des Écrins	4101m	exceed 13,000ft all with minimum of 100m	
Nadelhorn	4347m	Pollux	4092m	col depth:	
Grand Combin	4314m	Schreckhorn	4078m	Piz Zupo	3996m
Finsterarhorn	4273m	Obergabelhorn	4063m	Fletschhorn	3993m
M. Bl. du Tacul	4348m	Gran Paradiso	4061m	Mont Mallet	3989m
Castor	4221m	A. du Bionnassay	4052m	Meije	3982m
Zinalrothorn	4221m	Piz Bernina	4049m	Gletscherhorn	3983m
Vincent Pyramide	4215m	Gr. Fiescherhorn	4049m	Schalihorn	3974m
Grandes Jorasses	4208m	Gross Grünhorn	4044m	Eiger	3970m
Alphubel	4206m	Lauteraarhorn	4042m	Grivola	3969m



# alpine

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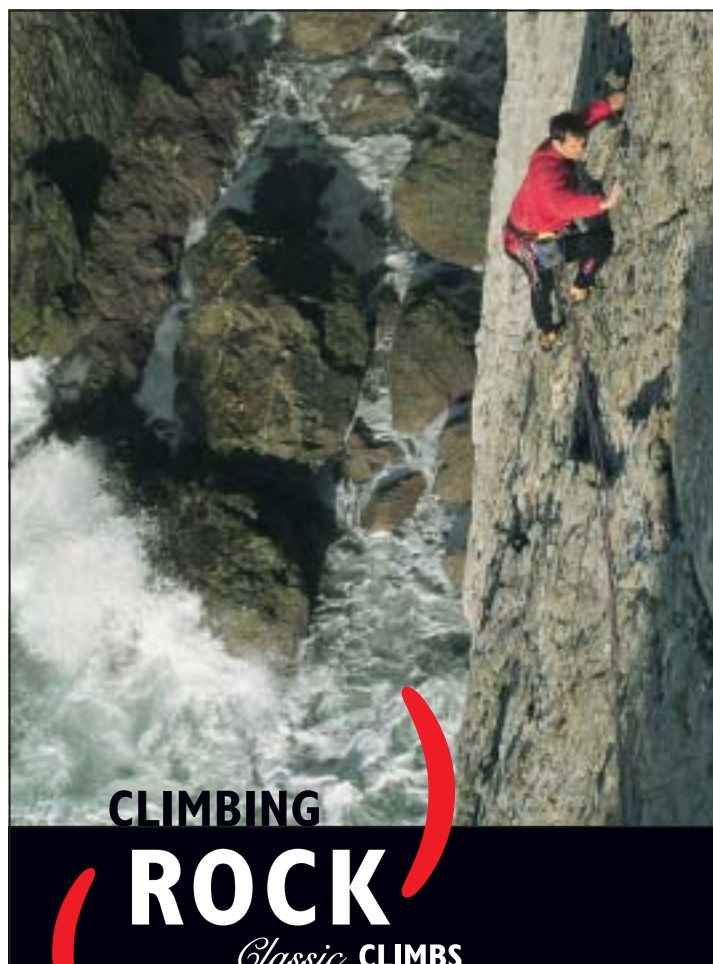
## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> In earlier editions of Blodig's book it was 69 peaks but by 1985 this had been reduced to 61 and this is the number in *The High Mountains of the Alps* (the English language adaptation of the German publication). The first edition of Richard Goedeke's guide also contained 61 summits but differed from Blodig by including Punta Baretti and leaving out Punta Giordani.
- <sup>2</sup> For impressions of both the Diables Ridge and the Grandes Jorasses Traverse I am indebted to Martin Moran. I also wish to thank Bill O'Connor, Dave Wynne Jones, Hildegard Diemberger, Mirella Tenderini, Gian Luigi Vaccari and, of course, Richard Goedeke for assistance in the preparation of this article. John Allen has contributed the two photographs.
- <sup>3</sup> Jean Chaubert died in 2001 and it appears that none of the other Diable pioneers of 1923-1926 are still alive.

## New summits

The additional UIAA summits plus the extra seven (in red) proposed by Richard Goedeke.

PEAK	HEIGHT	COL DEPTH
Lauteraarhorn Towers	4015,4011m	30m
Rimpfischhorn, Great Gendarme	4108m	c40m
Weisshorn, Grand Gendarme	4331m	33m
Liskamm: Schneedomspitze (Il Naso)	4272m	40m
Liskamm West	4479m	62m
Breithorn: Roccia Nera	4075m	20m
Breithorn Twin (East)	4106m	40m
Breithorn Twin (West)	4139m	117m
Breithorn Central	4159m	83m
Combin de Valsorey	4185m	40m
Combin de la Tsessette	4141m	55m
<b>Grandes Jorasses:</b>		
Pointe Wymper	4184m	40m
Pointe Croz	4101m	c20m
Pointe Hélène	4045m	25m
Pointe Marguéite	4066m	40m
<b>Mont Blanc du Tacul:</b>		
Pilier du Diable	4067m	40m
Corne du Diable	4064m	17m
Pointe Chaubert	4074m	57m
Pointe Médiane	4097m	25m
Pointe Carmen	4109m	54m
L'Isolée	4114m	36m
Mont Blanc de Courmayeur	4748m	18m
<b>Mont Blanc:</b>		
Dôme du Goûter	4304m	58m
Punta Baretti	4013m	56m
Pic Luigi Amedeo	4469m	35m
Pic Eccles	4041m	35m
Grand Pilier d'Angle	4243m	15m
Aiguille Blanche, Pt. Seymour King	4107m	30m



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VID003



# EXTREME IRONING

Historically, Via Ferrata have been often underrated, misunderstood and summarily dismissed by hill walkers and climbers alike. But **Ian Fenton** explains the basics to help you get some ironing done this summer.

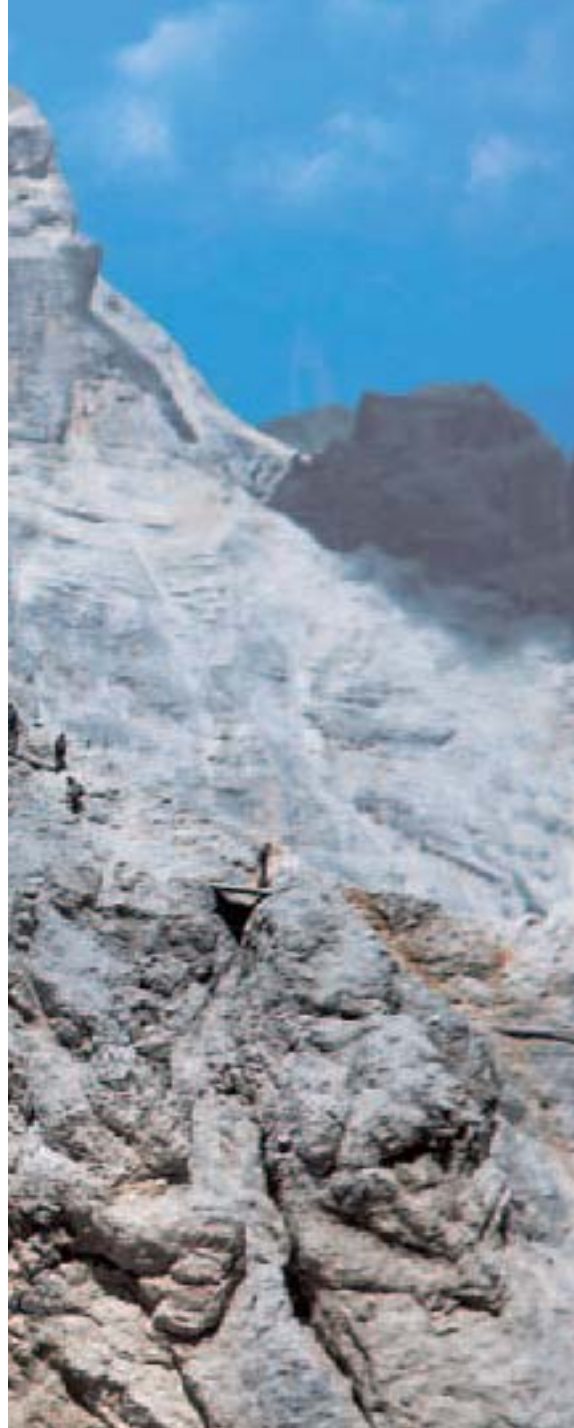
Some found them too adventurous, others said it was cheating, still others realised how potentially dangerous they could be if not approached properly. But following some recent advances in safety equipment, and better knowledge of how it may be employed to protect such routes, the Via Ferrata are enjoying something of a renaissance.

(TOP) Bridge over the void on Monte Cristalo. (RIGHT) Steel ladders leading to the summit on Monte Cristalo. Monte Cristalo, near Cortina, Italy, is where Cliffhanger was filmed. Both credit: Tony Marshall.

## WHAT ARE THEY?

Via Ferrata literally translated is "iron way", or "climbing-path" from the German version Klettersteig. They are routes through what may often appear to be inaccessible ground, opened up by the placing of metal rungs or footplates and protected by a continuous wire cable. This cable may also be used for your hands, (for those who don't want to use the rock, or in wet and slippery conditions) but it is usually just clipped into for your protection.





A Via Ferrata may be horizontal, vertical or indeed anywhere in between and can involve both ascent and descent.

There is a popular myth that the routes were created in wartime for positioning guns, but most date from attempts in the infancy of mountaineering to equal out the grade of popular alpine ascents. An early example of this implementation from 1869 can still be traced along the way between the two summits of the Grossglockner. Numerous records exist of the manufacturing of more iron ways prior to the First World War, with the routes becoming enthusiastically adopted by mountaineers. But it was in the 1930's that they first really exploded in popularity, and many more were created as either routes in their own right, or as a way of easing the approach to established climbing areas. Initially, the key principle was that the routes should facilitate the way to summits or traverse below them, but should not be the sole means of ascending a peak. Inevitably, this ideal was broken,

and these days a whole range of routes are present from roadside attractions to serious mountain adventures.

### WHAT EQUIPMENT?

OK let's work from the head down. A **helmet** should be worn to protect both against stone fall or head impact. Additionally, many Via Ferrata follow horizontal rifts and ledges, and like caving, there is a continual chance of catching your head. Choose one that is light and comfortable, and well fitting. Next is a comfortable **harness** - either a standard sit harness (with chest harness if you feel the need) or a full body harness. Again, comfort is important as you will be wearing it for the whole route, and it should move well with your body since high steps and wide strides will be the order of the day! Then a pair of light soft **gloves** are useful (leather is possibly best), as your hands will receive a lot of abuse pulling on the rungs and cables, particularly if any are damaged. But remember to check that you can operate a karabiner with these on.

And now the single most important piece of equipment specific to Via Ferrata - a purpose designed **shock-absorbing system** made from dynamic rope. This is essential. In the past people have used standard (static) slings clipped to the wire cables for protection, but this gives potential for very, very high fall factors, (up to 5!), which can cause catastrophic equipment failure. The danger of such a potentially high fall factor cannot be stressed enough, since in normal climbing situations the greatest fall factor you'd usually encounter is 2, and this is often regarded as grounds for retiring equipment.

There are a number of these special shock absorbers on the market, produced by Mammut, Camp, Petzl, Simond amongst others. They consist of a length of dynamic rope threaded through a KISA (Kinetic Impact Shock Absorber), which leads to a rope or tape "Y", with a Klettersteig karabiner at the end of each arm of the Y. If you make your own shock absorber, as you can with a Camp KISA (a.k.a. a knuckle duster!), you should follow the instructions religiously and the karabiners should be specific for the purpose. Check there is a K in a circle on the spine of the krab - if there is an H in a circle it is an HMS karabiner for belaying, and is NOT designed for Via Ferrata use.

With **footwear**, you have a certain amount of personal choice, from approach shoes with sticky rubber to full mountain boots; but whatever you choose must be supportive and sturdy. Your choice should take into account the approach to and descent from the Via Ferrata and will probably vary from route to route.

Your clothing and whether or not you carry a rucksack will depend on the location of the route and the time anticipated on it - remember to err on the side of caution and pack for every eventuality. It goes without saying it is not good to be on a Via Ferrata if thunderstorms are forecast, as they make fantastic lightning conductors!

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## MOVEMENT

This is like teaching someone how to climb a tree – basically you get to the start of the route, clip both krabs into the cable and away you go! The main thing to remember is to never have both krabs unclipped at the same time, so at re-belays (where the cable is re-anchored to the rock, usually every 5m or so) you unclip your leading crab and re-clip it past the re-belay, then follow with your second krab. Some shock absorbers have different coloured arms in the Y-shaped section to prevent twisting. If not, you can use different colours of insulation tape on the spine of your karabiners to differentiate between your leading and seconding ones.

You can also use one of the krabs for resting on a vertical or overhanging section if your arms are tired. Just unclip one of the arms of the Y from the cable, clip it into a rung and sit in your harness – the shock absorber will not slip unless shock loaded. But always remember to keep one arm of the Y clipped into the cable.

## SAFETY

As these routes are essentially man made they can and do fail, and should be treated with the same caution as any fixed equipment in the mountains. A brief visual inspection should be made as you travel over them and keep an eye out for any obvious signs of wear; badly rusted or loose ladders, loose cable anchors etc. Bear in mind that the ladder rungs in particular are subject to wear from passing climbers and in combination with extremes of weather do occasionally become bent or loose.

Even though the routes are generally technically straightforward, there are a couple of other points to bear in mind, especially if you are in a mixed ability group or

with the kids. Firstly, there can be a lot of arm work involved, and on harder routes it's possible that less strong climbers may become exhausted and be unable to continue. Start with some of the easier Ferrata, try to pick routes that are within the ability of the whole group, and always make sure an experienced climber, instructor or guide is with you if there are doubts. Consider employing a top rope for steep or difficult sections if someone isn't too confident. Secondly, though kids will love the climbing, their hands may be too small to operate the Klettersteig karabiners properly, or they may lack the grip strength required for their repeated operation. Check this before setting off and keep an eye out en-route.

The style of Via Ferrata varies with location. Some are almost roadside adventure playgrounds, others are full on days in the mountains requiring thousands of feet of ascent and descent. Before heading off, take time to think about your planned adventure. Some Ferratas start or finish on very exposed terrain, and short-roping inexperienced members of the party may be required.

## LOCATION

Traditionally, the main focus for Via Ferrata was the Dolomites, extending into Austria with a few (generally poorly equipped) routes in other areas. Plenty of information on these areas is readily available in the UK as they are popular and long established. See "Via Ferrata - Scrambles in the Dolomites" by Cicerone for information.

The only disadvantage is that they can get rather busy in the summer months, even to the extent of queues forming. Now, many areas are having something of a resurgence in the creation of new Via Ferrata, particularly in the mountain regions of France, with a large number of routes recently opened in the Dauphine and Haute Alps. In true tradition many of these new routes have been manufactured to follow spectacular situations in their own right, and do not take in any summits. The main way of getting information on these routes is through the local Bureau de Guides; a quick web search or call to the Club Alpin Français will get you their contact details.

So, now you've got the low down on the "iron ways", why not get out there and have some of the best fun on the hill! II

Ian Fenton was the BMC Youth Officer, but now is back instructing and coaching in the UK and Southern France. See [www.mountfenton.com](http://www.mountfenton.com) for more details.

(LEFT) Roadside adventure fun at Orpierre. Credit: Ian Fenton.

(RIGHT) A longer, more traditional Via Ferrata. Credit: John Shaw.

## WIRE WARNING

As mentioned, always check fixed gear in the mountains wherever possible. We received this letter from David Francis which highlights the issue very well:

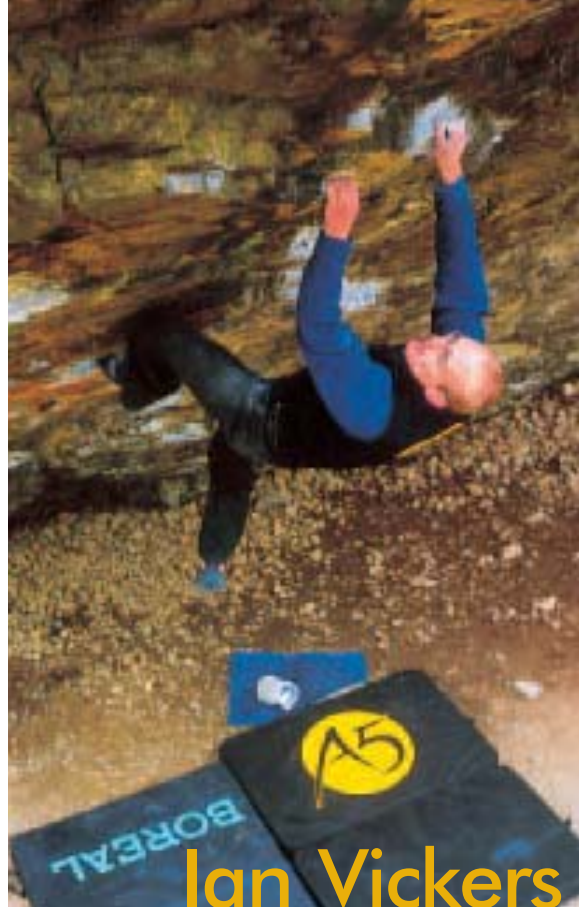
*"A word of warning for anyone heading for the Dolomites for a bit of Via Ferrata bagging - don't blindly trust the wires! Last summer we tackled the excellent Via Giovanni Lipella on Tofana di Rozes to the west of Cortina. The climb is sustained and exposed in places, but offers a perfect mix of dramatic scenery and challenging moves, a local classic.*

*We'd been climbing for over four hours as we set about negotiating the series of pitches and ledges that lead up through the 'amphitheatre' to the summit ridge. I was in front of the group for the final pitch and had begun pulling on the wire for balance and momentum. However, as I popped my head over the final ledge I was shocked to find that the wire I had been relying on for my safety had been cut.*

*Rock fall had damaged it, so at my end, it only just poked through the hole in the last stanchion, and was held there by a single metal clamp. Had I fallen or pulled hard, the clamp would most likely have slipped off, with obvious consequences.*

*That evening we concluded that none of us would ever blindly trust the wires again and would try and avoid pulling on it, especially in exposed locations. We also decided that on the harder routes it would be sensible to carry a short length of climbing rope, a couple of krabs and a few slings as a back up."*





He won the '98 European Championship, onsighted over 30 E7's and ticked an 8c in two hours. But what's Ian Vickers up to now? Gareth Parry takes a look.

It's now 2003 and we're sitting in Ian's latest venture BoulderUK, looking back at his achievements. The 1998 European Championship win was the culmination of a promising competition climbing career, in eight years Ian won four British Leading Championship titles, a British Bouldering title and an X-Games title.

Ian began climbing at the age of 12 and his earliest climbing memories involved trips to the Lancashire quarries with his long time climbing companion Dave Cronshaw. "In those days there were still lots of new routes to be done in the quarries and Dave always had a new line up his sleeve," says Ian. This early involvement with local exploration and having such a good teacher as Dave led to a rapid rise in Ian's ability through the traditional grades.

Rather than a climbing wall background, Ian worked his way methodically through the grades, feeling it was key to be fully competent within a grade before moving on. Ticking his first E6 *Piranha* at just 15. Hundreds of E4, E5 and E6's later at 17 it was time to try sport, very quickly flashing Main Overhang, a Kilnsey 7c+ that is still rarely flashed even now. Ian's ability as an all round climber became legendary, onsighting over 30 E7's, hundreds of 8a's, numerous 8a+'s, and even 8b.

His fitness at the time of the European title win was astonishing, mainly from an intense drive to train, and he'd devised a punishing schedule. A quick warm up on his loft board would be followed by a morn-

ings traversing at Craig-y-Longridge, where up to three consecutive no rest ascents of the 8b+ traverse was enough for anybody! In the afternoon it was either crimp problems at the Old Blackburn YMCA wall, off to the Broughton board for some 8c circuits, or if the weather was good Kilnsey.

This was a popular time at Kilnsey and as most routes had clips in, he could go from one end of the crag to the other constantly repeating the 8a's and 8a+'s he'd climbed before. And although rarely into redpointing, he turned his hand quite successfully to it and ticked Tony Mitchell's 8c True North in an astonishing two hours, stunning everyone at the crag. Graham Desroy was there that day and recalls the ascent; "Ian was as fit as a butchers dog at the time. He was obviously focused and knew what he wanted. Two short sessions to work the moves led to a very impressive first redpoint ascent. In typical Vickers style he hadn't worked the top easy bit into Urgent Action and thinking the clips were in set off. As he pulled through onto the slab it dawned on him the last two clips were missing. A quick down climb to remove the last clip and move it higher completed the most impressive ascent I have ever seen".

During the last few years Ian has continued focusing on climbing hard in good style, but as far as earning money competitions were never going to be a way forward. Nowadays the life as a pro climber is quite different, and support from his sponsors Boreal, Entre-prises and The North Face are combined with route setting and his new venture BoulderUK. Generally recognised as the UK's best route setter. Ian is usually the man with the inspiration to constantly churn out exciting comp problems and interesting wall routes all over the country. An internationally qualified route setter, he has yet again been chosen to test the routes and boulder problems at the UIAA-ICC World Championships in Chamonix.

After five months of work Ian's new venture BoulderUK is also now open. The Blackburn based bouldering facility built to Ian's design is rapidly gaining a reputation for how a modern climbing facility should be run. "The climbing wall is the completion of a dream. Support from The North Face, Entre-prises and Snow+Rock.com has allowed us to provide what climbers really want. We can run a facility that is purely focused on providing good regularly changed problems for climbers who want to improve and are the only wall in the country who have professional climbers on hand to offer help and advice."

Looking forward Ian will still be seen out on the crags of the UK and Europe continuing with the impressive ascents for which he is known, but at last he will have an outlet through which he can pass on his ability to the next generation.

Image: Ian Vickers making short work of Picnic Sarcastic (V9) on the Bowderstone. Credit: Dave Simmonite. For more info on BoulderUK check out [www.boulderuk.com](http://www.boulderuk.com) or call 01254-693-056.

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# yo!

He started climbing in the 60's. He designed the sets for Live Aid, then hung out in Chamonix before starting the Yo! Sushi chain. Tipped as the new Richard Branson, he thinks on a 1000-year lifespan and wants to see the Yo! flag on expeditions around the world. Welcome to the world of **Simon Woodruffe**.

## **L**et's kick off with an easy one - how did an entrepreneur like you start climbing?

Well, it was a long time ago. I went to Marlborough College, and a teacher called Mr Nash used to drag us out on school climbing trips to Dartmoor. It was great, and I still count myself very lucky to have done that, to have seen and smelt climbing in the 60's.

## **A**ny particular great climbing days that stick in your memory then?

Mmm. It's still got to be the early days, the first trips to Wales, dossing out in Nant Peris. These were the days of Joe Brown - Cenotaph Corner was still legendary, I remember looking at it in awe, thinking it was the hardest line imaginable. And then, in '67 we got on a school exchange to Saas Fee, and being the sixties, I managed to experience 4000m peaks, pot, and flowers in my hair all in one go. Now that was an education! But climbing's given me so much; it's like a ribbon that's run through my entire life. OK, I might have only led a handful of E1's but it's all about the people, the history, the places. I've seen Llanberis since the 60's and feel like I've got a god given right to be there, and I love that.

## **A**nd what about bad times - any gnarly days out you wish you hadn't had?

Easy. Swanage about 14 years ago. I'd just got divorced and was feeling a bit invincible, so went down on my own, and hooked up with two lads. We warmed up, then showing off a little, I decided to do this VS. I was out of touch though, maybe not placing gear that well. The route traversed across a wobbly flake, but then it petered out - I was suddenly off route. The only way back was across the flake, and of course it came off, taking me with it... I fell 30ft, smashing my head and legs, all very dramatic. The two guys were very good though, one stayed and one ran for the coastguard. The next thing I knew a Sea King got called in with rotor blades whirling two feet from the cliff, and the winch man wildly penduluming in to reach me. Then it was

straight to Poole hospital, but after all that drama, the doctors took one look at me and kept me waiting for two hours! Turned out I'd fractured two legs and an arm, but nothing too serious.

## **O**uch. Talking of epics then, have you got any climbing heroes?

Well, when I started it was the era of Joe Brown, Don Whillans and Tom Patey. They were called "tigers", and we really meant it! I'm still in awe of the modern day climbers, but these were the heroes of my formative years, the ones that go deep down. It's like the music you grow up with will always mean so much more to you. Like Don Whillans, he's Led Zeppelin. The modern guys, they're more like Hearsay.

## **M**mm. We'll tell them that. What did you do before starting the Yo! Sushi Chain?

I left school in the 60's and it was a revolutionary time in every way. But I didn't really know what I wanted to do, well apart from being a climber. As it happened, I ended up falling into Theatre design, then became a roadie. This evolved into starting a set design

know the Mt Blanc massif. Spent my time climbing, ski-ing, the works. I was just getting to know my way around when I decided it was time to come back to the UK.

## **W**hat about now - do you still manage to get out much?

Yes - definitely. I've got a bit more time at the moment. I only live an hour away from the Peak and am looking forward to some good routes there this summer! Mind you, I'm 50 now, so I like to climb with people I can relate to, nothing too hard please...

## **S**o, you've been a climber for a while, is there anything going on in the climbing world right now that excites you?

Well, Jo Simpson is a friend, and we share a speaking agent and he keeps me in touch with the latest gossip in the climbing world. He writes in such a beautiful way, his stories of far away places never cease to inspire me. I'm really pro-email actually; it's totally revived the lost art of Victorian letter writing. Really, these days we think it's all been done, but it hasn't, it never will be. When I grew up Cenotaph Corner was

**"...Don Whillans, he's Led Zeppelin. The modern guys, they're more like Hearsay."**

company, doing lots of rigging for the big US rock bands, early rope access work really. This peaked in '85 when we did the sets for Live Aid, but I'd always felt a fraud, having just fallen into it without a formal design background, so decided to leave whilst the going was good! After that, well, I bought a one bedroom flat in Chamonix, and headed straight down there on my motorbike.

## **E**very climber's dream then. Sacking it all in to climb full time - did you get any big routes done?

No. Nothing too extreme. I just got to

unobtainable, the hardest route imaginable. Now there are climbs 8/9 grades harder than that. And it always surprises me how much untouched rock there is out there still, new places to be discovered all the time.

## **Y**ou ended up sponsoring a team in the Italian Job climbing competition at Mile End wall, (and as a result got dragged into doing this interview...) How did that come about?

Well, one of the junior competitors parents got in touch. His son, Tom Arnold, was entering the competition and



was looking for some sponsorship. And I thought why not, that's the beauty of the Yo! name. It matches anything; Yo! Tel, Yo! Below, Yo! Japan, it's so easy to rhyme. Watch out Summit, I might take that over too - Yo! Summit. In fact, hell, I'll take over the BMC. Yo! MC.

**Hmm. We've heard stranger ideas to be honest. So, sponsoring the comp, was this just a personal interest?**

Yep. Purely personal. Yo! is still a pretty small company really. One day I'd like to get involved more, sponsor some expeditions, see the Yo! Flag flying off the back of a ship in Greenland, or outside a tent in the Himalaya.

**Er, you probably don't want to say that..**

Yeah. I bet I get a thousand letters now. Hey guys, remember Yo! is still small, give me a few years, then start writing in - not yet, please!

**No plans to start up a Yo! Climbing range just yet then?**

Er, no. Although actually I did very nearly get involved with the Castle Climbing Wall. I was looking at various ventures at that time, and thought that restaurants were only for people who couldn't think of anything else to do. Hmm. I think I made the right choice though.

**There's always a lot of debate about what the BMC should get up to, especially with regard to youth and competitions. How about you - do you think that young people should be encouraged to start climbing?**

Well, being British, we've got a great tradition of adventurers, and I'm a great believer in living life, taking responsibility and facing challenges. We live in very PC and safety conscious world these days, and it can be hard for young people to discover their independence. My daughter climbs, and I've never told her to "be careful". She's had to learn that for herself. I used to let her walk along the railings in the park, I never said be careful, she had to learn the consequences of her actions by herself. I was always behind her ready to catch her of course, but never told her that. It's the same with adventure sports. We're only ever 60 seconds from a mobile phone now, people need to learn independence, get away from being nannied. So yes, climbing's great for kids.

**And climbing competitions - good or the work of the devil?**

Ha Ha. Good, I guess. I'm a long-termist. It's easy to get caught up in the right and wrongs of the moment, but you need to learn to step back and take the longer view. And I'm talking really long, the next 1000 years or so.

**With your experience in business, how do you see the "industry" of climbing developing in the future?**

Well, I think indoor rock climbing as an entity in it's own right has yet to really take off. America is showing signs of it, but it's adoption as a fitness sport has yet to start. A bit of me doesn't like that, but again let's take the longer term view. I firmly believe that the countryside is for all, and it's value as a recreational area for urban dwellers is just as important as it is for local residents. But the real challenge of balancing the different user requirements is yet to come. All our arguments about climbing ethics come from a very moral stance, but that's the real issue.

**What do you think of climbing increasingly being used to sell "lifestyle" brands?**

Er, how do you mean?

**You know, clothing or cars being marketed with that whole "extreme" label, climbing companies increasingly seeking new participants to increase their profits...**

I've personally never had a problem with that. Really it comes down to what you want. It's better to embrace progress than defend your stance and lament the passing of the old days. The evolution of climbing is inevitable but the wise man will realise that it is certain to happen. The leaders of the sport (be they the magazines or the BMC) would do well to do what business does. Look over a much longer time period, and use "Imagined Hindsight". Take yourself 50 - 100 years into the future, and then try and look back. Make the effort to think about longer terms than your lifetime, or at least your lifetime in a current position. Have a vision.

**OK, that's enough big questions - any long-standing climbing dreams still to be done?**

Well, despite having seen it a thousand times, I've still never done Cenotaph Corner. That's my dream - maybe this summer?

**And finally, any plans to sell the empire and head off on a world rock tour?**

No, but I would like to continue on a whole series of little world tours. My secret is "This Is It" - you only live once. Be happy, and do all that you can. When I'm in LA on business I could hire a car and go shopping. Or I could take my bouldering gear, hire a Harley, and cruise down to Joshua Tree. That's the thing, integration. Add some adventure to your life wherever you are.

**Sounds good to us !!**

Interview by Alex Messenger, with thanks to Chris Arnold. Image credit: Roche Communications. More info about Yo! Sushi can be found at [www.yosushi.com](http://www.yosushi.com).



# PRIMA

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**BMC Climb 2003** A look back at the biggest competition of the year. By Graeme Alderson.



The weekend of 14-16th March brought glorious, beautiful blue skies. But over 45,000 outdoor enthusiasts decided to ignore that freak weather, and crammed into the most successful Ordnance Survey Outdoor Show yet, to check out the information stands, the retailers and various events that were taking place.

Climb 2003 was an integral part of the weekend, taking over from the old style "Festivals of Climbing", and the main attractions in the Climb area and arguably the whole Show were the "Have A Go" Walls, the Ice Wall and the bouldering competitions.

The Have a Go Walls were massively popular, with four Entre-Prises towers in constant use, and thanks to Plas y Brenin, Bear Creek and Beal for their assistance. The artificial Ice Wall also caused massive queues as people stopped to gawk at people clawing their way up the foam construction and even BMC President (as was) Dave Musgrove was persuaded to pick up some tools for the first time in years! Thanks to DMM and DB Outdoors for the loan of their kit.

There were no competitions on the Friday so the Entre-Prises boulders were used to run some improver workshops, hosted by Shane Ohly of Planetfear and ex Junior British Bouldering Champion Stew Watson.

But Saturday saw the start of the main attractions – the competitions proper. In-

ternational stars such as Malcolm Smith, Ben Moon, Stephane Julien, Vera Kotasova, Lucy Creamer, Corinne Theroux and Sandrinne Levett were mixing it with the British juniors in the final round of the A5 Series BBC. Qualification for both events took place on the Saturday and produced no surprises.

The International semi-finals were first thing on the Sunday morning and soon drew a packed crowd to see who would qualify. It was no surprise to see Vera, Sandrinne and Corinne get through but the Brits weren't too far behind, Emma Twyford only missing out by failing to get to the crucial bonus hold on one problem. The real surprise was in the men's semi, with Ben Moon giving way to an incredibly motivated Gaz Parry (well after all his employers The North Face were one of the main sponsors so we had to let him qualify!).

So the stage was set for the new format final, with the climbers coming out straight after each other, three problems for each climber. By this stage the crowd was bursting at the seams as people tried desperately to see what was going on, but they were kept well informed and entertained by the commentary team of Jerry 'Cool J' Moffatt and Ian 'Bouffant' Smith.

The women tried their first problem; all three of them topped out easily, and then out came the men. Gaz and Stephane strug-

gled on the powerful lower arête neither reaching the top. Out strode Malc and there was power to spare as he cruised it. Cue applause. Women's problem number two saw a flash by Corinne without too much of a tussle, and the problem setters legging it to the last problem to make it harder, but then Vera fell off followed by Sandrinne. Panic over. On the men's number two, Stephane topped out first go and Gaz couldn't make the top despite a real battle. Malc of course walks up it as if he's climbing the stairs. Now back to the women, and Corinne tops out to win with apparent ease. In the men's event Stephane had to flash the problem to win and hope Malc couldn't get off the floor. But the problem was just too hard and not even Malc could power his way to the top. But he didn't care - he'd won anyway.

All in all a great weekend and plans are already in place for Climb 2004. Many thanks to everyone who helped out, especially all the belayers on the "Have a Go" walls and the competition judges.

(CLOCKWISE) Malcolm Smith on the final problem / Sandrinne Levett, women's favourite / The ice-wall / Junior competitor in the final round of the Junior BBC / Emma Twyford going well / Lucinda Hughes - current British Bouldering Champion. All credit: Alex Messenger.



## urbanRock BRYCS 2003

**Starting 28th June**

This year's indoor competitions for young climbers are to be held over the summer, following extensive discussions between the BMC, climbing walls and youth groups. Running the series at this time of year will hopefully avoid some of the clashes with exams, school terms and the busiest periods at the venue walls that have been experienced in the past. Entry forms are now available from the BMC office and from host venues around the country. Dates are 28th June (Round 1), 5th July (Round 2) and 6th September (Round 3). The final will be on 27th September at the Ratho Centre, Edinburgh. Full details are available from the BMC website.

## RHM Summer Meet

**30 June, Vanoise Alps**

Rendezvous Haute Montagne (RHM) is an international women-only mountaineering group that exists to foster relations and maintain and develop an international women's climbing network and is open to all. This year's RHM summer meet will be held at Pralognan in the Vanoise Alps, from 30 June until 6 July. For more information, contact Monique at [mluttringer1@9online.fr](mailto:mluttringer1@9online.fr)

## FUNDamentals Coaching Workshops

**Summer / autumn, venues tbc.**

Following on from the successful pilot workshops held last year, the BMC's High Performance Steering Group are planning a series of seven workshops around the country this summer and autumn. The aim is to offer instructors and others who are involved in introducing climbing to youngsters the opportunity to broaden their knowledge of coaching techniques for both indoor and outdoor situations. Dates and venues are to be confirmed, but the Castle Climbing Centre (London) and the Lakeland Climbing Centre (Kendal) are already on board. Further details are available from [graeme@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:graeme@thebmc.co.uk)

## Student Seminar

**4-5<sup>th</sup> October, Plas y Brenin**

The highly popular seminar is again running in October. Designed for student-based walking, climbing and mountaineering clubs, it gives senior post holders the opportunity to improve their club practices and to help ensure safe and environmentally sustainable enjoyment of our mountains. Following the successful revised programme format last year, this year's seminar will include lectures, workshops and practical training (indoor and outdoor) on a variety of topics. Places are limited for this popular event so please book early. Cost per person is £35. Further details and registration forms are available from the BMC website and office, or email [vanessa@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:vanessa@thebmc.co.uk)

## BMC Extraordinary General Meeting

**25 October 2003, Manchester**

Just another reminder. The BMC is calling an EGM at 12pm on Saturday 25th October to agree membership subscription rates for 2004. All club and individual members are invited to attend the meeting at the BMC Office, 177-179 Burton Rd, Manchester, M20 2BB. The agenda and associated resolutions will be published in Summit 31 in September. See you there!

## A5 Series BBC

**Starting October**

Dates for the A5 Series British Bouldering Championships 2003/04 haven't been firmed up yet, but are looking likely to start on 18th October at the National Rock Climbing Centre (a.k.a. Ratho). Dates for next years BICC also haven't been confirmed but will be based around the desire to have a month clear of National events in the lead up to the hoped for Bouldering World Cup at the Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show on 2-4th April 2004.



# SCOTTISH WINTER ARRIVES EARLY.



This year at Plas y Brenin, for the first time ever, were posting our eagerly awaited 2004 winter programme dates on our website in May. Months before our 2004 brochure goes to press.

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# EXPEDITIONS

Cheap flights, abundant information, and healthy grant funding means expedition climbing in the UK is thriving. But how do you get started? **Jon Bracey** suggests some ways.

**M**aking the leap from Scottish winter and Malpine climbing to venturing into the greater ranges seems a daunting task. However people like Ian Parnell have shown that even with little alpine experience it's possible to get straight into the thick of the action. With a healthy dose of ambition, some experienced friends, and a little Dutch courage it seems that anything is possible.

These tortuous 'holidays' often start in the library, laboriously trawling through dozens of mind-numbing journals trying to find a suitable objective. But if that doesn't take your fancy, try and get invited onto a trip and let someone else do the legwork.

In deciding where and when to go there are several things to consider. If you don't like Dhal Bhat, then forget India and Pakistan for a start. The Himalayas obviously have a huge attraction with the biggest and wildest faces, but have some equally huge drawbacks. The monsoon limits you to spring and autumn, and often the weather is very unstable even during the accepted climbing months. Expensive peak fees, liaison officers, and endless red tape can be too much for some. A day spent in the Delhi Customs Shed trying to release freight for example, will put most people off for life.

In recent years many people have been concentrating on the more accessible ranges of Alaska, South America, and Greenland. Attractions include lesser altitudes, short approaches, stable weather, and no frustrating bureaucracy. Plus, without the constraints of peak permits there is no pressure to risk yourself on an out of condition route.

Sometimes all you start with is a dull, out of focus photo and the name of a mountain. Then you have to find and persuade others to join you. Spots like the infamous Broadfield Pub in Sheffield are perfect and it always helps if they've had a few beers before you start your sales pitch. A good well-balanced team is crucial and can either make or break a trip - spending weeks in cramped tents with the same couple of mates can test even the best friendships.

With everything set and flights booked the excitement builds with every day as the departure date looms. This is the time when some people are out pounding the streets morning and night, perfecting their already Olympian like fitness levels. At this stage others are busy gorging themselves stupid in an attempt to pile on extra pounds to



# '03

## WHO'S GOING WHERE IN 2003?

This year's collection of expeditions is as varied as ever. From high altitude Himalayan ridges to Tilmanesque adventures around South Georgia and hard technical rock routes in Greenland and Peru. And if you have a longstanding dream, then why not make this the year to do something about it? Grants aren't only for seasoned veterans attempting hard routes, each year people are helped out on their very first expeditions. With some careful research and a bit of enthusiasm it could be you in 2004!

(OPPOSITE) Big packs, midway on a ten-day traverse of Marble Wall, Kazakstan. (LEFT) Ian Renshaw new routing in Greenland, an increasingly popular destination. Both Credit: Jon Bracey. (TOP) Penguins on South Georgia. Credit: Mark Vallance.



## SOUTH AMERICA

### British Aguilera

David Hillebrandt leads a trip to Cerro Aguilera (c.2500m), an isolated peak on the western edge of the South Patagonia icecap. Although listed as an objective by two fairly recent expeditions neither has actually reached the peak. Can they?

### South Georgia

Dr Alun Hubbard continues the Tilman sailing and climbing tradition. A seven-man team will make the 5000km trip from Patagonia to explore the NE and SW Coastline of South Georgia. Possible ascents include the first ascent of Mount Roots East Peak (2159m) and one of the remaining unclimbed peaks in the Three Brothers Range (c.1800m).

### Jirishanca Re-match

Jirishanca (6094m) at the north end of the Cordillera Huayhuash of Peru is rated as one of the most difficult mountains in South America. Alun Powell and Nick Bullock are going back for a rematch. Having unsuccessfully attempted its SE Face in 2002 they know that the 'couloir of death' at the bottom of the face must be avoided unless it is completely frozen.

### Maestri Egger (Back)

Some of the worst weather in the region for years meant this year's trip fared even worse than last year's attempt, which was curtailed following a serious ankle injury to Leo Houlding. The plan to determine the truth of Maestri's claim of an ascent in 1959 was thwarted with the team failing to even get their kit to the foot of the route.

### Tepui 03 (Back)

John and Anne Arran returned to Venezuela and completed a major new big wall ascent of the East Face of Acopan, deep in the heart of the Gran Sabana region, without using a single piece of fixed gear. The 600m tower gave a 21-pitch climb and involved a great deal of E5 and E6 climbing in addition to its J3 (hard vegetation-pulling!) pitches. The entire climb was completed on-sight and with no falls.

### Women's Cerro Torre (Back)

Airlie Anderson and Roberta Nouns (Brazil) had hoped to make the first ascent by an all female team of Cerro Torre (3128m) by the Compressor Route, but they were also beaten by the appalling weather.



tude headaches. Even better still, add smoking to simulate the oxygen deficient air and a dodgy curry to prime the stomach for 'Delhi Belly'.

The more conventional like Matt Dickinson stick to relentless laps on Win Hill or similar steep hillsides with heavy rucksacks. Since, despite what some may say, it is essential to be fit whatever your form of training. Another key attribute of a successful expedition climber, that can be overlooked, is mental toughness. The mountains are no place for the faint hearted and when things start to go wrong a cool head is required. After several days on a climb, fatigue predictably sets in and a depth of will power is required to keep going. There are times on big routes when retreat is not an option so you need to know that your partner is fully committed. Experience is the key here and after their first expedition most people know whether or not they are up to it.

At times, it will all seem like far too much work, especially when all your friends are just jetting off for some relaxed Thailand sport climbing. But, even if your first trip doesn't go to plan, stick with it. Because when it's bad, OK it's very bad. But when it's good, it's unbeatable. II

Jon Bracey is a devoted expedition climber. His highlight so far is the first ascent of the north face of Tupilak, East Greenland, in winter. Along with Jules Cartwright he runs 'Vertigo', a company leading climbing holidays and expeditions worldwide. See [www.vertigo-mountainguides.com](http://www.vertigo-mountainguides.com).



Matt Dickinson, lovesick in India.  
Credit: John Bracey.

### Puscanturpa Norte

In 2000, two French teams climbed direct routes on the 800m NW Face of Puscanturpa Norte (5652m) in the Cordillera Huayhuash of Peru, but used fixed ropes and some bolts. This very strong six-man team whipped into shape by Mark Pretty hopes to 'free' the routes.

## ALASKA

### North East Tokositna

Malcolm Bass and Simon Yearsley plan to attempt the unclimbed 1000m South Face of Kahiltna Queen (3773m). Split by two obvious couloir systems, the face offers challenging but objectively safe lines.

### British Central Alaska

Paul Ramsden and Andy Kirkpatrick have two main objectives. First is the North Face of Thunder Mountain. Second the as yet ignored NNW face of Denali, situated between the unfashionable Wickersham Wall and the NW Buttress. This would give 9000ft of new climbing, and surely plenty of suffering.

### Kitchatna 2003

Stuart McAleese, Twid Turner and Ollie Sanders aim to fly from Talkeetna with two objectives in mind. They will first attempt the unclimbed 1200m 'Super Dupa Couloir' on the Citadel (2597m), before moving south to make the first ascent of the 1200m SE Buttress of Middle Triple Peak (2693m).

### Mount Vancouver 2003

Paul Knott and Dr Erik Monasterio are attempting to make the first ascent of the East Rib of Mt Vancouver (4812m) in the St Elias Range and hope 'an ability to perform on minimal rations' will help them succeed on this multiday route. More suffering then.

### British Foraker

After acclimatising on the west Buttress of Denali, the strong team of Rich Cross and Jon Bracey hope to make a first ascent on the 'awesome' 2000m SE Face of Mount Foraker (5304m). The main difficulties are concentrated on a 1000m high rock buttress.

Unclimbed peaks! Entering a Greenland fiord. Credit: Alex Messenger

keep them going on those long, lonely nights in bivouacs. This strategy is essential for Arctic adventures and seems sensible given that on a recent trip to the Arwa Spires, Pakistan, Al Powell and Co. lost about 10kg each. People like Andy Parkin on the other hand never seem to each much at all, so find adjusting to starvation suffer-fests no problem. But tales of living off handfuls of dandelions in Patagonia and comments "that no routes in the Alps are long enough to warrant taking food on", suggest that maybe Andy is of another species altogether.

Many seasoned expedition climbers often scoff at the ridiculous idea of training and prefer to spend evenings down the boozier rather than the gym. This is seen by some as the best preparation possible. A training regime along this line of thinking was put forward by Andy MacNae, ex-BMC National Officer to ready oneself for the worst that even the Himalayas can throw at you. A good skinful of ale and the inevitable hangover will condition you to the unavoidable dehydration and pounding alti-

## About the funding

BMC expedition grants are only made possible through funding from UK Sport. In the past there has been confusion over this, some thinking that membership subscriptions were helping to subsidise others "holidays", but that isn't the case. The grant is specifically for the support of British climbers overseas and cannot be used for any other purpose. Another common misconception is that the funding is only for "elite" mountaineers. Although those operating at the highest standards do tend to go on more expeditions, and so become regular fixtures in these lists, anyone can apply.

To meet the criteria for consideration for a BMC award teams must be attempting innovative ascents in remote mountain environments in 'good' style. Most expeditions will also be considered for the Mount Ever-

est Foundation (MEF) award. The MEF's criteria is slightly different to that of the BMC's. Their main concern is the exploratory nature of the expedition rather than the technical difficulty, and applications from medical and environmental expeditions or research proposals relating to mountain environments are also considered.

## How to Apply

The BMC conducts its interviews in conjunction with the MEF and applications for BMC funding are made via the MEF's application system, the BMC does not have a separate grant application form. Expedition organisers are strongly advised to meet MEF application deadlines (31 August and 31 December for the following year) so as to maximise funding opportunities. However the BMC understands that in exceptional

circumstances it may not be possible to meet these deadlines and will therefore accept applications directly up to the 15th February in the year of the proposed expedition, as long as they are submitted on MEF application forms. Expeditions applying directly to the BMC will not be eligible for MEF funding and should be aware that they can only be assessed on the information they provide on paper. For this reason the level of BMC support may be significantly less than if they had applied through normal MEF channels.

**For further information and application forms for BMC/MEF awards, contact: Bill Ruthven, Gowrie, Cardwell Close, Warton, Preston, PR4 1SH, or visit [www.mef.org](http://www.mef.org). The application deadlines for 2004 expeditions are 31st August and 31st December 2003.**

## KYRGYZSTAN

### British Kyrgyz-Kuilu

This expedition celebrates the 50th anniversary of Chester Mountaineering Club and aims to cater for a wide range of abilities. Robin Gibson's 13-member team plan to visit the Kuilu-Too range in Kyrgyzstan to make first ascents of peaks up to 5250m.

### Eagle Ski Club Ak Shiirak

Steve Wright and team plan the exploration and first ski traverse of the Ak Shiirak in the Tien Shan of Kyrgyzstan. Because of nearby mines there is a primitive road network in the area, so access will be by six-wheel drive vehicles. There are at least ten peaks in the range of 4500 – 5300m, many of which should be climbable on ski.

## GREENLAND

### SMC Greenland 2003

A strong four-man team organized by Stephen Reid hope to make the first ascent of the 1000m South Ridge of Dansketinde (2930m) the highest peak in the Staunings Alps. A chartered helicopter will drop them on Col Major, at the foot of their route.

### Wales Greenland 2003

Sue Savege's five-women expedition plans to visit Schweizerland to climb new routes on the south Face of Tupilak (2264m) and the North Face of Rodebjerg (2140m) - plus subsidiary peaks in the area. They also intend to make a film about the trip.

### Knud Rasmussen Land

This six-person trip led by Bob Dawson, will attempt a number of first ascents of peaks in the Knud Rasmussen Land in East Greenland. They will land at c.1700m on a glacier that will give them easy access to two mountain chains.

### Southern Kangerdlugssuaq

Brian Davison is returning to the Kronprins Frederiks Berge area of East Greenland to carry on with the exploration of previous years, and climb as many of the remaining virgin peaks as possible.

### Torssukatak Spires

Jon Roberts and three friends have selected the Cape Farewell area for their first visit to Greenland. They will establish a base camp on Pamiagdruk Island from which to explore the potential for one or two-day free rock routes of VS to E2.

### Prins Christian Sund

A talented team including Ben Heason, Miles Gibson and Steve McClure are hitting the Prins Christian Sund area of South Greenland. The team plan to climb various granite faces producing some hard free routes.

### Midnight Sun

The Rignys Bjerg range is the destination for this eight-person trip led by Martin Bohl. After landing on the glacier they hope to make first ascents of three peaks (2680m, 2390m & 2380m).

### Scottish SE Greenland

After collecting the pulks that have been stored since their 1999 trip, regular 'Greenlanders', Douglas Campbell and Malcolm Thorburn will continue with unsupported ice cap travel by ski coupled with mountaineering ascents en-route.

### Scottish Lemon Mountains

The Lemon Mountains still offer plenty of scope for first ascents and new routes. Graham Stein's ten-person team plan to set up a base camp on the Hedgehog Glacier from which to explore the area between the Lucy and Courtauld Glaciers.

## HIMALAYA

### Annapurna III SW Ridge

Attempted by at least three siege expeditions, the SW Ridge of Annapurna III (7550m) has resisted all comers. But it might fall to an alpine style approach by Kenton Cool and a very strong team.

### Virgin Summits - Tibet

Four experienced expeditioners led by Adam Thomas plan to explore as many peaks as possible from an unnamed and rarely vis-

ited valley to the west of Niwu (Nye) in the Nyainqentanglha East range of Tibet. Of particular interest are Nenang (6870m) and Jajacho (6575m).

### Khumbu Alpine Style

Nick Bullock, Jules Cartwright and Al Powell plan to climb new routes 'quick & light' on three well known peaks in Nepal: the SW Face of Kusum Kangguru (6367m), the North Face of Lobju (6145m) and the North Face of Kwangde Lho (6187m).

### British Qomo Lhari

Roger Payne and Julie-Ann Clyma attempt the first ascent of the NW Ridge of Qomo Lhari (7314m) in the South of Tibet. The peak was first climbed by Spencer-Chapman in 1937, however the long, elegant NW Ridge, which offers technical mixed climbing, remains untouched.

### Reo Purgyl North Face

This will be the Julie-Ann Clyma's fifth attempt to obtain a permit for the first ascent of the North Face of Reo Purgyl (6816m). No foreign team has been allowed in since its two previous ascents by Indian teams via the West Ridge in 1971 & 1991.

### British Da Kangri

John Town's three-man team plan to visit Toling Dechen county of central Tibet, a mountainous area in the south of the Nyanchen Tangla range with many unclimbed 6000m summits. They have chosen Da Kangri (6247m) as their objective, which they hope to climb from the north.

## CHINA

### British Mt Grosvenor

The Daxue Shan Range of Sichuan Province is largely unexplored, and contains several 6000m peaks which have never been attempted. One of these is Mt Grosvenor (6376m), and Mick Fowler's four-man team hope to bag the first ascent.

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# A+

It's official. Climbing's good for you. **Becky Mincher** reports on a new scheme pioneered at Rock City in Hull last summer.

During 2002 the BMC began supporting the first round of a three-year 'out of school' learning program in conjunction with Rockcity indoor climbing centre. The project was financed by The New Opportunities Fund, and targeted two under-achieving schools within the city of Hull, with the aim of improving low educational attainment through participation. Both the schools involved were situated in two of Hull's lowest socio-economic wards, and the key features within the summer project were to increase self-esteem and motivation and promote community participation.

These ambitious targets were to be accomplished by giving the pupils the opportunity to take part in previously unobtainable 'out of school' activities such as climbing, canoeing, skiing and hill walking. The majority of the climbing took place at Rockcity Indoor Climbing Centre, and outdoor activities were carried out in the Peak District, Yorkshire, North Wales, and at Plas y Brenin National Mountain Centre. The project did not aim to promote climbing, but rather to use climbing and the other activities as a 'tool' to engage young people in group work.

Over the summer, the pupils were introduced to various social settings and taught basic communication skills, providing a stage for contextual learning, something which schools often lack. The key was to promote group work, communication and participation, all of which are an essential part of climbing and outdoor-based activities. And it soon became apparent that such teaching



methods were beginning to have a positive effect on the pupils' attitudes.

It's easy to see why. Just think back to when you were at school, to those times sitting in a boring classroom, thinking, 'what an earth does this have to do with anything?' Well, put someone in an environment where they can apply what they've learned and the difference can be dramatic. What's the use in teaching geography to a class if they cannot touch, feel or even see a rock? In fact, the majority of the pupils had never even left Hull, the flattest part of the country, prior to the summer project.

The pupil/teacher relationship also benefited since the pupils and teachers acted differently towards one another once out of their usual hierarchical order. All shared the same fears and apprehensions about climbing and the other outdoor activities, resulting in a 'stripping' of the socially ascribed roles and everyone working together in a less authoritarian manner.

The pupils soon began to respect their new surroundings, and any issues such as litter dropping were quickly tackled at an early stage. When pupils were asked to explain the differences between the countryside and their hometown, it became apparent that they saw the two very differently. All the pupils cleaned up after each visit, and this included taking other people's rubbish as well as their own. Again, these attitudes were due to the contextual learning.

So, did it work? Well, due to working with the pupils throughout the entire project, it is fair to say that, personally, I did see major changes. And having visited the two schools since the summer, other longer-term benefits can now be identified. Both schools have produced data to suggest that the pupils who took part have improved both their grades, and their overall attitudes towards in-school learning. Plus, as a direct result of the project, two pupils ended up competing in the Yorkshire Area round of the urbanRock British Regional Youth Climbing Series, with one coming 17<sup>th</sup> in the finals! Something which none would ever have had the opportunity to do before.

Since the summer, both schools have had the opportunity to create an 'after school' climbing club. This was made possible through the project's encouragement of

parental and teacher participation, and both schools now have a sustainable indoor climbing community. Also after the success of this first year we have now enlisted the help of Andy Kirkpatrick, a former Hull pupil, who will be giving talks at both of the schools involved, and Ben Moon has also agreed to provide performance coaching sessions throughout the summer of 2003. Ben is keen to get started and believes that 'It is really important to give young people every opportunity to enjoy and learn from climbing.'

Such projects are always open to the charge of "promoting climbing", but this was never our intention. The aim was simply to use climbing as a tool to engage the young people, and it worked. The majority of people encountered at the crag were pleased to see children being given new opportunities, and there was a general consensus that people were impressed with the BMC putting lottery money towards a good use. Of course, there was the odd person who objected to group use, but this seemed unfair, since all climbing activities took place during the week. We didn't recruit climbers and take over 'your' crag for the weekend - university climbing clubs already do a pretty good job at that! II

**"I'm in Norway at the moment, soloing the Troll Wall - which is a bit like a 1000m Bransholme maisonette! All I can say is that without inner city youths like Joe Brown, Don Whillans, Stevie Haston, and Paul Pritchard we wouldn't have the best climbing scene in the world!"**

- Andy Kirkpatrick, ex-resident of Hull, and supporter of the project. (Bransholme in Hull is Europe's largest council estate).



(TOP) Learning to climb at Rock City, Hull. (BOTTOM) Pupils on top of Mt Snowdon. Both credit: Mincher/NOF.

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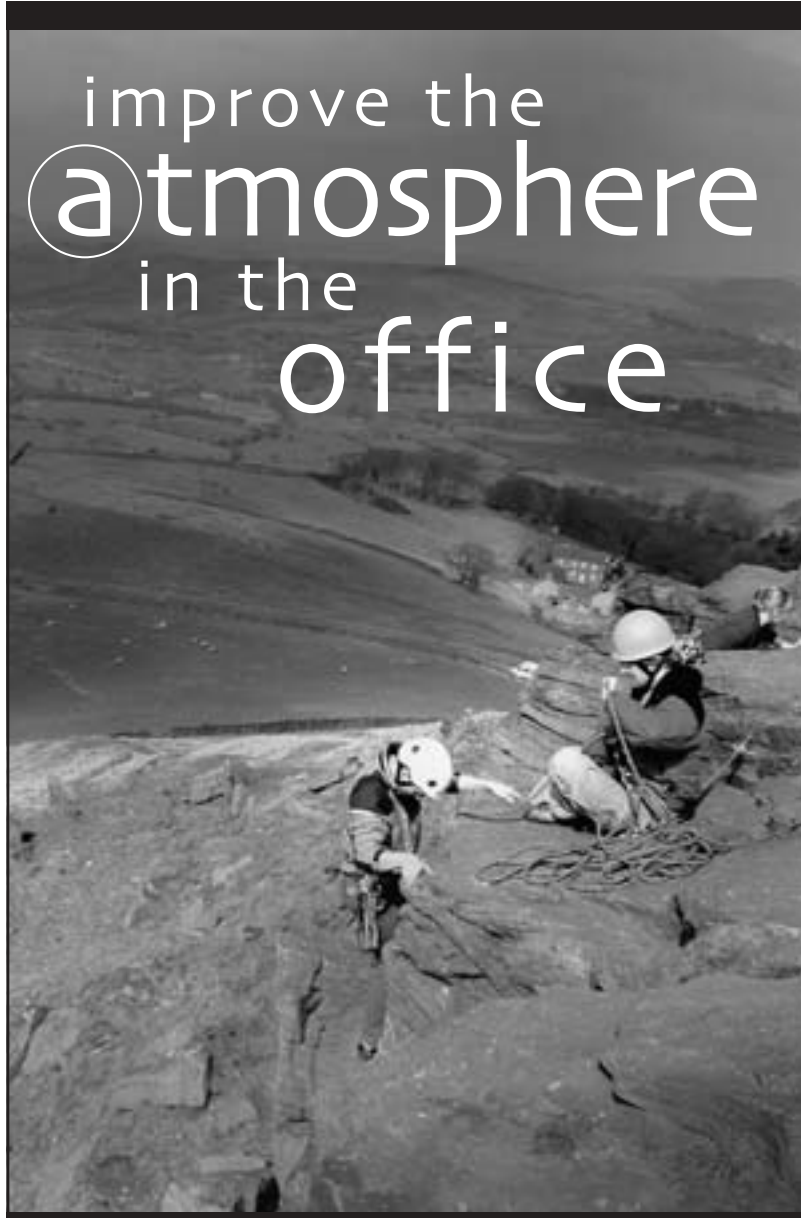
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# Slabs and pinnacles of Beinn Eighe

**Beinn Eighe: Ruadh-stac Beag** (896m),  
**Spidean Coire nan Clach** (993m),  
**Sgurr Bàn** (970m), **Sgurr nan Fhir Duibhe** (963m)

Walk time 7h40 Height gain 1200m  
Distance 15km OS Map Explorer 433

**A circuit on the Beinn Eighe massif with many sections of tricky scrambling. The slabs on Spidean Coire nan Clach and the pinnacles known as the Black Carls make this a serious route in winter conditions.**

Start from the Beinn Eighe Visitor Centre at Aultroy, 1km north of Kinlochewe (GR020630). Follow the green mountain signs for the Upper Ridge Trail. This leads westwards out of the trees, across a bridge and along a burn. At a fork, continue westwards along a path by the water, gaining altitude steadily. At another junction below a gate, continue west along the glen and cross a stile. The path fades when it reaches a plateau and a series of cairns, which combine to form a strange moonscape. Leave the plateau in a southwesterly direction, losing some height to ford the Allt Toll a'Ghiubhais. Aim directly for the broad east face of Ruadh-stac Beag and look for a series of caves just left of centre. Climb scree here to reach smooth



rocks, which can be easily scrambled. One tricky step is encountered before easy terraces lead rightwards onto the ridge. Continue south to the summit (GR973614) (3h20). Drop southwards over terraces to more scree: this makes for an awkward descent to flatter ground. Keep to the east side of the ridge below the lochan, and aim for a short gully. Climb up alongside it to reach vast slabs on the east side of Spidean Coire nan Clach. These provide excellent scrambling, though difficult when wet, and lead to a point just short of the summit (GR966597). Descend eastwards along a prominent ridge, and over towers to the top of Sgurr Bàn. Drop steeply east past the

northern corrie, a cathedral of organ pipes and scree, and then climb to the summit of Sgurr nan Fhir Duibhe (GR981600) (5h40). The jagged pinnacles of the Black Carls on the north ridge provide the final scrambling: the harder sections are best avoided on the east side, apart from the final two drops which should be taken on the west. The ground then undulates to Creag Dhubh, the last point on the ridge. Descend a good path to reach the east ridge. Further down, at a knoll with a cairn, drop north into a corrie. From here, the path follows the Allt a'Chuirn, crossing a burn and deer fences before reaching the road. This leads back to the start via Kinlochewe (7h40).



This is one of 40 circular routes which feature in Northern Highlands by Nick Williams. Published by Pocket Mountains Ltd and available from all good bookshops from June, priced £5.99.



## BERGHAUS PRIZE LETTER WINNER

### LUCKY BREAK

I am writing to praise the service I received from the BMC's insurance policy. On a recent trip to New Zealand I had the misfortune of being involved in an accident, which resulted in me breaking my neck. After an excellent days cragging it was agreed that chilling out by the pool for a few hours was in order. After all, what could be more relaxing after a full on day at the crag? Mucking about, I dived in, hands behind my back and drove my head straight into the bottom of the pool resulting in a very broken neck!

I was immediately carted off to hospital where I spent the next three weeks. Unlike in Britain, New Zealand has no free NHS, so I contacted the BMC's emergency insurance and informed them of my present situation. I didn't have to worry about anything else after putting the phone down, as it was all taken care of. This included keeping in regular contact with the hospital and my father back in England, flying a nurse from England to New Zealand to fly back with me, and making sure my friend Scott (who had the same policy as me) was well looked after as well. All three of us were flown back business class and then driven to my doorstep from the airport. All in all, the best £190 I've ever spent.

**Robin Richmond, Leicestershire**



### DEAR MR MESSENGER

It was with concern that I read the letter 'Who's Praying on Whom' by Sean Taylor in Summit 28, and with sadness that I noted the editors had chosen to highlight it was the prize letter, when members of the BMC and RSPB have much in common.

The RSPB receives over 275,000 enquiries a year, by phone, letter and e-mail. We try to ensure all are dealt with in a friendly and prompt manner. We can find no record of Mr Taylor's colleagues enquiry; in the circumstances described, I would have expected the details of the site to be recorded, and followed up if considered necessary. I can only assume that some misunderstanding occurred. We are appreciative of those BMC members who have contacted us to reassure us of the quality of response they have received from us.

The peregrine population is currently thought to be at its highest recorded level, at some 1,200 pairs – although numbers have not yet recovered in south east England and east Yorkshire, and in north Scotland there have been declines over the last decade. BMC's climbing restriction scheme mentioned by Mr Taylor has played an important role in facilitating this recovery. Peregrines are now censused on a 12 year cycle. The most recent was done in 2002 by the British Trust for Ornithology, funded by RSPB, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Northern Ireland Environment and Heritage Service. In the interim, routine monitoring is undertaken by bird of prey enthusiasts.

In light of this recovery, it is no longer possible or indeed necessary to guard all nests. However, some nests are still rou-

tinely targeted by pigeon fanciers or egg collectors. We continue to mount watches at these sites, and at others where we receive specific information of a threat. Any climber who wishes to report a wildlife crime is welcome to phone the RSPB's Investigations team on 01767 680551.

**Gwyn Williams**  
Head of Sites and Species Conservation

### EX-PRESS

In the last Summit Dave Musgrove gave a comprehensive account of the recent financial difficulties of the BMC while at the same time emphasising the many continued successes. However in his first sentence Dave wrote; "For the last three years the BMC has received much bad press over its financial difficulties, ambitious expansionist plans, and so called vanity projects". Actually, apart from some criticism of the guidebook programme, the first "bad press" as such came only a year ago at the time of last years AGM in the April 2002 edition of Climber Magazine with the headline "BMC posts £167k loss". Dave has rightly explained the reasons for this deficit in his article. In fact throughout the 90s and to the end of '01 the BMC generally enjoyed favourable press at a time of an unprecedented growth in membership, and also, as Dave highlights, an increase in the range of services and activities offered to members and a number of outstanding successes.

**Derek Walker, ex-BMC General Secretary**

### ROPE MARKING

In High Magazine, May 2003, there is a Rope Safety Warning by Peter Chaly. This was a factual report about a "Notification concerning Rope Marking" issued by the UIAA Safety Commission in April'02. That Notification was prompted by some research conducted by the German Alpine Club into the effects of marking ropes with felt-tip pens and commercial rope markers. It was concluded that some markers degraded the performance of some, but not all, ropes. Since the Safety Commission could not test all possible markers on all brands of rope, it then issued a warning "against marking a rope with any substance that has not been specifically approved by the rope manufacturer of that rope".

This did not get much publicity in the UK, but in some countries it produced an over-reaction, with retailers demanding that rope manufacturers supply ropes without any middle marking. But there has never been any indication that manufacturers markings produce any degradation, and the German research did not test any marker manufactured by a rope manufacturer. Hence the Safety Commission issued in June 2002 the following Addendum to the Notification to clarify these points:

1. *The rope markings applied in the factory by rope manufacturers do not produce any deterioration in the properties of the rope, and hence do not present any danger to climbers.*
2. *The rope markers produced and marketed by rope manufacturers for climbers to apply to their ropes do not present any danger to climbers, so long as they are used sparingly, in accordance with the instructions.*

I only know of one rope marking pen produced by a rope manufacturer, that of Beal. This has been tested on Beal ropes without any adverse effects. Beal also state that it will not have adverse effects on any other polyamide (nylon) rope.

Although the Safety Commission was correct to issue the warning, the practical effects can easily be overstated. The worst markers reduced the number of standard test drops held by 50%. This would only be a problem in a real fall if the marked section of rope were repeatedly loaded over the krab attached to the top runner. Since it is usually the middle of the rope which is marked, the chance of this particular small section being repeatedly loaded is pretty unlikely. Probably of greater concern is the cumulative degradation that would occur by repeatedly abseiling past the marking. However, if the marking is used sparingly, to mark the sheath and not soak through the rope, any degradation should become visible on the sheath before it seriously weakens the rope. Even so, it is better to use a marker which does not have any adverse effect on the rope.

**Neville McMillan**  
Vice President, UIAA Safety Commission  
Chairman, BMC Technical Committee



# summit

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## LOST & FOUND

**Found at Shepherds Crag.** 16th Feb black duvet jacket. Makers name & route it was below to ensure return. Contact John On 01934 814478

**GPS FOUND** - April 5th in N. Lakes area. Contact 01912576740

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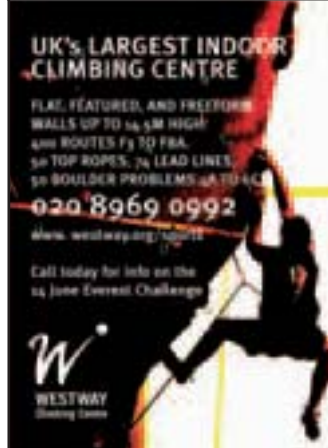
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# Sh\*t

If you go down to the crags today, you could be in for a shock. People are systematically abusing the places we climb, and popular bouldering venues are showing the strain. Ian Hill takes a look.

In the rush to crimp, it seems that many are turning a blind eye to their damage to the crag environment. Blocking gates with their cars, taking a beeline to the crag through vegetation and over dry stone walls, splattering chalk, dropping litter and only pausing to leave a deposit behind any convenient boulder.

Water bottles, crisp packets, finger tape, apple cores, banana skins, and fag butts litter the ground, whilst paths to most crags are wide enough for several people to walk abreast, and grass has all but disappeared from beneath popular areas. On some classic problems at Stanage such as *Not To Be Taken Away* or *Deliverance*, the level of erosion has even changed their nature. Chalk and tick marks spread the beta on just about every move, and the left hand ends of Rubicon and Raven Tor are littered with toilet paper and worse, and are not for the faint of heart. At many popular areas it's now a case of beware where you tread.

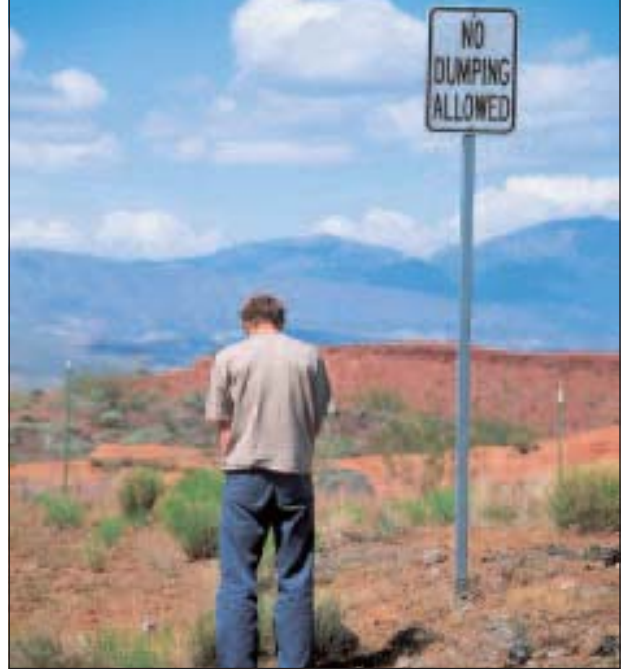
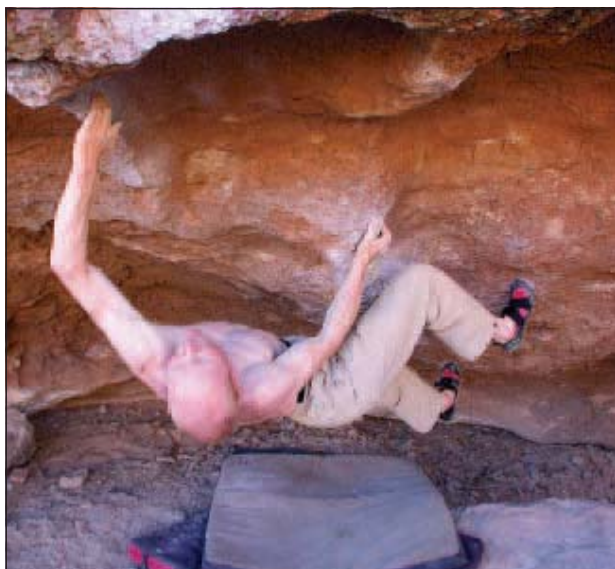
If this state of affairs continues we'll have more access problems. Pressure on the environment is increasing from many directions. We can argue about damage caused by cyclists, motorbikes, walkers or any other countryside users but that doesn't change the fact that we should treat the land with respect and avoid giving ammunition to people who would stop us using crags.

A trip to Bishop last year highlighted the issues. Apart from the superb bouldering one of the most obvious things about the place was the cleanliness of the boulders and their surrounds. The rock is relatively clean and while chalk is visible it is in fairly small quantities given the popularity of the area. Litter is noticeable by its absence, and here nobody makes a beeline for the boulders; they stick to the paths and avoid creating new tracks and damaging the surrounding soil and vegetation. But best of all, when you walk away from the climbing areas there are no piles of shit lying behind any boulder that dares to offer a scrap of privacy.

But why is this? I talked to Mick Ryan, a Brit ex-pat and veteran of the climbing scene who now lives in Bishop and works for Rockfax guidebooks. He suggested that it revealed something of a different mindset on that side of the pond;

*"One of the main differences between US and UK cultures is personal responsibility. Americans don't have the culture of a welfare state as is found in the UK and so tend to take more responsibility for their actions and themselves."*

The idea of having to look after themselves has spilled over into the climbing world, giving a very different approach from the UK;



*"American climbers adopt their cliffs, they look after them. They build trails, have litter pick-up and liaise with local land management agencies and private land owners on access issues. In Bishop, climbers are engaged in all kinds of pro-active measures to conserve outdoor resources and protect access to local climbing areas. As a Brit who was used to leaving access and management issues to others it was quite a shift in philosophy. Everything done by climbers round here tries to include positive environmental factors; this is essential if the freedom to climb outside is to be preserved."*

This impressive grass roots approach has been formalised and supported by the US Access Fund, and when combined with the heightened environmental awareness of US climbers and negative pressure from land management agencies you get a recipe for clean cliffs. But it's not just climbers that are helping, there is a big difference in corporate giving, with US climbing companies contributing far more to the Access Fund than their UK counterparts donate to the BMC's Access and Conservation Trust. To tackle the waste problem, the Bureau of Land Management has also installed Portalooos at key locations, such as the Happy Boulders. Perhaps it's time that the same is done at popular climbing areas over here?

The contrast between the cleanliness of the US boulders and the current degraded state of the UK venues is remarkable. This has to change. We need to take control before someone does it for us, and probably not to our advantage. As climbers we have to become acutely aware that our actions and behaviour directly affect the crag environment and the enjoyment of others. It all comes down to personal responsibility. So next time you go out don't expect someone to clean up after you, just aim to climb in such a way that no-one will ever know you've been there. II

(BELOW) Ian Hill on Red Rum, V10, Happy Boulders, Bishop. Credit: Pete Phillips.

## A code of conduct

**Take** all your litter home, even the organic bits. Leave no sign of your presence, and pick up any other litter.

**Use** established paths to get to the crag and around the boulders. Don't take short cuts or jump fences. Minimise ground and vegetation erosion under boulders by using a mat but be careful not to squash flowers or bushes.

**Cut** down on chalk use. When bouldering, consider using a chalk bucket instead of a bag. Don't dip for every move. Don't use tick marks, if you see any clean them off. After you've bouldered use your toothbrush to clean the chalk off the holds. Clean up all spills.

**Share** cars to the crag and park sympathetically. Don't cut off roads or farm tracks or gates.

**Don't** shit at the crag! Go to the toilet beforehand.

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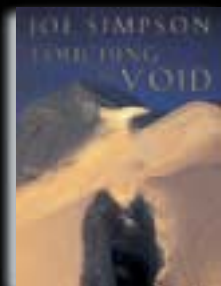
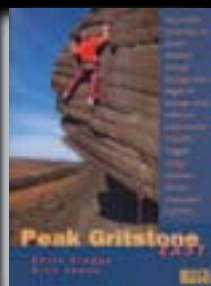
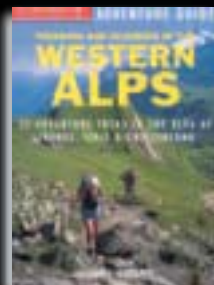
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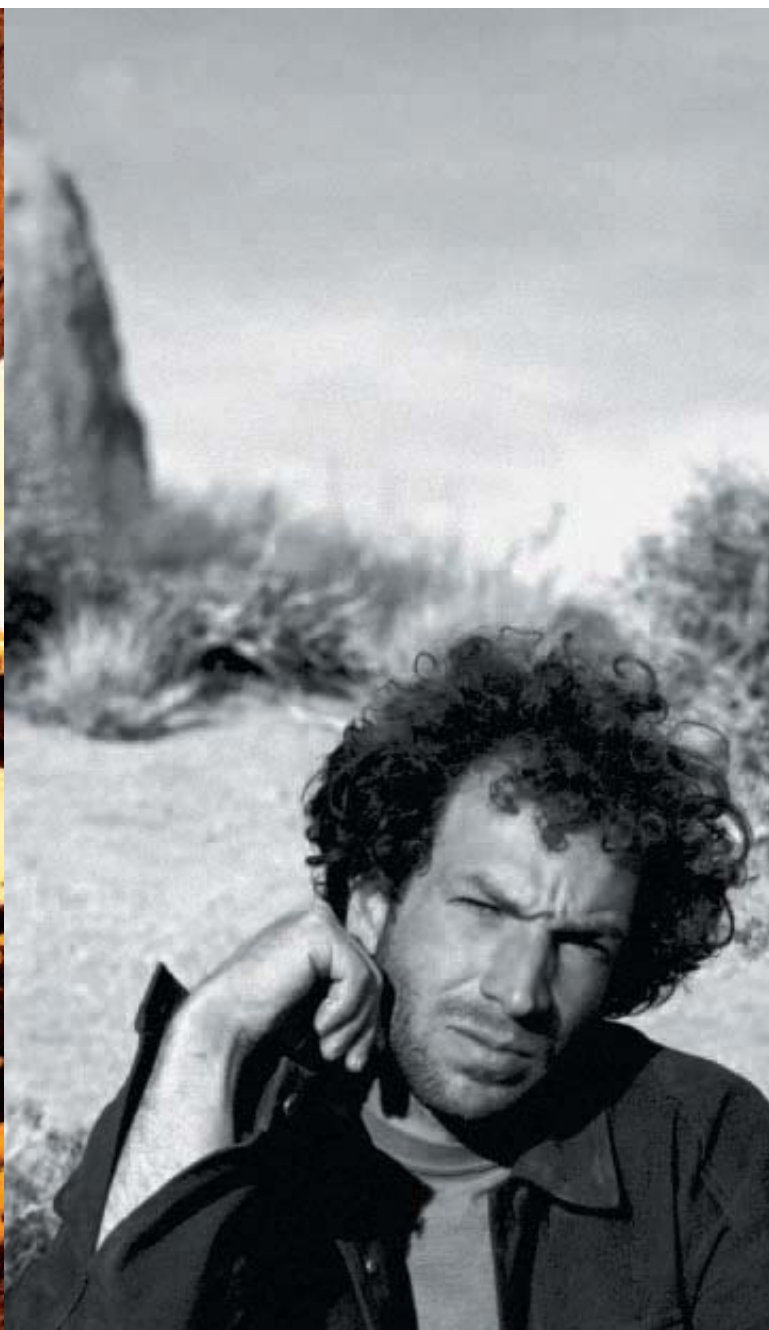
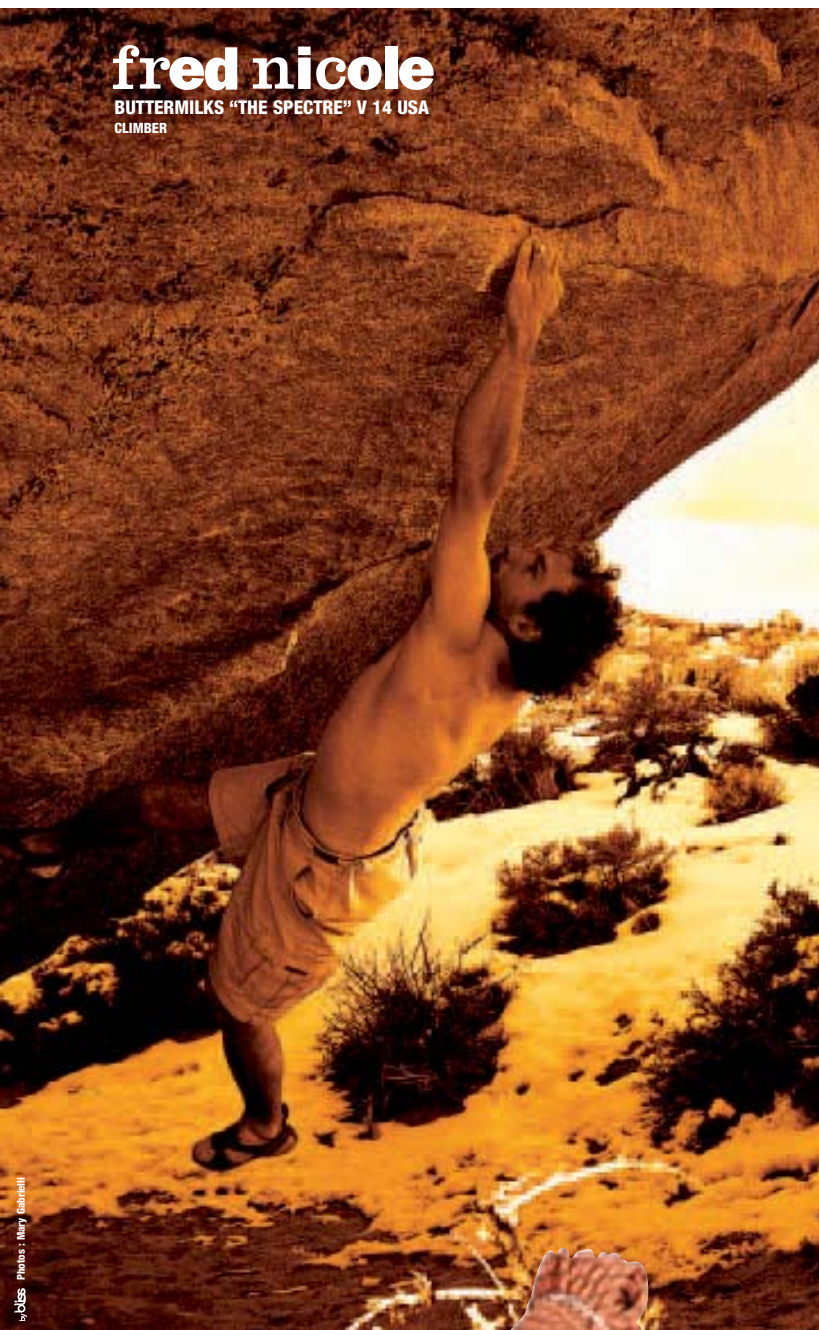
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