

# summit:46

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# Conscience

We don't need to tell you what to do. Do we?

A turd's eye view of the world? Photo: BMC.

**T**his conscience thing is all very well: saving rainforests, rescuing whales, reducing carbon emissions, eating "guaranteed happy-until-point-of-death" chicken. We all know what we should be doing - it's a no-brainer. What a shame that all these excellent ethical choices are not only expensive and boring, but also a bit too much like hard work. How inconvenient.

So despite the best of intentions we're often found chucking McDonalds down our necks, eating endangered fish, jetting off to New Zealand and sliding that organic meat back on the supermarket shelf in search of something cheaper. We'll all be good next week.

Not me you're probably thinking, I'm not like that, I'm "green". And you probably are, you're a BMC member. You're a climber, hill walker or mountaineer and we're all thoughtful individuals aren't we? Constantly appreciative and respectful of the environment, especially the ones that our sports take us into contact with.

Yes we probably are, until it becomes inconvenient. Until the usual parking places are full, but you reckon you could squeeze onto the verge. Until the stile's just a bit too far down there and the fence becomes too tempting. Until the boulder's a bit too green and a good wire-brushing would sort it out. Until you've driven all this way, the route has a bird restriction and there's no one else about. Until you've got nowhere to put that fag butt and there's a handy crack in the rock. Until that curry you had last night starts bubbling away deep inside.

You know all about being responsible, but you're an individual, you're different. Climbing and walking are adventurous sports - no one can tell you what to do. And if your moral code should flex from time to time, then so what - who's to know? Is it really that big a deal, we can all be good tomorrow. That's probably fine in the bigger picture, no one's saying that the earth is doomed if you accept that carrier bag, if you go for a drive just for the hell of it, if you give in to that craving for a dirty burger. It's your overall outlook that might make a difference. Or might not. You'll never have the satisfaction of knowing either way - how could you measure the impact of one individual on the global environment?

Don't feel too disempowered though, rest assured that on a local basis you can make a real, noticeable contribution - and not always in a good way. Somewhere out there a couple of keen boulderers might be feeling a strange tickle of emotions. Annoyance, anger even, that they can no longer boulder at Eagle Tor in the Peak District. Perhaps tempered with a slight dash of guilt, when they realise that as they dropped their trousers in someone's back garden they also tipped the scales in a delicate access situation. Eagle Tor is on private land, not covered by the Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CROW), and this was the final straw - the landowner has banned climbing indefinitely. How inconvenient.

As outdoor indiscretions go, they don't come any more dramatic than a crap, a sh\*t, a pile

of excrement, a poo, a turd. Nothing gets you noticed like a dirty protest. Just because you can get away with sh\*tting somewhere doesn't mean that you necessarily should. Barring a medical problem or sudden illness there's no real excuse for leaving such a gift at the crag, and certainly no excuse for leaving it, quite literally, lying around. You know the score: go before you hit the crag, and if you are caught short then bury any waste, and burn toilet paper.

Hopefully this is all very obvious. But what about other things such as taking your dog onto CROW land, taking a group to a crag, how to find out about bird restrictions - how do you know what's right and what's plain wrong? As increasingly numbers of people hit the hill and the crags any individual indiscretions can well add up, and whilst access may not always be taken away in such a sudden fashion, your impact could still be felt.

That's where the new BMC Crag Code comes in. We're working on a series of simple guidelines, covering all the things you should be aware of when out and about. It's in a draft stage right now, and when it's finished, we'll be distributing it to all climbing walls, shops, and outdoor centres and of course, right here in Summit.

We're not telling you what to do. You already know. It's just a reminder. The rest is up to you. ■

## What do you think?

All comments to [summit@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:summit@thebmc.co.uk).



WELCOME TO...

# ISSUE 46

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

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

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## RISK & RESPONSIBILITY

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



# Features

## 16 That's me

The poet climber Ed Drummond.

## 18 On my art

Neal Beggs and Dear Prudence.

## 20 Against the wall

Is Yosemite Valley in trouble?

## 28 Race for the summit

Inside the sport of alpine running.

## 34 Gold fever

Dave Lucas finds treasure in the Sinai.

## 40 Fast food

Gary Rolfe is in the kitchen.

## 44 Schooled

A lesson is learnt in the Alps.

## 46 New media

Summit goes online.

## 48 Matterhorn memories

One man's ascent remembered.

## 50 The devil's cracks

Sometimes you just don't fit.

## 54 Plastic fantastic

Climb '07 and more.

# Regulars

3 The issue 6 News 10 Access news 12 Letters

14 Stuff 56 Wales 57 Folkard 58 Events

61 On the ground 62 Hill skills 64 Climb skills

66 Tech skills 74 Last thoughts



## Headlines

**"S**mall earthquake in Chile: not many dead," once wrote Claude Cockburn for The Times. He won the competition for the paper's dullest spoof headline and it was printed the next day. Appalling taste, though. Thankfully it doesn't look like any such competition is taking hold in Summit - the magazine continues to go from strength to strength, and credit must go out to all those involved.

That's not just the BMC staff either, but all the volunteers who submit interesting content, and give the magazine a real grassroots feel. The level of feedback is also shooting up - so keep those thoughts coming. The Issue in Summit 45 resulted in a real flood of emails. We asked whether you wanted Summit on recycled paper, online, or both, and the results were fascinating.

The vast majority were in favour of continuing to produce a printed edition for the foreseeable future, but doing so in a sustainable manner. Personally I must agree with all those who stuck up for the printed word, online just isn't the same.

That's not to say we've been ignoring the BMC website - far from it. It's just been completely overhauled and even features a huge archive of old Summit content cross-linked with the latest breaking news. And not a dull headline in sight. It also has RSS feeds, video, and blogs. I've no idea what some of that means, but am assured that they're all great ways of transmitting essential information about BMC work. This is always important - look at the sorry situation at Eagle Tor.

I even re-registered my membership online yesterday, and took the upgrade option for Club Members - it could not have been easier. Since I'm already a member of the Alpine Club and the Climbers' Club, the discounts meant that I was looking at a full upgrade to Individual Membership for little more than a fiver. One more club and theoretically I'd be in profit. Sadly it turned out that our old friend the Alpine Club hadn't paid its BMC subs, so the final cost was £13.50. Even so, I feel I'm getting pretty good value from the BMC. I hope you feel the same.

Have a great summer.

*Charles Clarke*

Charles Clarke  
BMC President

**ON THE COVER:** Want to be up there? One guy (or girl) on their solo journey up The Nose. They are hauling their pig (a haulbag) after the Great Roof Pitch (pitch 22 of 31), with the Pancake Flake above (pitch 23 of 31). Photographed from Yosemite Meadow (with 560mm lens) in late afternoon - the same time as the panorama on page 22. Photo: Chris Dainton.

**THIS PAGE:** Via Ferratta the French way: Ricky Morris experiences the fantastic Traversee du Coucou. Photo: Chris Dainton.



# News

Get all the latest essential news at [www.thebmc.co.uk/news](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/news)

## Quarry quashed

**A triumph for nature over profit at Longstone Edge**



An end to the destruction? Backdale quarry in its current state. Photo: SLEG.

The battle to save Longstone Edge, a picturesque part of the Peak District National Park, from unauthorised quarrying has been won. In April, following a public inquiry, the planning inspector ruled in favour of the Peak District National Park Authority's (PDNPA) enforcement action to halt the removal of large quantities of limestone by the quarry owners and operators at Backdale Quarry near Bakewell.

This ruling, despite being focussed on Backdale, is effective across all areas of Longstone Edge covered by the quarrying permission from 1952, including Wagers Flat. The PDNPA has now issued an enforcement order and stop notice against the quarry operators MMC Ltd and Bleaklow Industries Ltd who are currently appealing against the inspectorate's decision. Following the decision to halt activity at Backdale Guy Keating, BMC Access & Conservation Officer said: "This is great news and it's very heartening to see that the right decision has been made. Congratulations must go to the Park Authority and the local pressure groups for sticking to their guns and taking the quarry companies on."

The BMC has campaigned in support of the PDNPA and other pressure groups throughout the inquiry. BMC representatives and local climbers attended the inquiry, publicised the potential destruction and supported a petition. In particular the BMC would like to thank BMC Peak Access Co-ordinator Henry Folkard for his dedication to this issue.

## Cost of access

### United Utilities charge groups for access

As of April 2007, United Utilities (UU) has implemented a "rationalised permit and charging regime" for certain groups accessing its land. This will affect commercial operators and organisers of large events on UU owned land. Both the BMC and MLTE voiced concerns over the impact of the new scheme on the outdoor community, and at a meeting in March UU stated that: "we assure the BMC that we have no intention to charge the general public for access to UU owned land covered by CRoW or other access legislation. UU has always maintained a principle not make access charges for educational and charitable activities and there are no plans for this to change."

*Details of the quite complex charging policy are available on the United Utilities website [www.unitedutilities.com](http://www.unitedutilities.com).*

## Fit for a queen

### "Best crag in the world" now has guidebook to match

The new BMC definitive guidebook to Stanage is now out. Stanage - The Definitive Guide is the latest in the new breed of BMC guidebooks and continues the highly successful style set by the recent Staffordshire Roaches and Burbage, Millstone and Beyond guides. This bumper book of fun contains every route and every boulder problem on the "Queen of Grit", lovingly packed with detailed route descriptions, full-colour topos, handy maps, action photos, first ascent lists, graded lists, historical snippets and much more.

Innovative features include three Fontainebleau-style bouldering circuits to encourage exploration and a series of "My Favourite Five" where well-known climbers and guidebook contributors share their pick of the very top routes. Whether you're starting out or a seasoned campaigner, you need this book in your rucksack.

*Buy it now from the BMC website priced just £17 (members) or £18.99 (non-members).*



## Right to roam

### David Miliband meets BMC at Kinder Trespass

David Miliband, Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, met the BMC in the Peak District in April, when he was key speaker at the 75th anniversary celebrations of the Kinder Mass Trespass. Mr Miliband chatted to the BMC's Cath Flitcroft and Henry Folkard, to find out more about the issues that affect climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers. This follows Miliband's recent announcement in support of pushing through measures to create a coastal access corridor around the English coast - an idea proposed by Natural England and supported by the BMC just a few weeks before.



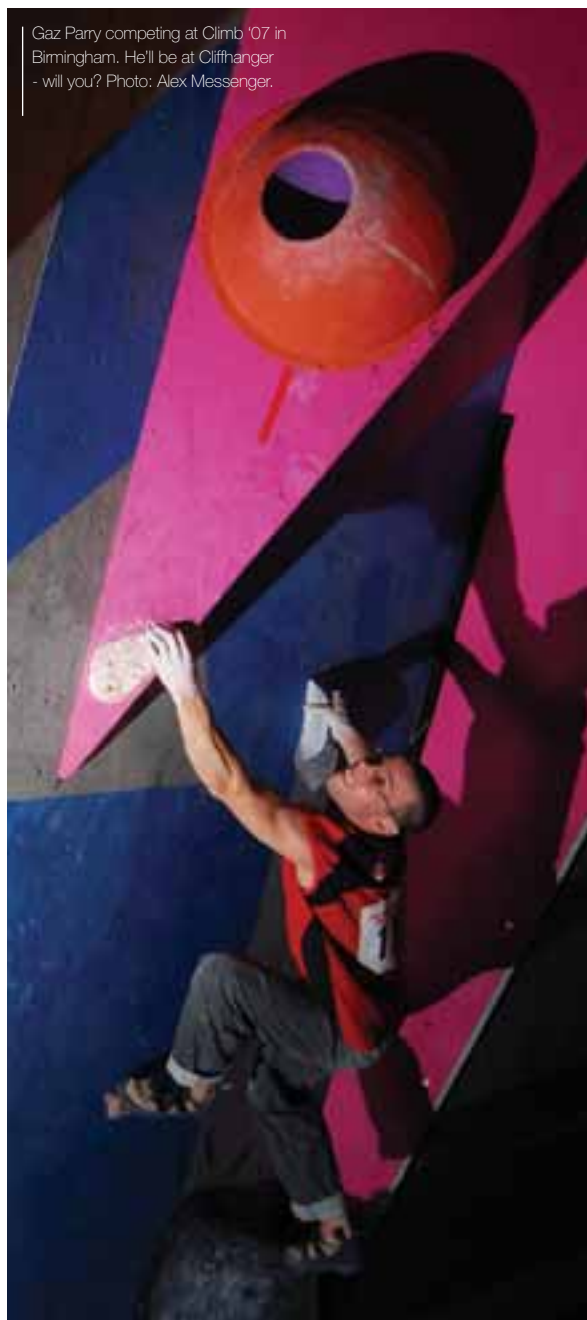
David Miliband meets Cath Flitcroft. Photo: Martin Kocsis.



# Cliffhanger

## Major outdoor climbing festival hits Sheffield in July

Gaz Parry competing at Climb '07 in Birmingham. He'll be at Cliffhanger - will you? Photo: Alex Messenger.



Sheffield is often regarded as the centre of British climbing, and now it's got an event that proves it. Sheffield City Council and Heason Events have got together to create Cliffhanger - a large-scale celebration of climbing and walking over the weekend of the 14-15th July. It's a little like the Outdoors Show at the NEC, but actually held outdoors - in Graves Park on edge of the Peak District.

The BMC will be there in force, hosting the British Bouldering Championships (BBC) on a set of specially constructed boulders. For the first time since 2000, the competition is a one-day event rather than a series, so the winners will actually be those climbers who pull out the best performances on the day. This guarantees a great atmosphere, and there's sure to be some real power on display. On Saturday Andy Earl will be looking to retain his men's title for the fourth year running, and Audrey Seguy will be looking to keep hold of hers too. Then on Sunday, the stars of the future will battle it out in the Junior Championships - expect to be wowed by their enthusiasm and skill.

BMC Chief Executive Dave Turnbull said: "We're excited to be involved in Cliffhanger, especially as it's the first time that the BBC has been held outdoors. Sheffield is home to a massive climbing population and the venue means that the audience capacity is greatly increased. Spectators get the best of both worlds as they can enjoy the outdoors at the same time as witnessing the best of British power."

As well as the BBC, there's a mass of events to keep you and the kids occupied.

See [www.cliff-hanger.co.uk](http://www.cliff-hanger.co.uk).

## Building BRYCS

Growing enthusiasm for climbing amongst Britain's youngsters is evident by the increase in numbers taking part this year's BMC Youth Climbing Series (BRYCS).

Over 400 7-15 year olds took part in the first three rounds of the fun competition in England and Wales. 174 finalists (all of whom finished in the top three in their regional category) are now eagerly awaiting the grand final. Junior Aspirant British Climbing Team members Rebecca Hall, Ross Kirkland, Johnathan Stocking and Kitty Wallace have all qualified for the final which will be held at the Edinburgh International Climbing Arena on Saturday 30th June 2007.

## Graeme Alderson escapes

We're saying goodbye to BMC Competitions Officer Graeme "Whitey" Alderson. Graeme has served a seven-year sentence at the BMC, and following his release he will be scampering back east across the Pennines to work full time at his new venture, The Climbing Works in Sheffield. His commitment to competitions, Newcastle United and healthy living will of course be missed. Graeme will be replaced by a full-time Climbing Wall Development Officer and a part time Competition Climbing Officer.

## IN SHORT

► news

### Troll Ventura harness notice

A Troll Ventura harness was recently sent into the BMC with a cracked buckle. As a precautionary measure all owners and users of Troll Ventura harnesses are advised to check their harness buckles carefully.

### Stubai Tirol crampons notice

Trailwise, the UK distributor for Stubai, have issued an advisory notice for owners of Stubai Tirol crampons. The notice concerns crampons manufactured in 1997/1998 with alloy rivets. For more information see the BMC website.

### Climbing for all

"Climbing for All" is a new booklet written by Don Mabbs and produced by MLTE, aimed at all those who work with people with disability in the outdoors. The focus is on managing the experience of rock climbing in an enabling way but there is also considerable discussion of ways of working with those with a variety of disabilities in the outdoors. It's based upon the work that Don has done both directly as an instructor and also as a trainer of others working in this field, and is available from the BMC shop.

### Yr Helfa

A new walkers and climbers hostel has opened above Llanberis, just 30 minutes walk from Cloggy and ideally situated for the Llanberis and Snowdon Ranger paths. Yr Helfa is a fully restored traditional Welsh lodge with accommodation for up to 18 people. Email [yrhelfa@hotmail.com](mailto:yrhelfa@hotmail.com) for details.



## IN SHORT

### Mountain Rescue BaseCamp

Mountain Rescue in England and Wales has launched a new national supporters' group - BaseCamp. This makes it possible to donate to Mountain Rescue teams nationally - in addition to the support given to individual teams. By joining BaseCamp you can now support teams in all the areas you visit. Supporters will receive quarterly copies of Mountain Rescue Magazine plus other benefits. See [www.mountain.rescue.org.uk/basecamp](http://www.mountain.rescue.org.uk/basecamp)

### Hop on the Stanage bus

A reminder that the 284 service runs every Sunday and Bank Holiday from Sheffield Interchange to Hathersage Station, via Sheaf Square, Furnival Gate, Eccleshall Road, Hunters Bar, Ringinglow Road, Burbage and Stanage. There's a free hail and ride shuttle between Stanage and Burbage car parks. It only costs £2 for a return ticket, and the fully accessible bio-diesel bus has plenty of space for bikes and climbing equipment.

### Langside mountaineers

Langside Mountaineering Club is celebrating its 50th anniversary and trying to get in touch with former members. Contact the club at [http://members.lycos.co.uk/phil\\_mac/](http://members.lycos.co.uk/phil_mac/)

## All quiet at the AGM

### BMC returns to Plas y Brenin for another successful AGM and Annual Dinner

(L-R) The BMC directors: Pat Littlejohn, Rab Carrington, Charles Clarke and Bill Renshaw with BMC CEO Dave Turnbull (Vic Odell missing).



The "great and the good" of the climbing world headed to Plas y Brenin in March for the BMC AGM and Annual Dinner. Saturday kicked off with a club workshop, where BMC affiliated clubs discussed issues of concern, and a number of outdoor skills workshops for members. Perfect weather didn't deter a hardy few from staying indoors to take part in the National Open Forum, where members discussed a range of issues including insurance, child protection, climbing competitions and the shooting of a nun last year near to Cho Oyu. As people poured back in

from the hills, numbers swelled and there was a packed AGM.

President Charles Clarke and Vice Presidents Bill Renshaw and Rab Carrington together with Honorary Treasurer Vic Odell were re-elected and Pat Littlejohn was elected as Vice President to replace Michael Hunt who completed his term of office. John Willson was also elected as a new BMC Honorary Member and those present spoke glowingly of the important contribution John has made towards climbing and the work of the BMC.

Jim Donini, the President of the American Alpine Club (AAC), was guest of honour at the evening dinner. He was introduced by Rab Carrington - a friend of many years. Jim spoke about a range of issues including the good relations that exist between the AAC and the BMC, and in fact between British and American climbers in general. Perhaps, he suggested, because of their mutual love of the climbing sandbag.

## Obituary: Hugh Banner

Hugh Banner, who died aged 73 on April 23rd, was one of the finest rock climbers in the country in the 1950's. He started climbing while studying chemistry at Bristol University in 1951 and first made his mark on the Avon Gorge and Cheddar with routes like Great Central, Desperation and Sceptre. In North Wales he was the first to break through the psychological barrier of the Rock and Ice routes, making the third ascent of Cenotaph Corner in 1956 and then going on to repeat many of Joe Brown's hardest Cloggy routes. His most significant contribution to Welsh climbing came in 1959 with the bold and inspirational ascent of Troach on Cloggy, a major step forward. Meanwhile he put up numerous desperate routes like Crumpet Crack and Gorilla Wall on his local Helsby crag, while on grit he succeeded on Insanity at Curbar, where both Brown and Whillans had failed before him.

He set up his own company in the 1980's making high quality and innovative climbing equipment, notably HB offset brass nuts, micromates and quadcams. He continued climbing and in his fifties climbed The Nose of El Capitan with Mark Vallance and the Philip-Flamm route on the Civetta in the Dolomites with Derek

Walker. He had joined the The Climbers' Club in 1956 and was an influential President from 1987-1990. He was also a long serving member of the BMC Technical Committee. He is greatly missed by his wife Maureen and all who knew him.

- Derek Walker



## Obituary: Ken Vickers

It is with both shock and sadness that we recently learned of the death of Ken Vickers. Ken was involved with the BMC Guidebook Committee for many years and was always an understated voice of reason in their many debates. Ken can be credited with single-handedly revolutionising the guidebook scene in the UK through his pioneering work at Cordee. He will be missed by all.



# AccessNews

## Your guide to climbing and walking in England and Wales

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

The Access team is to thank for keeping many crags open, co-ordinating conservation projects and standing up for your rights on both a local and national scale. But access advice is always changing, so make sure you do your bit: check these pages, the Regional Access Database and signs on site.



### North West

#### Hoghton

The peregrines have returned to the quarry and climbing is not permitted. Given the nesting period, it appears that the opportunity for climbing will be very limited for 2007. Local BMC Reps are negotiating with the landowner to extend the climbing season once the birds have fledged.

### Yorkshire

#### Kilnsey

The collapsing footpath in the Dihedral Wall area has been restored by the BMC. Using Access and Conservation Trust (ACT) funds, a local contractor installed stepped wooden revetments to stabilise the path and stop erosion. The work looks good and should bed-in nicely over the next 12 months. Many thanks go to the local farmer for agreeing to the work, Yorkshire Dales National Park Ranger Iain Mann for his liaison work with Natural England, and to John Webber for building the path.

#### Malham

During a sensitive point in the peregrine breeding cycle three people abseiled from the top of Malham Cove - very close to the left-wing nest site. This caused the birds considerable distress and was observed by members of the RSPB. It is not known if the group were climbers or cavers, but the incident has caused much concern amongst conservationists and the Yorkshire Dales National Park Authority (YDNPA). The BMC and YDNPA have placed a number of signs at Malham describing the agreed restrictions, namely do not access any part of the crag between Hangover and The Man and the Myth on the Caveat Wall. The situation will be reviewed at the end of June.

### South West and Southern

#### Cheddar

People have been climbing out of season on the Main Cliffs (south side) during the Easter Bank Holiday fortnight. This has caused much distress to the landowner. Permitted climbing dates are agreed for public safety and published in the local guidebook and on the BMC website. If you are in any doubt, call into the Cheddar Caves & Gorge office next to Gough's Cave and ask.

All people climbing here need to carry civil liability insurance, in case you're involved in an accident involving a third party, such as dropping a quickdraw on a tourist. You must bring evidence of you cover (e.g. BMC/BMC Club membership card) each time you climb. A massive investment of time has been made to achieve the current arrangements. The landowners do not wish to discourage responsible climbing, but they also do not want to be placed in the position of having to ask people to leave.

### Peak

#### Eagle Tor

Agreed access has now been lost to Eagle Tor.

#### Rowtor Rocks

Local residents are unhappy with the use of shortcuts from the Druid's Inn car park. Some of these shortcuts are close to residential housing and have recently been blocked with tree branches. With the recent loss of agreed access to the nearby Eagle Tor and the sensitive relationship between climbers and the residents of Birchover, the BMC strongly advises climbers not to shortcut, defecate at the crag, or create excessive noise when visiting.

**Use the main path from the Druid's Inn and head directly up to the caves area.**

#### Horseshoe

Work has started at Horseshoe Quarry to enhance the wetland area for wildlife. This involves a temporary rearrangement at the entrance to the site to allow contractor access. Climbing will not be affected but please be careful when parking.

#### Millstone

There is a Tawny Owl sitting on her eggs 50 feet up the route By Pass just left of Great North Road. These birds have a reputation for attacking those who go near their nest. The Peak District National Park Authority has put up a sign asking climbers not to climb By Pass.

#### Stanage

The Ring Ouzel has returned and a temporary restriction has been agreed on Green Crack - see on-site signing. The Stanage Bus has also returned for the summer - so beat the crowds and do your bit to protect the Stanage environment. See timetable at [www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/stanagebus.pdf](http://www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/stanagebus.pdf).

### More details

#### WWW.THEBMC.CO.UK

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

[www.thebmc.co.uk/access](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/access)



## Eagle Tor Lost

Eagle Tor is a small Peak District gritstone crag just opposite Cratcliffe. It's home to a great bouldering circuit and some classic test pieces. But if you haven't been yet, you could be facing a long wait. Climbers have just lost all agreed access to it, thanks to the actions of a selfish minority.

### Q. What happened?

**A.** Sometime last year we received a report that the landowner was getting twitchy about the number of climbers visiting Eagle Tor and some of the behaviour that was going on. So a couple of the volunteer Peak Access Reps were dispatched to meet with the landowner pronto.

### Q. What were these "goings on"?

**A.** Following the publication of a new Peak bouldering guide, the crag had experienced a big upsurge in popularity - to the point where over 20 climbers could turn up when conditions were good. Now, while this doesn't sound too excessive, also consider the site is pretty compact and effectively in the landowner's back garden. She appreciated the quality of the site for climbers and was prepared to tolerate some use. However, she was very unhappy with climbers defecating where her young children played.

### Q. Yuk. What happened next?

**A.** The BMC publicised the story on the Regional Access Database, various web forums and in the magazines with warnings that agreed access was being jeopardised. We also produced agreed guidance detailing preferred access routes, advised to keep groups small and low profile, and of course, not to sh\*t everywhere.

### Q. Did it work?

**A.** It did for a while and the situation calmed down. However, during the late winter/early spring 2007 season large numbers of padded-up climbers would often troop past the owner's farm from Birchover village. They were ignoring the preferred access



What's the score at Eagle Tor? Andy Hutchinson stretching it out on Knuckle Duster (Font 6a). Photo: Simon Jacques.

routes from the Cratcliffe valley, and continued to leave piles of crap and toilet paper.

### Q. I can guess what's coming

**A.** Yep - all agreed access for climbers has been withdrawn for the foreseeable future. And those who remember Craig y Forwyn in the mid-1980s will know that can mean a very, very long time. Guy Keating, the BMC Access & Conservation Officer spoke at length

with the landowner in March and found her to be both agreeable and tolerant. She spent her childhood on the farm, and has now returned here to raise her young family there. She understands the value of the site to climbers but felt very uncomfortable with the prospect that her children's playground could feature over 20 strangers and piles of excrement.

### Q. Very sad. When are people going to learn?

**A.** Access for climbing should never be taken for granted. We only release site guidance for very good reasons, and in this case people were either unaware or ignored that advice.

### Q. I never go bouldering in the Peak - why should this matter to me?

**A.** Because this sorry little episode is a classic example of what can happen when a landowner loses patience with climbers. Given the proximity of the farmhouse you would hope people would be switched-on enough to realise a ban was enforceable and act accordingly. There are many other examples where a landowner lives close to their crag - let's not do anything to antagonise them.

### Q. The bottom line

**A.** The BMC's advice is not to visit Eagle Tor at the moment. The crag is situated in private woodland and is not Open Access land under the CRoW Act. Although the woodland has peripheral public rights of way, the rocks cannot be directly accessed from these paths, and the landowners are within their legal rights to eject you for trespassing. ■

# REGIONAL ACCESS DATABASE

Find out the definitive access situation for over 700 climbing locations in England and Wales - check the BMC Regional Access Database (RAD).

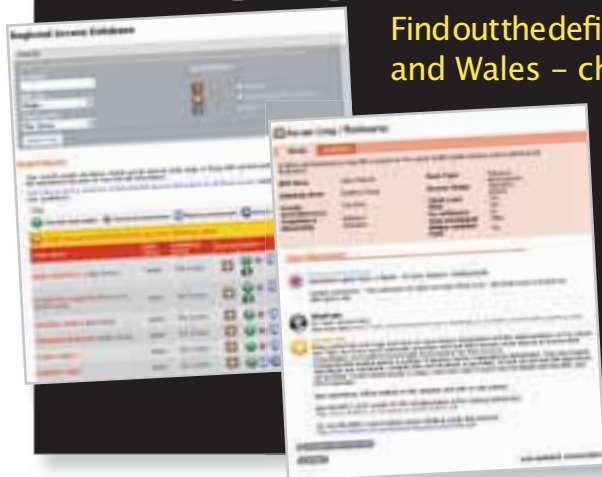
Don't blindly head to the crag this weekend, you could be jeopardising access for all climbers. Take a minute to check the definitive access situation for your planned crag, and get totally up to date information on:

- Latest approach and parking advice
- Bird restrictions
- Fire bans
- Group use
- Erosion work
- CRoW status
- And much more

You can search for individual crags or select whole climbing areas (e.g. Pembroke) and print all the crags off in one go - ideal to stick in the back of your guidebook.

RAD is updated daily by the BMC Access Officers and the nationwide network of Local Access Representatives. Don't rely on your guidebook, it could be out of date.

[www.thebmc.co.uk/access](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/access)





# Letters

Got an opinion? Then let us know!

Email: [summit@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:summit@thebmc.co.uk) to get something off your chest.

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

## Brave enough?

The BMC is clearly able to negotiate its way with politicians to develop whatever agendas it wishes to pursue. What I find surprising is that some members find reaching out to young people and accessing funding more daunting than scaling the heights. I am a BMC member and have some years experience of accessing government funding to work with young people at risk of offending - giving them opportunities to explore new skills and see that there is more to life. I agree that there are issues of short-termism in the funding; but these efforts need not be very costly, and the drive to be more inclusive has a long history. For example the Glasgow shipyards organised climbing clubs in the 1930's, and these young men were probably of a social profile very similar to the "young offenders" of today. Surely the BMC is smart enough - and brave enough - to access funding to help boost its efforts to engage with the widest possible membership?

*Martine Marletta, Glasgow*

## We are the future

After reading the note of caution in the "Keeping your club alive" article in Summit 45 we felt a need to reply. Having been family members of an established climbing club for over ten years we've experienced the influences of being associated with a climbing club from a very young age. Meeting other young members has lead to permanent friendships and unique experiences, and we've been extremely lucky to have been part of a group which is on the whole welcoming to kids. Incorporating children into a climbing club should not be viewed as a hindrance, but

an addition, broadening the dimensions of an already strong club and creating 'ready made' members. 20-30 year olds were mentioned as being the future, but where are these 20-30 year olds recruited from?

*The Mynydd Bach*

## Goosed

I realise that I may not be responding very smartly, but weren't the "canadian geese" featured on Page 47 of Summit 45 actually whooper swans? Sincere regards - I'm finding my magazine is getting more interesting each issue. Thank you.

*Ian G. Oliver*

*- Oops. Yes, you're right. Thanks to all the readers who pointed this out!*

## Made in China

Ed Douglas is to be complimented on his article in Summit 44 on the Tibetan shootings. The problem for the concerned mountaineer is what to do about it, and not buying that jacket made in China is a bit difficult when just about everything in the shops is produced there now. However UK mountaineers can at least make a collective complaint against the killing of that young nun. In 1982 the UIAA (of which the BMC and the Chinese Mountaineering Federation are members) signed the Katmandu Declaration - nine separate statements of ethical objectives. The third statement says 'Respect the cultural heritage and dignity of local populations', something which the Chinese government has certainly not been doing. The BMC should consider making a formal complaint at the next meeting of the UIAA against the actions of the Chinese government.

*K. C. Gordon, Llanllechid*

## STAR LETTER

### Independence

In the last issue one letter commented that the Minister for Sport just sees climbing as a means of getting young offenders off the streets. Another that the BMC had lost government funding which could only be regained by the BMC assisting the government in its social engineering agenda.

From the BMC financial report 2006, grants and donations included £56,600 from UK Sport, £191,300 from Sport England, and a further £11,300 from UK Sport in connection with the UIAA. We assume that certain conditions are attached to these grants, but what exactly are they - what does the government want the BMC to provide? While Sport England wish to promote sports participation, some members might argue that we don't necessarily want to encourage more people to take up our sport with the consequent pressures on the finite natural environment - but we do want to represent the interests of those who have decided to take it up themselves.

The more dependant we are of government the more we will be affected by changes in funding, such as the diversion of funds from grassroots sport to pay for the Olympics. Greater independence can be obtained by developing our trading activities and membership services. It appears from the accounts that the insurance scheme is bringing in almost twice as much as the government grants, and income from subscriptions is almost four times that amount. It's good that we have a dialogue with the Minister, via the lobbying event, but our vision of the BMC may not necessarily coincide with his view of how it can serve government agendas. Let's know what the deal with government is and debate it, and let's treasure our independence.

*Geoff Nichols, Sheffield*

## Win a Berghaus GR daysac worth £60 for your letter

Let off your steam with a letter to Summit and you could win a brand new GR35 daysac from Berghaus.



For summer '07 Berghaus have introduced two new highly specified daysacs to its range, the GR45+8 and the GR35+6. The sacs sit close to the back with a breathable back panel using EVABreathe technology. The matrix foam system means that air is able to travel through interlinked cavities in the foam sheets and passes out of the back system, keeping you comfortable on the most demanding treks. The sacs are also loaded with extra features including

side expansion pockets, mesh wand pockets, a hip belt pocket, a hydration reservoir pouch, a bungee cord attachment system, walking pole covers and a raincover.

For further information visit [www.berghaus.com](http://www.berghaus.com) or call 0191 516 5700.





# Stuff

## BMC Insurance Still great value!

If you're heading off on your summer holiday, then don't forget to pack some BMC insurance. As used by leading climbers and mountaineers, BMC insurance guarantees you peace of mind, and has an enviable reputation for quality. Get an instant quote and cover with our new, improved online system, or simply call the office on 0161 445 6111. Plus all profits from the scheme go towards working for climbers, hill walkers, and mountaineers, so the only one to benefit is you.



## Rab Summit 300 Sleeping Bag £150

It's summer - time to give that winter sleeping bag a break and slip into something more portable. Enter the Rab Summit 300, a superlight goose down bag with a water resistant outer shell that's just perfect for summer backpacking and alpine climbing. But just because you're saving weight doesn't mean you're skimping on quality. The Pertex Endurance outer provides the shell and the premier 750+ fill power goose down provides lightweight insulation to a -2°C comfort rating. And like all Rab bags, the Summit 300 is hand-filled with down in the Rab factory in Derbyshire.

Features include:

- 790g weight
- Comfort rating -2°C
- 210cm x 75cm size / 29cm x 16cm packed
- Gold colour

For more information and stockist details call 01773 601870 or see [www.rab.uk.com](http://www.rab.uk.com).



## The Mont Blanc Range: Classic Snow, Ice and Mixed Climbs £12.99

The Mont Blanc Range is a new alpine guidebook that's guaranteed to be a hit this summer. The guide is aimed at those alpinists seeking lower grade snow, ice and mixed climbs (F-AD+) in the Mont Blanc Range - i.e. us Brits. And even better, it reflects all the recently changed topographical conditions due to climate change and glacial retreat. The 36 classic climbs are selected across the Mont Blanc Range and are all easily accessible from huts, telepheriques and mountain railways. Some are well known, others little-travelled gems. Written by Jean-Loius Laroche and Florence LeLong, and adapted from a translation by Blyth Wright, this A5 sized paperback is also packed full of inspirational photos. *The Mont Blanc Range is published by Baton Wicks and is available from the BMC online shop. Priced just £11.50 to members - plus p&p.*



### Win one of five books

We've got five of these little bibles to give away. Just work out:

**Q.** How high is the Aiguille du Midi?

### Win a Rab Summit 300 Sleeping Bag

We've got our hands on one of these fine sleeping bags to give away. Just discover:

**Q.** When was Rab established?



## Lowe Alpine Extreme Attack 20:20 £100

Way back in 1967 Greg Lowe designed a new rucksack and started a revolution in sack design. Greg was part of an enthusiastic outdoor family and his brothers soon joined him to form Lowe Alpine Systems. The Lowe brothers continued to push the boundaries of outdoor equipment, and their design philosophy remains with the company to this very day. And now, to celebrate 40 years in the business, Lowe Alpine have just released the Extreme Attack 20:20. The Extreme Attack 20:20 aims to re-write alpine pack design with its truly versatile nature - expand to 40l for the walk in, compress to 20l for the climb. Sorted.

Features include:

- Slim profile

- Expandable volume (20l + 20l)
  - Discrete, adjustable Centro system for tailored fit
  - Self-adjusting hipbelt
  - Superfabric for safe ice axe storage
  - Webcatcher system for easy, secure carrying of axes, skis and poles
  - Plenty of head clearance for wearing a helmet
- The Extreme 20:20 is available in shops now - but hurry, it's a limited production run so there will only be a few hundred in the UK. For more information see [www.lowealpine.com](http://www.lowealpine.com).*

### We've got two packs for you to win.

Be one of the lucky few to get your hands on this unique alpine sack. Just tell us:

**Q.** Where was Lowe Alpine started?



## Chaco Walking Sandals

£65

US Company Chaco has hit the UK with a range of trekking sandals to give your feet some soul this summer. The Z/1 and ZX/1 are equipped with a specification usually reserved for walking boots including a biocentric foot bed, heel cup, arch support and a choice of two sole versions. If trekking plump for the Vibram sole - designed to cope with a wide range of terrain, and for watersports the Stealth Rubber sole could be your cup of tea with its improved grip on rocky and wet surfaces.

The sandals' durable Polyester webbing - available in many colour options - is one continuous, movable piece so that you can achieve the perfect fit. And with a buckle, not Velcro, this fit can be retained even when wet.

Available in sizes 5-14.5 (men) and 3-10 (women), from selected outdoor retailers nationwide. For more information phone 01202 572775 or see [www.chacousa.com](http://www.chacousa.com).



## Win one of four pairs of Chaco sandals

We've got four pairs of Chaco sandals to keep you cool this summer.

Just let us know:

**Q.** When was Chaco established?

## Bounce Balls

£15 (pack)

We all know that we should refuel properly during exercise, but sometimes it's just too much like hard work. Enter Bounce Balls - a new snack ball aiming to provide an easy yet nutritious energy boost. These satisfying little balls are a great source of "good" carbs, and are made from 100% natural ingredients, so contain no nasties such as artificial additives, sweeteners or preservatives. Five tasty variants ensure that there's a Bounce Ball to suit everyone:

- Premium Protein
- Almond Protein
- Spirulina & Ginseng
- Cashew & Pecan
- Fudgie Walnut

Bounce Balls cost between £1.40 and £1.60 each, and are available from Waitrose, Planet Organic (020 7221 7171), Fresh & Wild (020 7025 6030) and [www.bouncesnackfoods.com](http://www.bouncesnackfoods.com).

## Try a 10-pack of Bounce Balls free

Want to try a Bounce Ball? No problem, we've got ten ten-packs to give away to readers. Just email your name and address to [summit@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:summit@thebmc.co.uk) and keep your fingers crossed.



## Rab Longsleeve Base Camp T

£30

Rab may be renowned for their extreme mountain wear, but they've now released a range of clothing more at home in base camp or the pub. The Base Camp T is made from a heavy 220gm cotton with double hem and collar and features route topos from major range ascents made by Rab sponsored climbers. So you can lounge about looking as hard as nails with prints of Ama Dablam, Peru's Jirishanca or Alaska's Mount Kennedy on your back.

- Available in steel, chocolate and earth
- Short sleeve (£25) and long sleeve (£30)

For more information and stockist details call 01773 601870 or see [www.rab.uk.com](http://www.rab.uk.com).



## Win a Rab Base Camp T

Look the part this summer - we've got five long sleeve T's to give away. Just find out:

**Q.** Which Rab-sponsored climber succeeded in climbing a new line on Jirishanca in Peru?

## Issue 45 winners

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

## How to enter the competitions

Email [summit@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:summit@thebmc.co.uk) with your answers. Or if the world wide web scares you, then jot something onto a postcard and send it to: Summit, BMC, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2BB. Don't forget to state your name, address, which competition(s) you're entering - and size if appropriate. Good luck!  
Closing date is 01/10/07



# That's me

## Ed Drummond, 62, Poet, San Francisco

Surely one of the greatest characters ever to grace the British climbing scene, the 'poet-climber' Ed Drummond has combined philosophy, talent and a greatly individual approach to leave a physical and literary legacy that can be matched by few.

**B**orn in Wolverhampton in 1945, Drummond found a typically unique and self-directed route into mainstream climbing, and while never becoming one of the established elite, he moved easily through their ranks, maintaining always a slight separation, due to a differing underlying ethos. Still, his canon of first ascents rival many a hard man's. Beginning with groundbreaking routes on Avon Gorge such as The Equator and Krapp's Last Tape, then in the Peak District where his routes such as Banana Finger and The Asp are rightly heralded as classics.

In North Wales, his The Moon and A Dream of White Horses are among the greatest climbs in the country. His masterpieces, however, The Long Hope Route on Hoy in 1970, and The Arch Wall on the Troll Wall in 1972, remain dark challenges - hard, committing and untameable. Drummond left the UK in 1992, moving to San Francisco. He is currently in the UK on a lecture tour.

**I started climbing because of hunger.** My parents would lock me out after school, so to get to the pantry I had to climb up a ladder, traverse along a little ledge, mantelshelf onto the window ledge, then squeeze through the window. I could be in and out in five minutes.

**The Wrekin in Wellingborough was the first hill to inspire me.**

There was an automated beacon on top, and it moved me to write my first poetry. A line from that poem still thrills me, "One lone aircraft tracks." The thought that through language you can register something, can track real presence.

**I had a primitive attraction to climb the first mountain I saw.** I'd been youth hostelling in North Wales with my friend John Varty when we saw Cadair Idris. We set off directly up it, but the cloud came down. My companion began to cry. But I found within me a way, not only of getting to the top, but of speaking to John so that he too was able to carry on. That was very empowering.

**I got turned back from Tower Ridge.** I'd found a book in school that said Tower Ridge was the longest climb in Britain, to me that also meant the hardest. I had to climb it, so at Easter myself and a Pentecostal preacher - who was abusing me - made our way there. We had sixty feet of Sisal rope, and all we knew was that it was above a hut. We got up to the top of the Douglas Boulder and met two climbers wearing crampons who told us to go back down. The preacher was wearing a black mac, his street trousers and a pair of Wellingtons. I was in my little shorts.

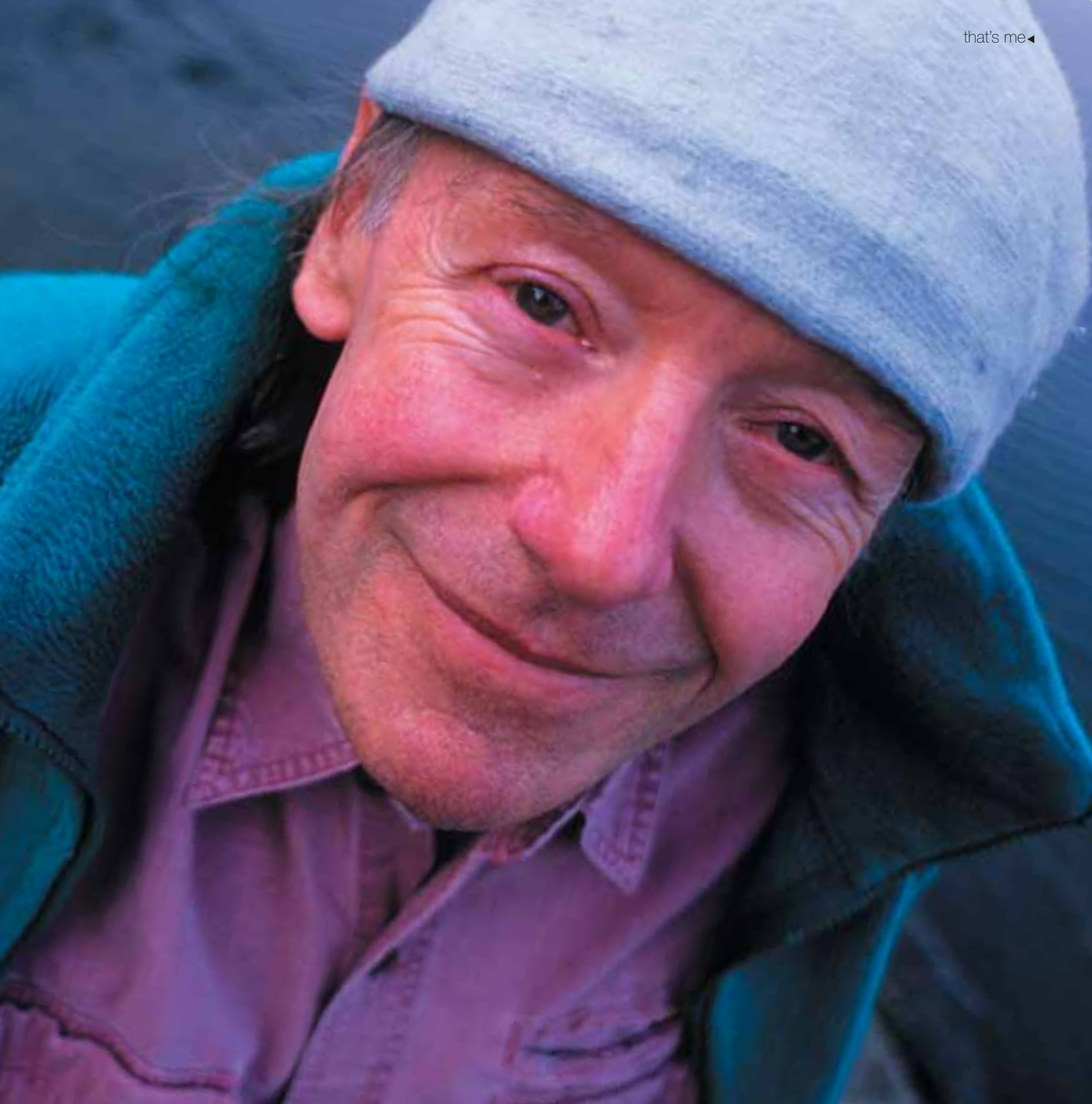
**When I realised that I was going to live, the feeling was incredible.** I fell off the front of Pontesbury Hill. It had only just been top-roped for the first time and I naively decided to do it. At the top, I couldn't pull over, and eventually fell, smacked into the ground and kept bouncing. I was sure that I was dying, that I had crossed some line. But no - it showed me that no life was worthless, that my spirit could never be killed off. It was like having a million volts passed through my body.

**I didn't want to bother with all the climbs that qualify you to do the hardest routes.** I wanted to tap in to a developing sense that you can trust the universe, that you can trust yourself. I went to Cloggy with Ken Wilson, and when I saw Great Wall, I told him that I was going to climb it the following day. I'd only been climbing for a year, I had no right to climb this route. I should have been out of my depth.

**I learned to ask for help on North America Wall on El Capitan.** I was attempting to make the first solo of this







route and after fourteen days, and three pitches from the summit, I got trapped in a terrible storm. My portaledge slowly filled with meltwater. Then eventually, I farted, and it was cold air that came out of me. Deep inside the furnace had been turned off, and I was going to die. Then a rescuer appeared and they brought me back to the top. It felt like I'd been brought back from the brink.

**Writing is an attempt to map the unknown.** To go a little further into the labyrinth. Even whilst climbing I'd wander off between climbs and write. Climbing often inspired me, and I tried

to write in such a way that the reader could see themselves in the act. To find situations where the act reflected something of me, but also, hopefully, something of them.

**I see Parkinson's Disease as a beginning, not the end.** I have always valued my health, but having done so much, I didn't feel aggrieved when it was diagnosed. I was a tree. I grew, and I cast my shadow. And now it's time to wind down, and that in itself brings a whole new set of challenges and interests. It has made me focus on getting things right. You don't get to repeat any day. It's like

making a will. I want to be as open and as authentic as I can about it with anyone who will listen. I want to engage with it, to touch it and feel it with accuracy.

**I don't want to go to bed with any secrets.** I want to have shared what I have felt and what I have seen, accurately, honestly, with my friends and my peers, anyone who will listen. Climbing and writing aren't necessarily isolated self-indulgences. They must be communicated. ■

*Interview by Niall Grimes. Photo by Ray Wood.*



# On my art

## Neal Beggs and Dear Prudence

Neal Beggs was born in Larne, Northern Ireland in 1959. He became a climber at the age of 14, and at 16 led Cenotaph Corner - in his own words, “a minor big deal at the time”. He had several alpine seasons in his late teens and early twenties, before drifting out of climbing. In his early thirties, Neal discovered art, and soon found a subject in his reawakening love for the mountains. This led to taking a Masters degree in Glasgow to be close to the Scottish hills, both for recreation and inspiration, and he was a natural choice to be the first ever Artist in Residence for the Scottish Mountaineering Council in 2000.

“The image to the right, resembling an oversized sandwich board, is the result of a temporary public art commission that I undertook for the city of Brussels earlier this year. I’d been offered this commission on the simple premise that nearly all of my work relates to mountains and that the site of the commission - a hill overlooking the city - was known as Mont des Arts. The added bonus was that my works often engaged the public in a participatory fashion.

‘Dear Prudence’, as the work was to become known, took about three months in the planning. Several ideas materialized, of which I eventually settled on one, the sandwich board, a common enough object around Mont des Arts and an obvious motif for a mountain. This motif, once increased in height to 6m, acquired a curtain Magritte quality, always a good connection when working in Belgium. Shortly after came Edward Whymper’s quote, and with a slight adaptation of the ‘will’ to ‘want’, his words, focusing particularly on ‘Prudence’ formed the foundation on which the finished work grew. The title ‘Dear Prudence’, from the Beatles song, was added last in the hope that it would subliminally echo a kind of message within the work: “won’t you come out to play?”

From the start Dear Prudence was an ambitious project, not only with respect to its size but also with respect to its location, the hyper-conservative

and ‘prudent’ museum quarter of Brussels. Perhaps more ambitious though, considering the climate of health and safety which effects all activity taking place in public spaces today, was the commissioning body’s acceptance of my condition that the public should be free to engage with the artwork as they saw fit.

The steps on the lower face are like those cut in a snow slope - they are also a homage to Belgium artist Hergé and the front cover of Tin Tin in Tibet. Intended to help keep the sense of the mountain, they had been designed in such a way as to make them easy to ascend at first. But with height the steps became smaller and wider spaced. Until on reaching the final step at half height ‘the public’, in the precarious position of having only one good foothold and precious little else to cling to, were faced with a decision. To continue climbing, using only the letters, or to go down. Which would be the more prudent?

There was no avoiding this decision and as one would expect, most on reaching the last of the ‘steps’ thought better of their decision to climb and prudently reversed or jumped onto the old mattresses below. But many others, a surprising number in fact, in skirts, high street fashion, and oversized trainers, crimped the 4mm MDF letters of ‘STRENGTH’ and ‘COURAGE’ and went for the 8mm edge of ‘REMEMBER’ and then the 12mm of ‘BUT’, until finally committed in a manner not normally experienced when encountering art, they grasped the true meaning of the phrase that had got

them there in the first place - ‘CLIMB IF YOU WANT’, an 18mm edge.

And from that point, both the first and the last line in the story, some managed to pull through to the top, but the majority fell in spectacular fashion to the applause of the public, landing safely on the mattresses. After which, if they still felt the need to reach the summit they could, by walking around to the back face of the sandwich board and climbing the ladder to the top to enjoy the view. On the way up they would pass another text, this time not Whymper’s but my own, which read “AND PRUDENCE IS NOTHING WITHOUT A LITTLE COURAGE”.

One aim with this work was clearly to highlight questions concerning personal responsibility, the need in life to take risks as well as to be prudent. And not simply with respect to the individual - this can apply to art too. Contemporary art traditionally takes risks, but it’s surprising that after so long it still looks much the same. And maybe this is a necessary quality of art, enabling us to recognise it when we meet it. By incorporating within Dear Prudence actual, lived, physical and mental experiences not normally anticipated when engaging with art, some will find Dear Prudence hard to recognise, accept, or understand as art. To those I would urge simply to look at it on the level of an experience, one that can be shared with others, discussed and reflected on. In doing so ideas are exchanged. If this is all that happens then this is fine, since for me the sharing of ideas and experience is what matters most.” ■

Dear Prudence was a temporary public artwork (6m x 4.8m x 4.5m), which came out to play on Place Royale, Mont des Arts, Brussels for three days during March 2007. For more of Neal’s art, see [www.nealbeggs.com](http://www.nealbeggs.com).







Half Dome from Glacier Point - possibly the most famous sight in Yosemite Valley? Climbers head to the vertical North West Face (left) and the classic 5.9 Snake Dyke (this side of the dome) whilst thousands of hikers ascend the Cables Route to the top every summer (out of sight around the back). This profile of Half Dome is also said to be the inspiration for The North Face logo.  
Photo: Chris Dainton.



Matt Goode escapes  
the Lost Arrow Spire  
by tyrolean traverse.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.

# AGAINST THE WALL

**Yosemite Valley is drowning in theme park detritus - is there any hope? Dave Pickford takes a look.**

**“Which way eez it to touch Ze Capitan?” enquires a wide-eyed French hiker on the trail that leads through a huge boulder-field to the base of most famous piece of rock in North America. On a glorious October afternoon, the immense South West Face of El Capitan is washed gold and ochre by the sun, and glimmers down through the trees in monolithic response to the question.**

The French hiker’s unwittingly hefty phrase - “touching El Cap” - seems to capture both the timeless dreams and ambitions of rock climbers worldwide, and at the same time to acknowledge a crucial, contemporary issue in the evolution of California’s Yosemite Valley: the debate over its visitor service provision and management infrastructure.

With the possible exceptions of the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley, Yosemite is one of the most celebrated - and visited - natural

spectacles in the United States. Its ‘visitor profile’ is as wide a cross-section of American society as it might be possible to gather in one place, with the ‘standard visitor mean’ falling somewhere in between a 5.14 rock climber on a three-year road trip and a bank clerk from a small provincial town in the Mid-West. If you were to put two such individuals in a room together and ask them what they would like to do on a visit to Yosemite, each would come up with a response more or less incomprehensible to the other. Taking a “rad ripper on that dang microwire, dude” and “grabbin’ a taco down the crazy golf” are, one would suggest, mutually incompatible activities in an environmental management context. That is not, of course, to discount the possibility that there are 5.14 climbers out there who are also bank clerks in the Mid-West(!), but the point remains.

The issue of visitor service provision and management is clearly a substantial and difficult one. There is a profound and far-reaching conflict of interests at the heart of any service provision infrastructure set up in

Dave Pickford high on  
Sons of Yesterday (5.10).  
Photo: Sarah Garnett.





A moderate classic  
- Sarah Gardner on  
Nutcracker (5.8).  
Photo: Dave Pickford.



Yosemite. It is a conflict arising from the wildly different motivations and objectives of the Park's visitors, from the different activities those visitors wish to pursue and the services set up to support them, from the dichotomy posed by the conflicting ideologies of environmental preservationists and wilderness enthusiasts on one side, and the proponents of a mainstream tourism infrastructure on the other.

It could be argued that this is a purely ideological debate and has no real basis in the day-to-day service and infrastructure management issues in Yosemite. But to dismiss this argument I'd simply guide you to consider the gridlock around the Valley's loop-road. Total gridlock is the norm on most summer-holiday season weekends, consisting mainly of vehicles with an average engine capacity of 5000cc (and that's no exaggeration) belching out exhaust gases into the pine and cypress glades beside the Merced River. This is

a real and pressing issue demanding an immediate practical solution.

The importance of Yosemite in relation to both climbers and the wider public has perhaps never been so acute as it is today. An estimated 3.5 million people now visit the Valley every year (the head-count in 2004 ran to 3,280,911) yet only a small number of these visitors come to walk, climb, or to explore any distance beyond the boundaries of the loop road and its amenities. The problems arising from the issue of mainstream tourism in the Valley, of the mushrooming of a 'theme park' business agenda in the alien context of a wilderness environment, are both staggeringly obvious and extremely challenging to solve.

In Zion National Park in Utah, a scheme was established in 2000 which replaces private vehicle use in the Park with a free shuttle bus service: an illuminating statement on the National Park website ([nps.gov/zion](http://nps.gov/zion)) suggests "5000 vehicles [were replaced with] 21 buses". The scheme has been championed by climbers and walkers as a great success – and interestingly seems to have

El Capitan: 1000m high big wall mecca. An amazing digital panorama by Chris Dainton taken at the same time as this issue's cover shot. The solo climber is up there - somewhere.



“Yosemite is the **ULTIMATE PLAYGROUND**, the only downside is the hierarchy - seeking the **VERTICAL REALM** here immediately pushes one to the bottom of the pile. Still, it’s easy to be **ABOVE IT ALL**, looking down at abstract sized cars and people only visible from their elongated shadows.

Forced into a **MOMENT OF BATTLE** with granite, focus is quickly snapped into that all encompassing reality, pinpointed so acutely you can forget the locale. Until the waft of a **SWIFT DARTING INCHES** away draws a smile and you check the air beneath your heels. **BIG AIR.”**

- Kevin Thaw, Ex-pat Big Wall Expert.

gained substantial support from the wider public. Although there is now a free shuttle bus service in the Valley, the likelihood of such a scheme being implemented in Yosemite would appear to be very marginal indeed.

Today, Yosemite is a different place to that which John Muir wrote so vividly about at the turn of the twentieth century, and which Ansel Adams

celebrated through the lens of his camera. That peculiar human desire for kitsch, generic to western-influenced popular culture around the world, has created a number of remarkable anomalies that jar against the real Yosemite of mountainous trails, thundering waterfalls, and huge granite walls.



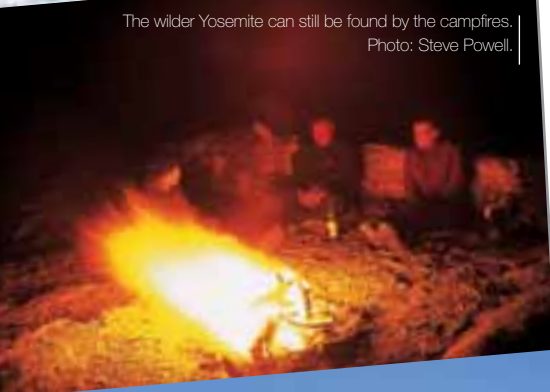
Upper Yosemite Falls.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.







Camp 4.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.



The wilder Yosemite can still be found by the campfires.  
Photo: Steve Powell.



Half Dome wearing its winter coat - in winter the Valley is a very different place. Photo: Alex Messenger.

If he were given a posthumous glimpse of Yosemite Village on a busy Sunday in 2007, John Muir might well think he'd been reincarnated onto a NASA moon-base, populated as it is by impossibly gargantuan vehicles transporting equally outsized individuals between various facilities. As if to add an absurdist dimension to Yosemite's 'Moon Base Alpha', the general store that serves the Valley is partially taken up by a Disney-esque junkyard of tourist tat, including a fifteen-foot tall cuddly replica of an American Black Bear, available for a modest fistful of dollars. And of course, there is always the option of taking a scenic tour of the Valley aboard a truck-driven tram, decked out for your viewing pleasure in an attractive and highly inconspicuous lime green.

Why has this incongruous detritus proliferated in Yosemite? For one reason above all else: the virtual monopoly held by Delaware North Companies (DNC) on the service-sector business infrastructure of the Valley. DNC is one of the largest privately-held companies in the world, with over 40,000 employees worldwide. The extent of the monopoly it holds on the service provision infrastructure in Yosemite is quickly evident from a browse of its commercial website dedicated specifically to its amenities in the Park ([yosemitepark.com](http://yosemitepark.com)). All of the non-camping accommodation options in the National Park are owned and run directly by DNC. Only the climbers campground Camp 4 escapes their jurisdiction. This - the only Park Service run campground - is the cheapest in the Valley, and still is as magnificently grotty today as it was as the epicentre of the acid-and-flares climbing scene of the 60's and 70's.

The slick business operation of the Delaware North Companies' running of the visitor accommodation and services in Yosemite National Park, and its facile charade of championing the environmental sustainability of its activities and presence, belies a sinister monopolised economy that benefits neither the Valley nor, in the long term, even the most service-needy of its visitors.

A brief comparison with Britain is

useful and provocative here. DNC owns and runs The Ahwahnee Hotel, Curry Village, the Yosemite High Sierra Camps, Housekeeping Camp, Tuolumne Meadows Lodge, Wawona Hotel, White Wolf Lodge and Yosemite Lodge. To set this in the context of a UK national park, it is the effective equivalent of a single multinational private company owning and running all the Youth Hostels in Snowdonia, Plas y Brenin, all the climbing and outdoor shops in Betws-y-Coed and Llanberis, Pete's Eats and all the other pubs and restaurants in Llanberis, all the smaller accommodation facilities in the Llanberis Pass area, and the Heights Hotel. Thus DNC holds an almost absolute monopoly - the most damaging kind of economic conglomerate - on the service and retail business in the Yosemite National Park, in which no internal regulation or scrutiny is necessary due to its complete dominance of the market.

A PhD in economics is not necessary to work out how damaging such a situation would be if it were to arise in the UK. Fortunately, this is almost unimaginable in a British national park (even in the shadow of the current expansionist and marketing manoeuvres of Tesco) because of the fact that no monopoly of the kind DNC has in Yosemite could have developed in this country after the Monopolies and Mergers Act (1965).

It is hard to avoid questioning the sensibility of the Federal decision-makers who have allowed this mushrooming of a mainstream tourism infrastructure in the Yosemite Valley. To put it bluntly, we are dealing with a system of service provision that is set up to cater specifically for the visitor to whom a burger joint, rather than a water bottle, is the definition of quality refreshment. I am in no sense arguing that people who do not wish to climb or walk should not visit Yosemite, simply that there should not be a system of service provision in the Valley that replicates that of a mainstream holiday complex, with similar shopping and recreational facilities.

As with the blind Federal usurpation of so many other environmental management and preservation issues elsewhere in the USA (such as the horrific damage to the Alaskan Tundra as a result of oil and other mineral exploration activities along the trans-Alaskan pipeline and the Arctic coast) in Yosemite too it has been the

"Big Brother is reality here. **THE PARK OWNS EVERYTHING.** You can't even phone without buying one of their cards. Smiler Cuthbertson and I once wore our best clothes to buy a meal at the Ahwahnee Hotel. They wouldn't serve us as we were "not wearing ties". A few years later with a film crew in tow we were ushered in wearing jeans and T-shirts. **MONEY TALKS IN CALIFORNIA.**"

- Steve Long, Mountain Guide.

lure of substantial long-term corporate revenue and profit that has produced and driven the establishment of this mainstream infrastructure. And it is sadly inevitable that a majority percentage of the profits from the expansion of a consumption-centric, theme-park tourism are never re-invested back into the Yosemite National Park, but swiftly drafted back to the boardroom chiefs at 40 Fountain Plaza, New York City - the headquarters of DNC - and to the accounts of other subsidiary companies and their shareholders.

So, is the landscape of the contemporary Yosemite Valley defined as much by the debris of its commercial exploitation as an American icon as it is by the astonishing natural architecture for which it is known throughout the world? Does the DNC time-share salesman, canvassing potential clients back in San Francisco or Las Vegas, have a greater impact here than the environmentalist or ecologist? Is the figure of the itinerant climber, dragging a battered haul-bag back into Camp 4 after a stint on El Cap, usurped and ultimately displaced by the far more profitable presence of the weekendng Los Angeles stock market trader, residing in style at the salubrious Ahwahnee Hotel? Perhaps. But there is a get-out clause from this dead end scenario, where monetary value appears to have taken precedence over the co-existing values of adventure and environmental preservation.

Fortunately, climbers and other wilderness enthusiasts are known for their refusal to adhere to common cultural trends, to be subjugated by authority, or to conform to the tyrannical injunctions of monopolising power structures. And climbers in particular are perhaps even better known for their repertoire of innovative methods for the evasion and subversion of the status quo of popular opinion. Despite the best efforts of Delaware North Companies to create a 'theme park Yosemite', the Valley still remains one of the pre-eminent rock climbing destinations in the world. And the scene in the 'zero-star' Camp 4, where virtually all climbers end up staying, remains a refreshing contrast to the tourist-junkyards nearby. For those who haven't been, Greg Child describes it with superlative insight in his 1998 essay, *Postcards from the Ledge*: "beamed in from a Hunter S. Thompson story, there were rascals and blatherskites, petty criminals and acid casualties, kooks and misfits, natural-born losers and sociopaths. And they all flocked to Yosemite's Camp 4, aka Sunnyside Campground."

"Once you're **100 FOOT ABOVE** the deck, the Valley is one of the **MOST BEAUTIFUL** climbing areas on the planet. It's just a shame that time spent on the ground is done so under the watchful eye of the **LUDICROUSLY OFFICIOUS PARK RANGERS**."

- Ben Heason, Climber.

In winter the wilder side of the Valley is more obvious.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.



Brad Jarrett leading pitch seven of Aurora (A4, 5.8), El Cap.  
Photo: Adam Wainwright.

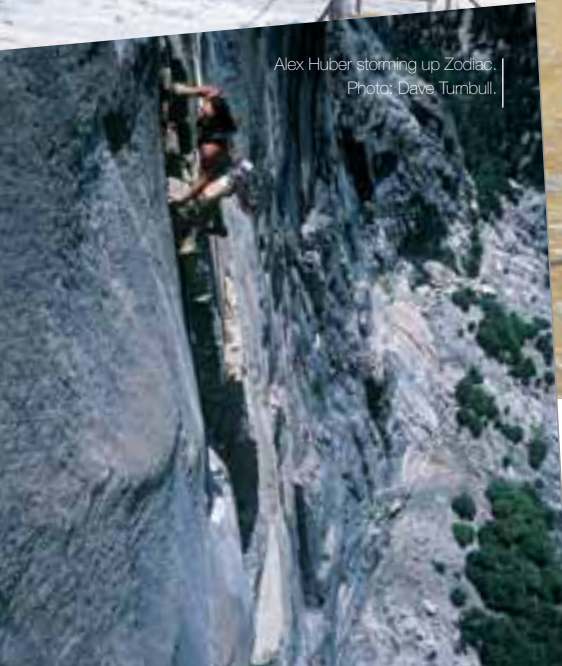




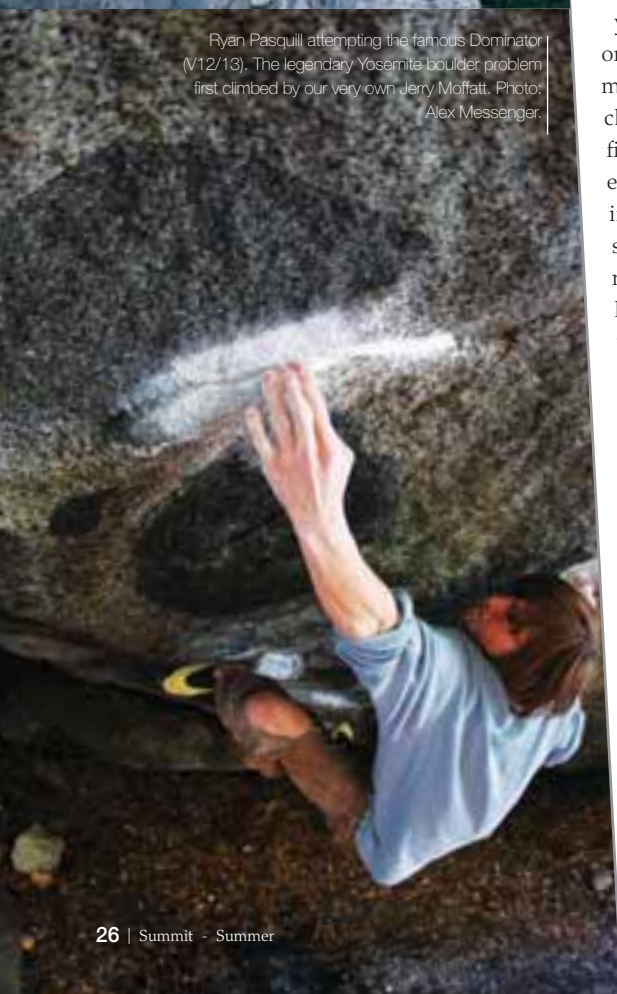
Phil Poole climbing the cables above the Shoulder, Half Dome.  
Photo: Stuart Halford.



Alex Huber storming up Zodiac.  
Photo: Dave Turnbull.



Ryan Pasquill attempting the famous Dominator (V12/13). The legendary Yosemite boulder problem first climbed by our very own Jerry Moffatt. Photo: Alex Messenger.



Adam Wainwright on the Triple Cracks pitch of The Shield, A3, El Cap. Taken on an 18:16 hour ascent of The Shield in 1994 - a record which stood for quite a few years.  
Photo: Garibotti/Wainwright.



This was in the 1970's and 80's. The campground is a little more organised now, but the odd acid casualty still springs up from time to time, clutching a bottle of whiskey and jumping around wrapped up in a sleeping bag at seven in the morning. Just when you thought that climbing had moved on, grown up, and got sensible with modern times, such wayward characters still survive here. They are a fine reminder that climbing is still an essentially anti-establishment and inherently subversive activity, best suited to those who have chosen to resist the pressures of conformity. The long hair and the flares may have vanished, but the spirit of Woodstock '68, Jack Kerouac, Jim Morrison, and

Apocalypse Now, all mixed in with a good dose of vagrant European eccentricity, is still very much alive and well in Yosemite today.

Amid this eccentricity and anti-establishment vibe you can still feel the real Yosemite - a far cry from the madding crowds of consumption-driven tourism. Around the late-night bonfires of Camp 4, the awesome presence of El Cap, Half Dome, The Leaning Tower and Washington Column are vividly felt. Those great names are caught in every snatch of conversation drifting around in the dope-smoke, as another gaunt team staggers in late bearing huge haul-bags after long days high on a wall. Another bong is fired up to the clink-clink sound of a major rack overhaul, and someone sounds an eerie blast on a digeridoo yet another time.

As climbers and wilderness enthusiasts

"It's a place of **INCREDIBLE CONTRAST**: the serene valley floor versus the staggering **VERTICAL WALLS**; two-move boulder problems and mile high routes; the **TOURISTS AND CLIMBERS** looking upon each other with horror.

There's no escaping that the Valley is run as a business and that the climbers have an on/off relationship with the Park authorities. On one hand they are **PART OF THE SPECTACLE** and are advertised as such. On the other hand they are viewed as scum - living cheap, outstaying **PARK TIME LIMITS** and bending the **OVERZEALOUS RULES** "

- Adam Wainwright, Climber.



"After the stress of making our Yosemite film 'Blood, Sweat and Bagels' I never wanted to see the Valley or its bloody **GRANITE WALLS** again - I'd had a belly-full. Two years later I found myself back in the States and suddenly all I could think about was getting back to Camp 4. A week later we were **TOPPING OUT THE NOSE**, dangerously dehydrated and wobbling on our feet after 35 history-laden pitches. Whilst so many climbing days are forgettable, that can never be said of **A DAY IN THE VALLEY**."

- Rich Heap, Filmmaker.

we're lucky. Lucky that we have the opportunity to more swiftly and easily access that 'real' Yosemite than people with more conventional horizons, who are sadly forced to tolerate the profuse and various detritus of one of the world's largest privately-held companies that has proliferated across the Valley floor.

We can find the real Yosemite after less than an hour's energetic blast up a spidery climbers' trail heading up to the base of one of the cliffs, or after moving over just a pitch or two of perfect granite. It comes suddenly to life, with a rich transformative power, as soon as the human noise and traffic of the valley floor subsides. Suddenly, through that quiet and sublime benevolence unique to the vertical, we are alone again amid the true landscape of one of America's greatest wilderness regions.

Yosemite is still one of the world's ultimate rock climbing environments, and I'd argue that the Valley of Muir and Adams, Salathé, Robbins, Harding, Frost, Pratt, Chouinard and Bridwell, Charlie Porter and John Barbella, Ray Jardine, John Long, Ron Kauk and John Bachar, Galen Rowell and Greg Child, Todd Skinner and Paul Piana, Lynn Hill, The Huber Brothers and Yuji Hiriyama, Leo Houlding and Dean Potter can never be completely compromised by either big-business or poor management. And we can but hope that this Yosemite - the Valley of climbers, walkers, and environmental ideologues - will remain undiminished by any new leviathan the 21st century may yet confront it with. ■

Dave Pickford is a climber, writer and photographer based in the UK. He has a particular interest in the Greater Himalaya region, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Far East. See [www.davidpickford.com](http://www.davidpickford.com)

Thanks to all who contributed, especially Adam Wainwright for looking in his archives and Chris Dainton for the use of his stunning panorama. Prints of this and more available from [www.cjdigitallandscapes.com](http://www.cjdigitallandscapes.com).

"My mate was **WASHING IN A STREAM** when he felt a gun pressed against his cheek: "What you doing here, boy?" barked the ranger. But the rangers that I've met have been keen climbers, and when we met the head climbing ranger it was clear that **HE LOVED THE PARK** and wanted to educate climbers about thoughtless desecration.

Things like the miles of fixed ropes we encountered on Salathe Wall, fixed by so-called free climbers who leave the ropes up for months on end. Hopefully soon Yosemite will see **A RETURN TO THE CLEAN AND LIGHT ETHIC** - no fixed ropes for more than a week would be a start. If you have to strip all the ropes it'd be a good incentive to finish the project and get a life.

- Steve Long, Mountain Guide.

Adam Wainwright cleaning a pitch on Aurora (A4) in the evening sun. Photo: Wainwright collection.





# RACE FOR THE SUMMIT

A full-page background image of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, a person is seen from behind, running on a snowy slope. The middle ground features a large, dark, craggy rock formation. In the background, more snow-covered mountain peaks are visible under a cloudy sky. The title 'RACE FOR THE SUMMIT' is overlaid in large, red, distressed font across the middle of the image.

**Vicky Wilkinson** goes behind the scenes of alpine running

**E**arlier that morning in the hut, Hugo Biner, Zermatt mountain guide and proprietor of the Trift Refuge, had looked with a mixture of curiosity and bemusement at our English fell-running shoes. He didn't think it was a particularly good idea to run up there.

He'd seen pretty much every brand of tourist, walker and climber pass his hut, but runners only rarely. I assumed his hut would have been a common stop-off for runners on the ascent of this classic walkers route, but apparently

not. It's always good to check local knowledge and Biner's unfamiliarity with the subject of running in the area made me uneasy. It was dawning on me that, if I were to run in the Alps, I would seldom meet another runner and for this sport at least, there must be great areas of virgin territory.

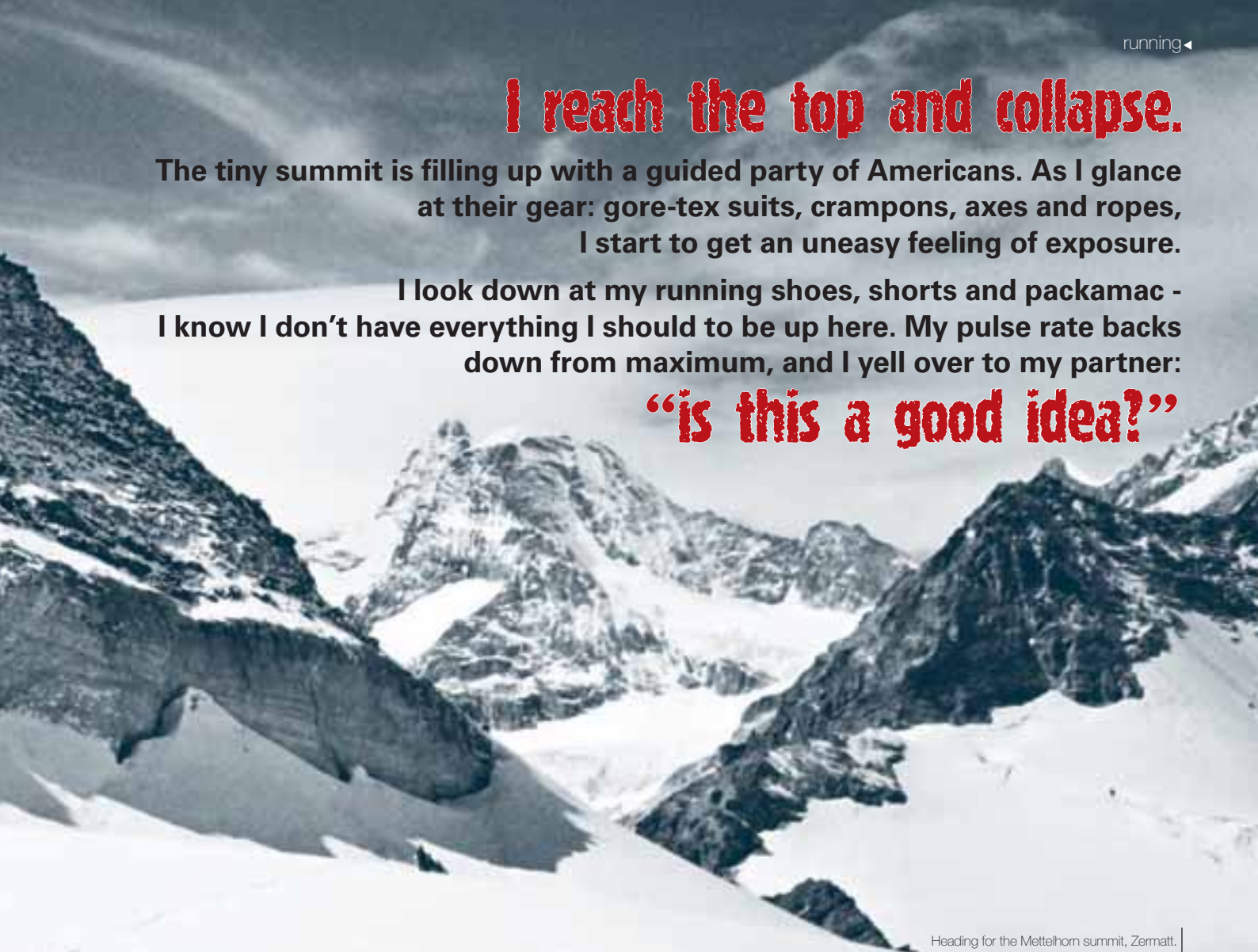
This was for me the day that alpine running finally made sense. I expect everyone who does it has a day like that. As I looked out from the rocky summit, down to the snowfields we had crossed below, struggling to take in the full panorama of spiky white summits around me, I knew I'd cracked it. Previous

attempts at running in the Alps had been wrecked by bad route choices, or the wrong kit and poor preparation. It had made me think - either walk or climb, but don't bother trying to run it. Maybe trying to transplant UK fell running onto an alpine environment simply doesn't work. But this time we'd got it right. Our companions on the summit had laboriously trekked to the top, roping together over the snow, carrying all the heavy essentials for a day in the mountains. We had the simple, lightweight freedom of the fell runner, and the anticipation of an awesome descent.

# I reach the top and collapse.

The tiny summit is filling up with a guided party of Americans. As I glance at their gear: gore-tex suits, crampons, axes and ropes, I start to get an uneasy feeling of exposure.

I look down at my running shoes, shorts and packamac - I know I don't have everything I should to be up here. My pulse rate backs down from maximum, and I yell over to my partner:  
**“is this a good idea?”**



Heading for the Mettelhorn summit, Zermatt.  
 Photo : Vicky Wilkinson.

The Mettelhorn is 3406m high. It's like a mini Matterhorn. It has an outline that mirrors in miniature the signature shape of the area - the "perfect mountain" silhouette. It's one of the few true peaks in the area that can be tackled by walkers and the perfect choice for a running ascent. The day we ran the sky was clear and the autumnal weather was bright and fresh. Working hard up a well-defined track we were able to gain height at speed. In fact, if you wonder whether it's worth the extra effort, check out how quickly the walkers you pass become dots below you - indistinguishable from the rocks and boulders. The final few hundred meters of running to the summit had felt really hard. By then the tight switchback of the track seemed to make no impact on the sharp gradient and the rock under our shoes was loose and greasy. I'd tried not to lose grip on a good running rhythm - up on my toes, stepping lightly, but my legs were becoming more leaden with each stride. I focused on trying to keep comfortable,

moving forward and with each wheezing lung-full, hauling in as much of the thinning air as possible.

Once we'd stopped on the summit, carrying only a thin layer of Pertex, we chilled rapidly. I needed to get my legs moving and heart rate back up again to feel more comfortable. The stable weather could stay for several days or change unpredictably to the cold, windy conditions of the day before. As a runner I felt very exposed. A glance across to the Matterhorn, and the great plume blowing off its summit reminded me that this wasn't our usual winter jog up Coniston Old Man. So we left the trekkers and launched ourselves downwards. I have found that after each of my recent running trips to the Alps, my lung capacity increases. It feels like the increasing thinness of the air causes you to dig deeper each time you breathe in, like scratching around in the bottom of a bag, trying desperately to get what you need to fuel the uphill effort. Descending after a climb like that is great fun, with gravity suddenly on your side, you feel

like nothing but a pair of lungs, flat sections requiring no effort to motor fast. Heads forward and heels digging down into crunchy snow, we dropped like rocks and were able to jump the small, bridged crevasses without breaking our stride.

Back home in the Lake District, our usual running ground, fell running is a sport as embedded in the history and culture as climbing. The challenges for runners are numerous and well known. An example, one of the oldest, is the iconic Grasmere Guides race. It was established in the Victorian era as a showcase for the Lake District mountain guides, enabling them to compete for training, prestige and cash. It is a very steep 900ft of ascent in a 1.5mile long race. The record has stood at 12 minutes 21 for the last 28 years, but was broken this year by British champion, Robb Jebb, one of the elite UK runners now making their presence felt in the emerging alpine race scene.

In the Alps, established classic alpine trail races such as Sierre-Zinal have been attracting first class athletes since the 70's.



“For running the steepest climbs, get into a low gear, relax and don’t stop running - with good technique the fitness can follow”

New “ultra-endurance” races are also springing up, set in classic mountain environments and with big name sponsors. The North Face Ultra Trail takes runners on a 158k lower level circuit around the Mont Blanc massive. The latest Buff Sky Runner race series has attracted some of the stars of the UK fell running scene, having the added enticement of taking runners higher into the mountains, racing up to altitudes of 3000m.

The fastest fell racers in the country are turning to the Alps. But as well as that, more runners are heading out alone looking for high passes, peaks and a different sort of challenge. Like climbing, kayaking and mountain biking before it, mountain running seems to be having something like its own “free ride” revolution, releasing it from the rules, conventions and organised activities of athletic sports. But despite alluding to Alpine running in their marketing, the big name brands are still not producing specialised gear, especially shoes, which can truly hack it on steep, rocky and icy ground. Running for peaks and high passes is still really a minority sport. If you want to run routes like the Mettelhorn there are no guidebooks for runners, no grading system and little advice for the novice on how to take their first steps in the Alps. Fitness can seem a daunting obstacle.

But like many sports that are apparently all about fitness, a technique lurks beneath the surface. For running the steepest climbs, get into a low gear, relax and don’t stop running - with good

technique the fitness can follow. “Don’t stop running” seems obvious, but in my experience, your body may try to talk you into it. Many of the really good mountain runners I have watched and tried to learn from, never stop and never walk - both of which you will often see runners do on long and steep fell races. Stuart Parker, a former UK orienteering champion and veteran fell runner put it to me very clearly as I failed to keep up with him, “If you stop your pulse will drop right back, and it’s hard to get it back up again, if you keep stopping you’ll blow up”. When it gets really steep make small rapid steps, learn to relax and know your anaerobic threshold. Eventually your body will get the message.

For challenging routes, and the most exposure a runner should ever have to face, the Dolomites are an excellent area to start with. Look for routes in the peaks above Cortina d’Ampezzo. For example, from the Falzarego pass up to Rifugio Giussani (2580m). This route follows long traverses across the mighty Dolomiti screes as they pour out from the base of the sheer rising rock faces. The traverse sections are fast and relatively easy, giving breathing space and a chance to look straight up the flanks of the pink skyscraper columns as you pass underneath. A particular hazard for runners here is the barbed wire and rusty metal strewn around, left over from WW1. Through the barren Travenanzes valley the track descends a little, skirting the top of the tree line and passing under a spectacular plume of water falling from

Vicky covering rocky ground near Lacs Noirs in the Aiguilles Rouge, Chamonix.  
Photo: Harvey Wilkinson.







Released from his battle with gravity on the Mettelhorn, Harvey Wilkinson heads down at top speed for a cold beer.  
Photo: Vicky Wilkinson

“there’s no queuing for the teleferique there’s no faffing about and almost no kit. It’s a pure challenge.”



# ALPINE RUNNING: ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

## Choosing the right routes

The choice is vast but be prepared to be a lonely runner. You can run anywhere you can walk, but a good hike won’t always convert into a good run, and the wrong line or choice can absorb all the strength you’ve got - with very little reward. To start with try getting the cable car out of the valley and tree line and tackle one of the many contouring hikers’ routes that circumnavigate the big alpine valleys. These routes can be very fast and can give you an easy introduction to running in an alpine environment. Going from hut to hut is another possibility. You could plan two-day routes with an uphill “chilled lager finish” at the hut followed by a descent the next morning.

## Acclimatising

If you don’t do this you’ll pay. My friend Mikey pulled up in Chamonix after his usual non-stop marathon car drive for a climbing trip and tried his first alpine run straight out of the door of the car. He’s super fit, but blew up before getting to the glacier he was aiming for. Give yourself a sporting chance. Dehydration is inevitable, and you will struggle to carry all the water you need. Try to make up the deficit, before and after.

## When to go

The clearer and more stable weather in the late spring and autumn is good, especially when you depend on carrying minimal gear. But beware of mid summer - the heat and burning effects of the sun can be particularly dangerous for runners. Hut opening times can be erratic at either end of the season, so always check they are open to avoid horrible disappointment.

## Equipment

Speed is your friend so go as light a possible. Don’t forget that like alpine style climbers your only real protection is your speed, and that is a bubble that can burst very quickly. Carry too much and you can’t run well. Thin foil blankets and light head torches are useful safety items. One light layer of complete body cover is a good idea. Most of the “breathable/waterproof” fabrics on the market don’t work particularly well for running. Fine Pertex types are OK. I use single layer cotton Ventile, but this fabric is hard to find in the shops and largely ignored by the main manufacturers. For routes with an overnight hut stop, manage with the gear you’re wearing, a credit card and a toothbrush.

Be wary of using “trail running” shoes off-piste. In many, although not all, there is too much cushioning and height built into these shoes. Great on a level track (or down the pub) but you can risk fall, ankle injury or worse if you venture onto very steep, rocky ground. UK fell running shoes work pretty well, with a low narrow sole unit and grippy studs. To help tackle the snow and ice, we made our own hybrid shoes from a cross-country spike with a piece of mountain bike tyre stuck to the heel. Perfect! We took them to Cobbler John in Kendal who did a great job putting them together, but told us not to come back as cutting the bike tyre to fit had filled his shop with smoke! These have done better than anything I’ve managed to find so far.

## Insurance

As a runner this is what brought me to the BMC, I couldn’t find anyone who would specifically insure me for running in the Alps, and I didn’t want to make do with walkers’ insurance. The BMC offer tailored coverage for specific activities.

## Further information

For more information about the areas featured visit see [www.dolomiti.it](http://www.dolomiti.it), [www.chamonix.com](http://www.chamonix.com), and [www.zermatt.ch](http://www.zermatt.ch).  
For more info about fell running in the UK see [www.fra.com](http://www.fra.com).



# LAKE DISTRICT MOUNTAIN TRIAL

**9th September**

If you love the mountains, and feel exhilarated when moving swiftly over varied terrain, then why not enter the Lake District Mountain Trial?

The Lake District Mountain Trial is a fell race with a difference. It takes you to unknown, quiet areas. You decide on the optimum line between checkpoints, and whilst you may see other competitors, it's likely that you'll be spending much of the time out on your own. The men's route will cover a maximum of 18 miles with ascent of about 7000ft. The women's route about 12 miles and 5000ft of ascent. And there's also the Short Course, about 10 miles with 3500ft of ascent. This is ideal for the younger (or older!) runners, or those who are rich in mountain experience but not necessarily runners.

Unlike other fell races, competitors need to be self-reliant. It's not just fitness that counts, but the ability to identify the best route choice between controls, often navigating in poor weather. And as the venue is not disclosed until two weeks before the event, there is little chance to recce the area.

## How to enter

Owing to the severity of the courses, you need to demonstrate that you're competent in the mountains through previous participation in mountain marathons, cycle navigation events, orienteering or Class A fell races. But the organisers are keen to attract more people to the event, especially the Short Course, so give them a shout if in any doubt. Minimum age is 21, and 18 for the Short Course. Cost is £15, see [www.ldmta.org.uk](http://www.ldmta.org.uk) for full entry details.



Vicky Wilkinson on the Grand Balcon Sud trail contouring the Chamonix valley.  
Photo: Harvey Wilkinson.

the cliffs above. For the final ascent, the path breaks off straight up an exposed track, heading abruptly and very steeply to the pass summit and the welcome sight of the Rifugio flag.

I'm still working on my approach to alpine running, and the best places to go, and how far I can take it personally. The Dolomites have offered up some fantastic routes. Running in these extreme and awe-inspiring environments, free and fast moving, seemingly against logic, brings the greatest rewards. Mike Vogler, alpine climber and fell runner, has started to take his running to the places he climbs. "It's the brutal simplicity of it that I love", says Mike, "there's no queuing for the teleferique there's no faffing about and almost no kit. It's a pure challenge". I would urge anyone who loves the simple challenges and rewards of running to try the Alps, if only so that I can meet a few more runners on the mountain. ■

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

" Heads forward and heels digging down into crunchy snow, we dropped like rocks and were able to jump the small, bridged crevasses without breaking our stride"



Champion UK fell runner Rob Jebb competing in the Three Peaks race.  
Photo: Jebb collection.

►

"Let my brother send gold  
in great quantity, for in my  
brother's land gold is as  
plentiful as dust."

# GOLD

**There's gold in them thar hills.  
And Dave Lucas is in the  
grip of its madness.**

All that glitters is not gold - ascending a wadi,  
all the rock here is unclimbed.  
Photo: Dave Lucas.

# FEVER









**The wind whipping up, we huddled around a fire in the very cave where my friend Mohammed had lived to the age of 12. We were reminiscing on the days climbing when I heard Mohammed and his companion murmur about Dahab - Arabic for gold.**

My ears pricked up. Climbing suddenly forgotten I leaned over and asked him what he was on about. He grinned sheepishly, and told me a Bedouin tale, hundreds of years old, passed down from generation to generation. The tale was long and intricate, but concluded in a box of gold being left on a ledge on a mountain "too steep to climb to, and too hidden to climb down to".

Great story, but I assumed that they didn't know where the peak was. On the contrary, Mohammed explained. He claimed to know it very well, but without climbing equipment he couldn't reach the ledge. My head began to feel strange,

fuzzy. I couldn't concentrate, my eyes couldn't

focus. Mohammed was still talking to me, his mouth moving, but I wasn't listening. I was dreaming.

Gold! I'm going to be rich. But will I have to share it? If it's coins I could go down first and then hide them in my chalk bag. Curses, what if it's cursed - I'll be famous but dead. I bet we can't get it out the country, I can't just stick a bar of gold in my hand luggage. We'll have to find it, bury it and leave a treasure map for my grandkids. It may have been taken already. Perhaps not, but we've got to go quickly, we'll smuggle it out somehow. God. What if the box is empty?

I could still feel the heat and smell the acrid smoke of the donkey turds fire we were cooking on, but I was on a different planet. I'd caught a bad case of gold fever.

The next day, after a fitful sleep, we packed our camels and set off - destination Gold Mountain. The mountain came into view and on every ledge my eyes could see a box laden with gold, covered in the dust and dirt from its hundreds of years of rest. Mohammed squinted, pointed to a ledge, and there it was - a box like

object below a small bush. Wow.

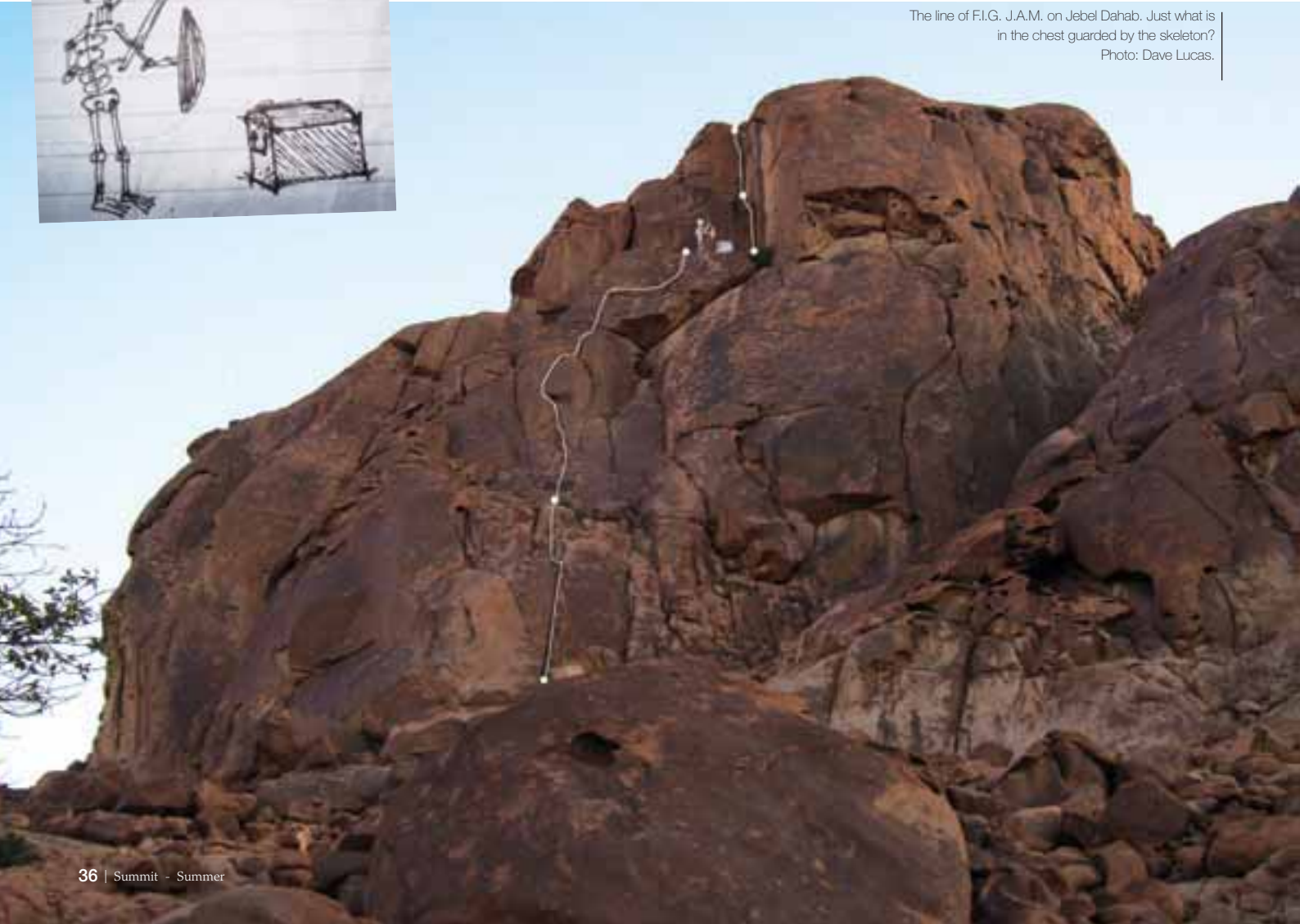
We raced up the approach, scrambled up a boulder-filled gully to the right of the peak, and continued up past fragrant bushes of mint, oregano and other plants of varying medicinal properties. On the col we balanced our way along a thin ridge to gain the summit and set the anchors for the abseil. I soon bullied my way to the front of the rope, to be the one who could descend onto the ledge and discover the gold. I was to be the one to open the box, to have this ancient treasure named after him.

As I slowly slid down the rope other thoughts skimmed my mind. Should I hide the treasure and tell the others there was nothing? Should I bring it back up to share equally? If karma does exist then surely it shouldn't be toyed with when dealing with ancient cursed Egyptian gold? Aren't our guides the real owners anyway?

My feet landed on the ledge and heart-in-mouth I began to make my way to the bush. Damn, oh damn. It's just a rock, a rock. Our box was nothing but a rock. I frantically searched the ledge, something must be here, it was so inaccessible, the perfect



The line of F.I.G. J.A.M. on Jebel Dahab. Just what is in the chest guarded by the skeleton?  
Photo: Dave Lucas.





hiding place. I peered under every rock expecting a tunnel entrance or a buried box. But half-an-hour later, shrill cries from the others enquiring if they were rich yet brought me back down to reality.

"There's nothing," I replied. And nothing there was, but rocks, dirt and a bat poo filled cave. Fred shouted down that perhaps the hoard of skeleton zombies destined to protect it had hidden their riches from us. This didn't improve my blackening mood. I felt deflated, hopes of opulence dashed.

Turning to prusik back up the abseil line I faced a great corner crack that arrowed 50m back up to the summit. And as I lurched my way back up the rope my dreams shifted from those of gold to those of cracks. This line was impeccable, if you could somehow reach this classic corner crack from the ground. But you couldn't, could you?

An hour later our despondent team trudged back to the valley floor. And there, at the very foot of the pinnacle's deep red granite eastern flank was the perfect hand crack rising 30m up into the slabs, walls and cracks above. Hell. It'd never make me rich, but I suddenly cheered up, I had found my gold; an untouched, clean, natural, unforced line. Two hours later the route was in the bag, F.I.G. J.A.M., went at 130m of E2 (5a, 5a/b, 5b, 5c) and is without a doubt a new classic of the Sinai Desert, if I do say so myself. Everybody else had had an equally successful afternoon and the newly named Jebel Dahab now is the proud owner of five new routes.

I'm sure I'm not the first visitor to be overcome by madness in the desert. Dahab has been a part of the Sinai Peninsula for as long as people have inhabited it. The first recorded people to enter the interior of the Sinai were the Ancient Asiatics and Egyptians. A king wrote to the Pharaoh Amenhotep III: "Let my brother send gold in great quantity, for in my brother's land gold is as plentiful as dust." Sadly since then the dust seems to have severely outnumbered the gold, but as we were finding there were still plenty of riches for the taking.

In 1882, A. H. Keane wrote concerning Arabia Petraea: "The Southern-most tip is made up of the massive volcanic highlands cut into huge cathedrals of stone watching over the wadis deep below. Here the land



Alex belays on the first ascent of F.I.G. J.A.M.  
Photo: Fred Stone.



Breakfast. Cooked on a fire of donkey turds.  
Photo: Melissa Nesbitt.



The team en-route to find their fortune.  
Photo: Fred Stone.

derives its grandeur and peculiar charm from the very nakedness of the rocky heights. In some of the wadis the hillsides are scored by countless seams of the brightest hues, their fantastic designs producing an indescribable pictorial effect. What is seemingly the mere outline of a distant landscape reflects a charming and almost magical vista as if the bare rocks were clothed with woods or vineyards, or their summits capped with eternal snows."

And it is these "huge granite cathedrals" that we've been climbing on for the last five years. I've been organising expeditions here under the name of The Vertical World, to get groups of climbers to help me with the enormous task of new routing and recording the endless amount of unclimbed rock. It's only now that I'm starting to collect enough information to make the Sinai Desert a truly worthwhile exotic climbing destination. But we're nearly there. So come along on our next trip to find the next hidden treasure. And if the unimaginable happens and you've had enough of climbing, then just head to the clear blue waters of the Red Sea and pick up a tan. ■

Dave Lucas is going back to the desert this October with another expedition with one, two and three week sections available. Contact him on 07876525728 or email [dave@verticalworld.co.uk](mailto:dave@verticalworld.co.uk) for details.

# HALF PAGE V AD TO GO ON HERE





Gary and his dogs. All photos:  
Gary Rolfe.

# Fast Food

**What to eat on the go. More uncompromising advice from Gary Rolfe - Arctic explorer extraordinaire.**

**D**espite trendy hype we all have a pretty good idea of what food is good for us, and what isn't. But it's all too easy to settle for bad food - especially if you're out on a limb. It's a subject close to my heart, since I eat a lot. In winter I scoff the calorific expenditure of a marathon every day, around 5,200 calories.

The quantity of food required to suppress my appetite is even a cause of concern for some - apparently it appears unnatural. Most people think I have worms. Long ago my eating habits set an unprecedented personal ability to erode into enormous piles of

food. I'd regularly eat two bread loaves, plus a meal, in one sitting.

In the Arctic food has never been cheap. I used to live 350 miles north of the Yukon. During the 1896 Yukon gold rush a loaf of bread was worth more than its equivalent weight in gold.

And even now a grapefruit flown in from down south can cost five quid and taste like sawdust. To keep me going I baked, cramming bread dough full of nuts and dried fruit. Calorie drenched, I couldn't eat these in pairs so the loaf record remained unchallenged.

I'm not one for the privilege of eating traditional Arctic foods, those considered delicacies, like innards. I tend to retreat, my lips curl. Derogatory? Perhaps. But

I've seen white overall and rubber glove clad environmental boffins treat the very same as toxic waste. Studies on whales show them to be full of chemical contaminants. Around here bears and humans eat whales. The food chain stops at the polar bear. They're truly amazing animals, but thanks to worldwide pollution they're also radioactive. Trans-boundary pollution is released into the environment from industries thousands of miles away and reaches the Arctic through the atmosphere, rivers and ocean currents. Continuous accumulation of contaminants transported to the Arctic is a process called bioaccumulation. The Arctic Ocean is where pollution stays - nothing gets broken down because the







The man himself  
- Gary Rolfe.



Saxon carries his own food  
in a Ruff Wear dog pack.

"If all else fails I eat dog food."



Five-month old  
Spoons.

sun can't get at it under the sea ice.

I now live in Greenland, a country known for its pristine wilderness but pollution from lower latitudes is a growing concern. The major threat for human health is mercury. Mercury is concentrated in the food chain and reaches high levels in the traditional Greenlandic diet, mostly marine mammals. Extremely high levels of mercury have been found in the blood of hunters and their families from Greenland. Women now breast-feed their kids with contaminated milk.

I meanwhile filter all my water with a First Need purifier. I'm never without water in an Aztec steel vacuum flask. Filled with boiling

water and left outside for three days at minus forty, the contents will remain brew warm. Wrapped around a steel flask I've a magazine sized piece of Multimat's EVA foam, big enough to sit, stand or kneel on. This I tab with a Velcro clasp. In summer day trips I like the Aztec Widemouth 1.2 litre steel flask for keeping a decent meal piping hot.

In the western Arctic beluga whale hunters do their stuff in August. None of your old fashioned approach in nimble kayak armed with twig like harpoon scenes now. It's all satellite phones, high-powered rifles then back home to the VCR. Though be warned. If the pollution doesn't ruin your spoils, poor food

handling might. Someone always dies from botulism caused by eating muktuk (raw whale fat) that's been summer-stored in sweaty sealed plastic buckets. One way I overcame crippling food costs (and botulism) was to cross time zones and drive south 2,800 miles to Edmonton in Alberta. The plan was simple: spend a week shopping then head north with it all. My crazily long list always included 40lb of dehydrated banana chips, 70lb of dried fruit, 12lb of dried milk and 4 tons of Nutrience dog food.

A month's expedition food takes a full day to pack. I always do this alone. Food lists take into account safety margin and rest days. I've still got pre-laptop lists noting spoon and cup counts tallying



"There's no point scrimping  
in the cold - planned  
starvation isn't clever"



During a 400-mile summer journey made on foot with two dogs in Nunavut (Canadian Arctic) Gary had six grizzly bear encounters. Here he eats away from his tent.



60-litre HarcoStar  
re-supply drums.

everything that I eat. Fascinating stuff like 118 spoonfuls make up a 340g pot of instant coffee. It's a laborious process because I'm hopeless at sums. And I mean hopeless, I always made myself treble-check the count with a calculator. These days it's easier - everything now goes on to neat Panasonic Toughbook spreadsheets that add up for me.

A pound of butter I cut into quarters. This lasts a bad week, one of insane calorific output. With a knife, frozen

butter sticks are easier to whittle and add to food. Calculated amounts of dried fruit is mixed into rolled oats. Not just raisins and sultanas but dried strawberries and pineapple. There's no point scrimping in the cold - planned starvation isn't clever. Prepared perishables like cheese I leave outside, protected from my dogs and wolf packs, to freeze before giving it the chance of going hairy. The preparation is pernickety, but in a tent I want nutritious



Caught under the Mackenzie River ice, Gary boils his fish to kill a nasty strain of parasitic worm unique to this region of the Northwest Territories.



“ The food chain stops at the polar bear. They’re truly amazing animals, but thanks to worldwide pollution they’re also radioactive ”

and satisfying food then sleep. The less time it takes from bag, to pot, to mouth the better.

Most dried grub sold as ‘expedition food’ is nasty. If you’re serious about what you eat there’s no trusting what goes into this stuff. Look at the ingredients on ‘expedition food’ packaging. You can do a better job and save money; you can determine what goes into your meals without those health-tampering additives.

I love meat, and drying caribou, musk ox or fish in the Arctic is easy - the perpetual summer sun allows it. Framed bug-proof netted boxes looking like bird aviaries allow air to pass freely, and thin strips can make good tasting jerky in hours. It’s not easy to do in the UK though - you’ll need to head into the kitchen. To dehydrate meat in an oven grind it up. Beef is best, once dry it’ll become powder-like. Alternatively cut the meat into thin strips to make jerky. It’s light and nutrient-dense. You can get delicious, tender, high-protein jerky from even cheap meats, and it stores indefinitely. Fish also tastes good preserved this way too. The only trouble with ovens is that they cost a bit to run, and you have to constantly flip and rotate the load - a bind.

If you like the sound of drying your own food then you’ll need a food dehydrator - I use Excalibur ones. These come small or as big as you want. Purpose made driers house the food on screen trays. A fan in the unit’s base circulates air through and out at a regulated temperature. Dehydrating fruit is simple. Wash, cut and trim bruises before placing on a drying tray. Using frozen fruit to dry is good because it’s already prepared, no stalks or peel to mess with. Dried fruit can be eaten at once. When preparing menus it’s important to remember that vegetables re-hydrate at different rates. The fresh-to-dry times for all fruit and vegetables vary too. With practice it’s really easy to create what you know to be healthy.

Forget trans-Atlantic flights with copious amounts of food though. Chances are that killjoy customs officials will stop you with it and spoil your plans. If you can’t dry your own food US food companies like Justtomatoes Etc. offer a

magnificent array of unadulterated dehydrated fruit and vegetables, so go with time to buy and prepare in Canada or the US. Summer food preparation differs from winter considerations. If you’re flying north (above the Arctic Circle) then airline cargo expeditors can keep foodstuffs frozen or warm year round during flights. There’s a Canadian post office service called Food Mail. Buy provisions at allocated stores and groceries can be shifted around the Arctic at a cheap rate.

Summer food cache depots flown out ahead of me contain vacuum packed food. Re-sealable bags don’t hold content odours and advertise free grub for four legged gluttons like bears, wolves or wolverines. Vacuum packers are cheap enough. Food expected to withstand a Cessna 185 floatplane flight better be waterproof too. All my re-supplies are packed to survive rough and tumble travel. Bears bust padlocks so I thread and twist brass snare wire through barrel lids to secure them. I use Harcostar Drums - they’re light, tough and reliable 30 to 220 litre plastic drums.

Nobody grows stuff in the ground up north. Dirt is frozen solid year round. When training or preparing a journey from a warm base camp I sprout things like peas, mung beans, red clover, alfalfa and canola. I cover a jar bottom or shallow tray with seeds, soak for a few hours to swell and drain before covering the container with mosquito netting. Twice daily I add cold water, swirl and drain. Most seeds sprout within a couple of days. Mumm’s Sprouting Seeds guarantee me fresh essential minerals and vitamins. In the dead of winter I grow them indoors. Though colourless they’re nutritious and taste great. I started sprouting seeds after reading about Arctic explorer William Parry. In 1819 Parry was chosen by the Admiralty to explore the Arctic for the Northwest Passage. Beset in winter sea ice he grew cress and mustard seeds by the light of his ship’s candles. Supplemented with preserved berries and lemon juice he staved off scurvy from his crew.

Food isn’t much good without a stove. Throughout Arctic summers MSR XGK EX stoves keep me fed and watered.



Gary and his dogs camped, resting and well fed  
- Amundsen Gulf, Northwest Passage.

“ I’m not one for the privilege of eating traditional Arctic foods, those considered delicacies, like innards. I tend to retreat, my lips curl.”

Some things can be improvised on the Arctic Ocean. A stove can’t. In dreadful minus 50C° cold my stove repeatedly melts 90 litres of snow and boils 12 litres of water to hydrate my dogs and myself. I pack more than matches in the shape of an Ultimate Survival Strike Force all-weather fire starter. It’s a fail-safe stove ignition method. The Blast Match version is operational with one hand.

If all else fails I eat dog food. It’s fit for human consumption. ■

### More information

<a href="http://www.garyrolfe.com">www.garyrolfe.com</a>	Gary Rolfe’s site
<a href="http://www.ukjuicers.com">www.ukjuicers.com</a>	Food dehydrators
<a href="http://www.lakeland.co.uk">www.lakeland.co.uk</a>	Vacuum food sealers
<a href="http://www.justtomatoes.com">www.justtomatoes.com</a>	Dehydrated fruit and vegetables
<a href="http://www.harcostar.co.uk">www.harcostar.co.uk</a>	30 to 220 litre plastic drums



Original Message

From: John.Roberts2007@btinternet.com  
 To: everyone  
 Subject: We've been schooled

Heard about the weather back home - sucks to be you lot. Still in Chamonix with Ben. Duncan left just over a week ago - he managed to fall asleep in Chamonix train station, miss his train, his flight and get picked up by the police for hitching on the M1.

Meanwhile in Chamonix some very large lessons have been learnt. Mainly by Ben and I on the North Face of the Aiguille du Midi. It's a 1200m route, and in summer the first 800m are dry scrambling with a 200m section of F5c rock climbing thrown in near the top. The next 400m section is a snow ridge, forming the real character of the route, followed by three 80-degree ice pitches. The top was in great condition, the rock covered in a plastering of consolidated snow and ice. Perfect conditions for a hard mixed climb, the technicalities were well within our bounds. "Go for it," said a notable British alpinist. So we did.

We flew up the first 400m, moving together, on real form, our target an amazing bivi site between the snow and rock sections. But as we got higher it became natural to follow a couloir rather than skirt right as per the guidebook; quickly the difficulty increased, it was much harder than expected but climbable - slowly. Ben even uttered a rare compliment and offered to cook dinner after seconding one particularly savage pitch. It was slow though, and obvious that we were off the normal summer route and we had to use a little aid. Soon darkness was falling and we hadn't reached the bivi - luckily it was Ben's lead.

After storming through an overhanging crown of granite teeth, he shouted down that he'd found somewhere to bivi. I was dubious - I could see light filtering through the base of what he proposed we slept on. No matter. Trying to create a flat and "safe" pedestal to sleep on, we trundled blocks back down the couloir, watching their sparks as they rattled to the bottom 600m below. We commented on how spookily warm it was - yet again, the agency that claims some of the most accurate mountain weather forecasts on the planet had got it wrong.

The next morning the freezing level had rocketed. Guides and clients were racing down from the high mountain to the sanctuary of the lower level rock routes as the massif went into a rapid thaw. A helicopter came to check up on us - we gave him the thumbs up, concerned but happy. Later we learnt that they'd been looking for a missing party. We had heard shouts across the face that night but were unable to ascertain anything. They were never found. Perhaps, hopefully, they got themselves to safety.

After warm Lucozade for breakfast and four more pitches we were well into the crux of the rock section. The supposed crux was straightforward, compared to what we had climbed, and relatively dry. But worried about melting conditions above, Ben wanted to abseil. I didn't think that was a real option, it'd take at least 20 hours and be hugely dangerous in the current conditions - the sudden thaw was causing rockfalls and avalanches left, right but luckily not centre. I offered to lead the five remaining pitches to the bivi. We'd take stock there.

The route loomed above. A layer of 1cm melting verglas coated the rock, atop of that 10cm of wet, melting snow. I battled up for two pitches with all guns firing, using techniques I made up on the spot. Climbing some pitches without crampons and often without gloves it was impossible to climb purely as ice, mixed or rock. I dug away the snow and hacked into the verglas finding some occasional good protection, slowly creeping upwards. I thought I'd cracked it, until I hit an ice-coated slab. I inched up a few metres, found some protection and promptly fell off. No chance. I tried again, fell again. Now, soaking wet from the melt yet warm from the exertion, I pronounced it unclimbable. I lowered off and offered the lead to Ben. He swore at me.

There was nothing for it. Abseiling wasn't an option, and neither was sitting there for days - it was helicopter time. Ben rang them and they were more than happy to oblige: "Ten minutes, get your ropes in your bag". We packed up excitedly whilst the thumping of the helicopter could be heard rising up the valley. Suddenly it was there, filling the sky and the winchman was dangling next to us in mid air. We grabbed him, he clipped himself to our belay, introduced himself nonchalantly as Fifi and briefed us. The heli would fly past - I was to grab the wire, clip into it, unclip from the belay and jump. The thought of imminent sanctuary dispelled any doubts about leaping into free space above Chamonix attached to the underside of a chopper.

One, two three, go. Sh\*t. I was hanging, spinning, pulled away from the wall, seeing the face from a mad new perspective. It's pretty indescribable, you feel ripped from your pedestal, both emotionally and physically. Beaten. Ben and Fifi turned to dots on a vast white and black wall while I was pulled up. Next it was Ben's turn. We circled and flew back in. You could see our meagre highpoint on the snow-covered rock and within seconds Ben was sat next to me. "That beats the f\*cking Blackpool Big One," he finally uttered. For a man of few words he doesn't mince them.

Ten minutes later we were in Chamonix. We didn't have a key to the flat we were staying in, so foodless and dehydrated we sat and had a beer. The contrast of where we had been only 15 minutes earlier was impossible to digest, as was the beer. It's funny how Chamonix can be the alpinists' capital of the world, yet walking through the street looking like one draws real attention. It's the first time I've walked into a bar with a harness on - something I don't plan on making a habit of doing. We sat buzzing in silence and called Duncan. "You're never gonna believe the epic I've had getting home," he exclaimed. "Well," I replied, "we got a story for you too."

Hope you're all well. Back at the weekend. Word.

J.

This email  
<http://www>  
 No virus  
 Checked  
 Version

Date: 01/10/2006

The helicopter arrives. Photo: John Roberts.



An artists impression of the rescue by Jessica Chanyacharungchit (aged 4).

Ben just before the arrival of the helicopter.  
Photo: John Roberts.



**TRAVEL  
INSURANCE**

John Roberts is a BMC member with a particular talent for getting into scrapes. This is not the first time that BMC Insurance has saved his bacon, and it probably won't be the last. He is sponsored by Dyno Bouldering - [www.dynobouldering.com](http://www.dynobouldering.com).

**Make sure that you pack BMC Insurance for your adventures this summer. Call 0161 445 6111 or see [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk).**



# NewMedia

**With the launch of the new BMC website, Summit has entered another dimension.**

Last issue we asked you lot how you wanted Summit delivered in the future - online, or on recycled paper. It must have struck a real chord as over a hundred readers got in touch to let us know their thoughts. And there was a common theme in most of the replies - for the sake of our retinas please don't abandon the printed word just yet.

So you'll be pleased to know that we've made no plans to disappear into the ether. But that doesn't mean that we've been idle on the web side of things either. It's pretty obvious that for any publication to be successful and responsive these days it needs decent online presence. And as part of the upgrade of the entire BMC website we've given Summit a real boost.

Now all the useful articles way back to the dark ages of issue ten are online. You can browse entire issues as individual features or download as pdfs - all totally free. And if you fancy getting involved, leave your comments about the Issue or the letters page on our blogs. This is stage one of complete revamp of the BMC's web presence. We're the first to admit that it's taken a while to get there, but now we're in a real position to give you the information you want, and how you want it.

## Also on the site:

- Brand new homepages for all BMC work programmes
- Up-to-the-minute news service cross-linked to all feature articles
- RSS newsfeeds
- BMC flash video player for essential skills videos
- Blogs & wikis
- Online insurance
- Online shop full of bargains for members
- Profiles of all people involved with the BMC
- The very latest crag advice in the Regional Access Database (RAD)

And coming very soon is the members login. You'll be able to log in and take charge of your member record - sign up for newsletters, change addresses, take part in online voting and discussions.

## The best of Summit online

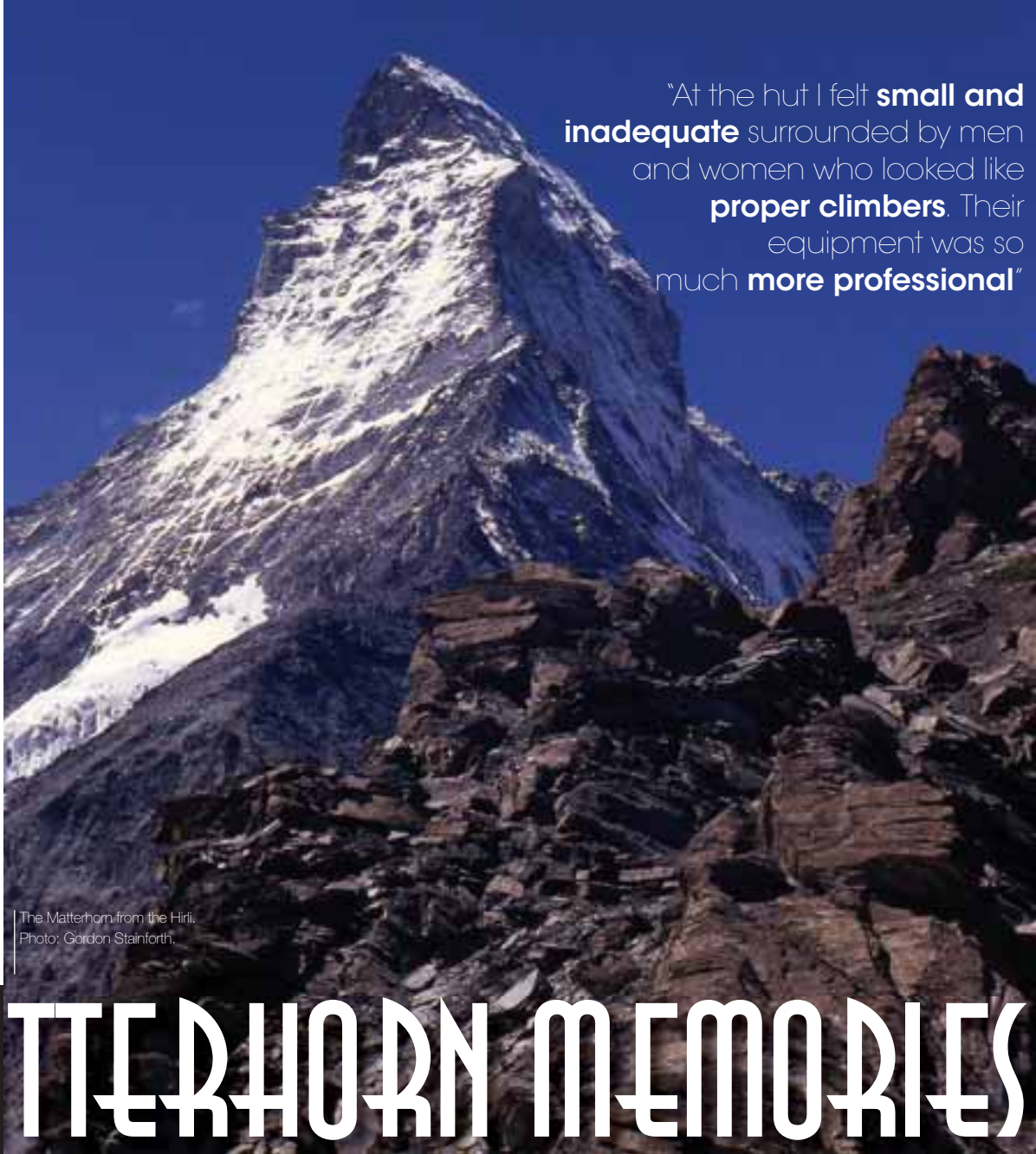
If you're a new reader (or just forgetful) then take a look through the Summit archive to discover some classic articles. Including:

- Nick Bullock's first published writing
- Nazi's and the North Face of the Eiger
- Interviews with Aaron Ralston (he cut off his hand) and Simon Woodruffe (he runs Yo Sushi)
- Thailand and the tsunami
- The state of British climbing series
- Helmet testing results
- Andy Kirkpatrick
- Niall Grimes
- The complete "That's Me" series
- Colin Prior's photography tips
- Gary Rolfe's Arctic series and much, much more.

**[www.thebmc.co.uk/summit](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/summit)**

**Pay it a visit today - and if you've any comments on Summit and the website then do get in touch - [summit@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:summit@thebmc.co.uk).**





The Matterhorn from the Hirli.  
Photo: Gordon Stainforth.

"At the hut I felt **small and inadequate** surrounded by men and women who looked like **proper climbers**. Their equipment was so much **more professional**"

# MATTERHORN MEMORIES

**On the eve of the 150th anniversary celebrations of the Alpine Club in Zermatt, Keith Hindell remembers his own ascent of the Matterhorn - sixty years ago.**

**I**f you've ever been to Zermatt in high summer you'll know that it has a heady atmosphere. The staggering magnificence of the scenery and the barely contained delight of the climbers combine perfectly with the smiles of visitors and villagers under a self-assured sun.

In such an atmosphere your legs feel twice as long and one's nerve twice as strong. It's practically impossible for a climber to admit that he is not going to climb the Matterhorn. Just to see it is to feel its challenge, said my father, Eric.

It was 1947 and I was fourteen, and my father and I had headed to Zermatt to climb a few modest peaks. He'd climbed Mont Blanc in 1939 and during the War I'd served a steady

apprenticeship on the British mountains.

After a 33-hour train journey we arrived, travel-worn, in Zermatt. Despite pre-booking the hotel, we found it inexplicably closed. For a few minutes we were cast down, but on our way we'd passed another hotel, which I remembered from the brochure. And here, at the Hotel Dom, the manager was very embarrassed - he was amazed that we could have paid and been given a booking receipt for somewhere which had been closed for months. He phoned their head office in Zurich where someone took responsibility for this lapse in Swiss efficiency and made a decision.

We were sent off to five-star accommodation, the Beau Site. There we were greeted with more profuse apologies, but we couldn't believe our

luck - a fortnight in a luxury hotel rather than the modest one star hotel that we'd booked. Coming from a Britain still locked in frugal food rationing we ate our fill in the dining room without reserve.

We had planned on a gentle introduction to the climbing, but when the concierge of this rather fine hotel asked if we'd like a guide for the Matterhorn, my father replied without thinking, "Yes, of course".

So before we knew it, and before we'd climbed any other peak, we were on our way to the Hornli Hut with our guide, Peter Biner - a sunburnt, leather-skinned giant in a white cloth cap. In those days there were no cable cars to the Schwarzsee - you just had to walk the whole way. But as we left the village we were overtaken by a train of mules carrying beer and



Eric and Keith Hindell on the summit of the Ober Rothorn 11,200ft in 1947. Photo taken by Alpine Club member Hilary StV. Longley-Cook.



supplies for the hut. So with a wink and tip to the muleteer, Peter offloaded our rucksacks onto the mules, saving us a lot of hard toil.

At the hut I felt small and inadequate surrounded by men and women who looked like proper climbers. Their equipment was so much more professional than ours, yet it turned out later that most of them went no further than the hut. I drank gallons of hot lemon and sunk deeper and deeper into my first pair of long trousers. After a fitful night we left at four in the morning just as it was getting light. Now, years on I no longer have a step-by-step memory of the ascent. What remains in my consciousness is but a blurred impression.

Soon after we left the hut an absurd incident occurred which didn't improve my confidence. Climbing a short wall I jammed my boot in a crack, only to find I couldn't get it out. I struggled with it, my father tried, Peter tried. Another guide leading the next party impatiently gave it an enormous heave, which nearly parted my leg from my foot, but still it did not budge. I felt an utter fool holding up not only our rope but also the party behind. A torrent of advice in unintelligible German merely increased my confusion. Finally the boot seemed to pop out of its own accord, and we were on our way once more.

All the way up I had a bad headache because of the altitude. And half way up at the Solvay Refuge I would gladly have stopped, letting my father complete the climb alone. But Peter was having none of it, so to my everlasting satisfaction I continued.

The upper part of the climb comes out over the north face. As every climber will know, this is where Edward Whymper's party had their accident after the first ascent in 1865. When you're on the climb it feels like coming up under the eaves of a house. There's no actual overhang on

the route but it is so steep that you cannot see the summit until you are almost there. The summit snow slope is always described as "the roof".

On reaching the summit at 14,780 feet we sank into the snow to gaze over the magnificent peaks of the Valais, the most prominent being the Monte Rosa about five miles away to the east. It was a perfect day and other climbers were taking photographs, identifying peaks and eating hard sticks of salami they called 'gendarmes'. All I could manage beyond some cold tea from the guide was to release the tension of thinking that I might not have been strong enough, or agile enough, to reach the summit.

The descent was notable for tension of another kind. A little above the Solvay hut my father on the rope in front of me slipped and fell. He was soon pulled up by the rope - uninjured but disturbed. It turned out that he was wearing a new type of nail on his boots called BPs or British Pattern nails. Each nail was individually screwed into a metal socket in the boot. They were an interesting experiment intended to replace conventional European nails, but one which had not really taken account of the Vibram rubber sole developed in pre-War Italy.

They seemed to be made of a hard steel which did not always grip the rock as well as the softer continental nails. So my father slipped several times more, evoking some ripe criticism from the guide. I had no such problems, wearing more simple cloverleaf nails.

We reached the hut at 2pm, a reasonable time for such an inexperienced pair. However, it was clear by now that Eric was much more affected by the altitude than me and needed a good rest. The guide left us at the hut to race down to the valley and up to another client at another hut for another peak the next morning. After an hour's rest Eric

"before we knew it and before we'd climbed **any other peak** we were on our way to the Hornli Hut with our guide, Peter Biner - a **sunburnt, leather-skinned giant** in a white cloth cap"

and I went on down the path back to Zermatt, but I had to wait for him much of the way. In a short note penned back at home Eric wrote that the climb was "The hardest day's work I ever did, but well worth it, a great experience and an imperishable memory".

The rest of the holiday was an anticlimax. We climbed some minor peaks from the valley including the Ober Rothorn at 11,200 feet. As this involved 5,900 feet of climbing in one day we must have been getting fit. But we had to decline Peter Biner's repeated suggestions that we tackle something more exciting. It was a time of serious currency restrictions and we simply hadn't enough Swiss francs to pay for another guided climb.

In any case we were quite content to gaze at our conquest and to get one up on the manager of the hotel. With great ceremony he produced what he called "The Golden Book" wherein were inscribed all the hotel's guests who had climbed the Matterhorn. Thomas Jefferson signing the Declaration of Independence could not have felt more pleased with himself than I did signing this gold silk-covered book. And as far as I can tell I was the youngest boy to have climbed the Matterhorn at that time, a record that the Zermatt Museum has no evidence to counter.

I'm sure my record is long gone, but the memories remain. ■

## ALPINE CLUB ANNIVERSARY ALPINE EXTRAVAGANZA 22-24th JUNE

On 22nd December 1857 a group of British mountaineers met at Ashley's Hotel in London. All were active in the Alps and instrumental to the development of alpine mountaineering during the latter half of the 19th century. It was at this meeting that the Alpine Club, under the chairmanship of Edward Kennedy, was born.

150 years later the Alpine Club continues, and its members remain extremely active in the Alps and the greater ranges, as well as in mountain arts, literature and science. And to celebrate the 150th Anniversary the Alpine Club are planning an alpine extravaganza in Zermatt on the 22nd - 24th June.

See [www.alpine-club.org.uk/150\\_Years/index.html](http://www.alpine-club.org.uk/150_Years/index.html) for full details.

# The Devil's Cracks

**Sometimes you just don't fit in. In the second part of his crack climbing guide Adrian Berry takes a look at those hellish wrong-sized cracks.**

**I**t is quite amazing that the majority of cracks we find ourselves climbing happen to be either hand or finger cracks. When jamming your way up a perfect crack that's just the right width to provide sinker hand jams, you could be forgiven for thinking that the whole cliff was just designed to be climbed by a benevolent maker who likes to see us enjoy ourselves.

Of course, this is only half the story. There are other cracks out there – those that are too wide, too narrow. And if the man upstairs made all the nice ones then he must have left the construction of the rest to someone of a less benevolent disposition.

## Off-fingers

First up are cracks that are just that bit too wide for snug finger jams, but far too narrow to consider trying to hand jam. Climbers with “twiglet” fingers will no doubt experience these situations where climbers with “sausage” fingers will still be happily finger jamming. As with just about all climbing techniques, start off by looking for footholds. With the right footholds, you may be able to simply layback for a couple of moves until the crack narrows down to finger size, or widens to hand size.

If there are no footholds other than the crack, then you'll need to press your toes into the crack in the same way as for finger crack – though this time the crack will be a little wider so a bit easier on your feet. Look for any irregularities in the crack that widen it up, or flare the outside to allow for a

slightly more secure foot placement. Softer shoes will get more purchase on the edges of thin cracks than stiff ones, so dig out those old slippers with the worn-down edges – they're probably the best tool for this job.

When it comes to putting your fingers in an off-fingers crack, the first emotion is usually despair. However take comfort in the fact that climbing odd shaped cracks is mostly about putting up with some discomfort and getting the technique right – strength is rarely a major factor. Just like for hand jams, there are two methods for off-finger jamming: thumbs up and thumbs down. By varying between the two methods you can take advantage of any weaknesses in the crack, and reduce the strain caused by repeatedly making the same move – a change is as (almost) good as a rest.

## Thumbs up

The idea here is to stuff your fingers as deeply into the crack as possible. The crack will off course be too narrow for your thumb, so keep that on the outside and dig the rest of your hand in. Your hand will probably stop at your knuckles, which will provide a degree of purchase. Now, complete the jam by pressing hard with your fingers against the side of the crack.

## Thumbs down

Standard finger jam technique applied to an off-fingers crack will result in your fingers stacking diagonally above each other; these jams are often referred to as ringlocks. Your index finger works in conjunction with your thumb to anchor the jam: place your thumb into the crack with your fingers,

Si Ashmore gets stuck into some gritstone off-width practice.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.



and slide your index finger and middle fingers down so that the pads of those fingers are on your thumbnail. The taper of your thumb will help your fingers jam with enough security to make a move.

Alternatively, if the crack is too wide to accept your thumb and finger combination, you may find that a standard finger jam will work if you place your thumb on the edge of the crack in opposition.

### Off-hands

Whereas off-fingers is a crack slightly too large for your fingers, off-hands is a crack slightly too wide for your hands, but too narrow for fists. One option here is to simply place your forearm deep into the crack and press your fingers against one side of the crack, using your arm to provide additional purchase.

The other option is to make a half-fist jam by arranging your hand so your fingers and thumb all meet at their tips - it looks a bit like a sock-puppet. Now insert your hand as far as it will go (it shouldn't go much deeper than your middle knuckles) and try to make a fist, you should find a jam will emerge that uses the index, middle, and ring fingers stacked tightly together. Whilst not the most secure of jams, your feet should be in snug foot-jams, and taking most of your weight.

### Off-width

An off-width crack is one that is too narrow to climb inside and climb as a chimney, but too wide for any hand-jamming technique. Whilst with finger and hand jams, good technique should mean you use minimal physical exertion, off-widths can take a huge

Yosemite granite - no respite  
from jamming here.  
Photo: Steve Long.



# HALF PAGE ADVERT

America: land of the free, and the crack.  
Laybacking won't help you here.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.



with both hands. This allows you to shuffle your lower body up the crack, but of course, the hold fails when you move either hand. The best way to use a butterfly jam is to place it on the edge of the crack – that way you can move your hands up twisting to one side and then laybacking the outside of the crack until you can place another butterfly jam. It works well at the top of Goliath. But then so does laybacking with your eyes shut.

## Thigh jams

Moving down the body, thighs placed in narrow off-widths can produce good holds, just bend your leg to expand its width. In wider cracks it may be possible to use both legs together.

## Heel-toe bars

A good foothold can be formed by angling your foot down, placing your heel against one side of the crack and then pulling your toes back until your foot jams in the crack. Heel-toe bars work best when you pull against them, rather than standing down on them. Because of this, it is often better to place a deep heel-toe in the back of the crack at waist height than to keep both of your feet directly below you.

## Stacked heel-toe bars

If the crack is too wide for heel-toe bars, you will need to use both feet together. Place your feet in a 'T' shape, one foot providing the heel-toe functionality, the other simply adding some width.

## Moving up

Knowing the various holds for climbing off-widths is but a fraction of the knowledge required to actually climb one. Whereas in face climbing, the bends in our arms and legs allows for rapid upward movement, when off-width climbing with our arms fixed into arm-bars and our legs obstructed by the crack, there is simply less body available to bend. Because of this, moving up an off-width is a process measured in a very different way to any other climbing technique – you may only cover a few centimetres in each 'move', and expand a considerable amount of energy to achieve that. If that sounds off-putting, remember: it may be hard to go up, but it's actually quite hard to actually fall off too.

## Jams and cams

One of the best things about climbing cracks is that there is always plenty of protection. Cams are by far the fastest means of protecting regular cracks. And models which place the cams the widest, and with the strongest springs, are the most secure in simple cracks, though it's always worth extending them to be sure they won't walk off anywhere.

A good skill to have when climbing cracks is to be able to associate a size of cam to the crack and to your chosen jam. For example, a size 3.5 Friend is a perfect hand jam (for me!), so if I'm climbing on perfect hand jams, I know what size to reach for. Similarly, if I know that a certain crack takes size 1.5 Friends, then I can guess it's going to be rattly off-finger jams, so will probably want to add a bit of tape to my digits.

For the very widest cracks, you are unlikely to be carrying more than one size 6 Friend, so you'll probably find yourself pushing the cam up the crack ahead of you as you climb it – though be sure to clip your leading rope into the cam, and not clip direct with a sling.

## Taping up

If you're new to jamming, then taping-up your hands is a good way to learn without scraping-up your hands. Take a wide roll of Strappal climbing tape and cover the backs of your hands, securing the tape around the bases of your fingers, and your wrist. Don't cover your palm, but do add tape to the sides of your hands if you intend to be fist jamming. Taping your fingers is simply a matter of tearing off a thin (about 1cm) strip of tape and loosely running the tape around the upper sections of your middle, ring, and index fingers. Cross the tape on the palm side of your fingers rather than the knuckles – if you want to be able to bend your fingers – which you do.

Now you know how to do it – no excuses. I expect to see you practising on your local thrutch-fest! ■



Adrian Berry is one of the UK's most experienced climbing coaches, and has just released his first book: *Sport Climbing*. Adrian is also available for personal coaching -

see [www.positiveclimbing.com](http://www.positiveclimbing.com).



Even celebrities tape up. Jack Osbourne preparing to get stuck into El Cap.  
Photo: Steve Long.

amount of effort, and your will to succeed is key! There are a variety of techniques which can be employed, depending on the width of the crack, usually a combination of several different techniques is the key to keeping moving and not getting too tired. For all these techniques, wearing long sleeved clothing, preferably made from heavy weight fabric such as denim, is essential.

## Arm bars

Camming your upper arm is usually the best method of supporting your upper body. Simply bend your arm and insert it into the crack with your elbow pointing upwards. Your palm presses against one wall of the crack and as you weight your arm, your elbow locks against the other side. You can only place one arm bar at a time, so with your free hand you can take a shoulder-press hold on the side of the crack.

## Hand stacking

Very occasionally, you may find this of use. If a crack is too wide for a hand jam, then try using two in tandem. The most secure double-hand jam is the butterfly jam, which can be placed by putting your hands back to back and adopting a hand jam technique



# Plastic Fantastic

Graeme Alderson reports on Climb '07 and the British Team successes since.



British Team member Naomi Buys gets to grips with the qualifiers at Climb 07.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.

**I**t was March, it was sunny and the cleaners were mopping up after Crufts. Yes - it was time for the annual climbing-fest known as Climb'07 at the Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show.

This was the sixth time the BMC had hosted an event at the Ordnance Survey Outdoor Show. This year we'd been asked by the IFSC (the international governing body for competitions) to help them out by hosting a leg of the European Bouldering Championships, following a sudden cancellation. So the pressure was on to deliver a world-class event.

But the Ordnance Survey Outdoors Show is about much more than just the bouldering competition (although of course from my perspective, as competition organiser, the comp is the Show). There's lots of lectures, kit testing, fashion parades, even the odd shop selling the latest kit and the odd bargain. And for the kids there are a host of "Have-A-Go" activities - climbing, biking, paddling, and even diving.



The winners! Photo: BMC.

The competitors must have approached the event with trepidation, as British competitions tend to be the only events to feature full-on mantles and savage jamming cracks. Just what would the twisted minds of route-setters Percy Bishton, Ian Vickers, Andy Long, Jamie Cassidy and Jason Pickles come up with this year? This time aided and abetted by Gallic cousin and legendary Bleausard Jacky Godoffe.

So how did us Brits fair against the strong teams from the likes of France, Russia, Italy and the Ukraine? Well, the short answer is not as good as previous years. The longer answer is that these days there are probably 30+ men and 20+ women all with a realistic chance of qualifying for the finals. There is a real depth of strength in competitors, so the slightest error can mean the difference between qualification and abject failure.

Dave Barrans was the only Brit to qualify for the semi-final, ending up in 13th place overall - his best result yet. And to get there he beat some serious "waddage" including such regular finalists such as Killian Fischhuber (AUT), Tomasz Oleksy (POL) and Jorg Verhoeven (NED).

In the end both the men's and the women's competitions went right down to the wire. France's Juliette Danion had to top out on the very last problem to win, she duly obliged by flashing it. Likewise Austrian uberkid David Lama had to do his last problem to win - he had been awesome all competition including pulling off an amazing pirouetting dyno in the qualifier. After four attempts it was looking as if he might have to settle for second, but he pulled up his bootstraps and dispatched it fifth

go to become the new European Champion. The trophy should look quite good next to his European Leading Trophy, not bad for someone who's still only 16.

Since Birmingham, the Bouldering World Cups have been coming thick and fast and we've been getting some excellent results. Dave Barrans and Mark Croxall have regularly been getting into the semi-finals, Gaz Parry a semi and a final, and Andy Earl won a round in Reunion Island.

Elsewhere the Junior Team had a very successful training trip to Orpierre that was combined with entering the Marseille Youth Open Cup. Kitty Wallace in her first ever international finished an amazing second, Nat Berry qualified for her final and Shauna Coxsey was into her superfinal when unfortunately they had to leave due to the competition overrunning.

Looking ahead, the Junior Team is heading en-masse to the European Youth events in Poland and Germany in July where we are hopeful of podium places. The Seniors are starting their build up to the World Championships in Aviles in Spain in September.

And if you want to see what competition climbing is all about then don't miss Cliffhanger, the new outdoor festival featuring the British Bouldering Championship, or the British Leading Championships at Blackpool Towers. See page 58 for details. ■

See more photos and full results at [www.thebmc.co.uk/comps](http://www.thebmc.co.uk/comps).

## PROFILE: DAVE BARRANS

### "British Bouldering Team Strong Man"

Dave Barrans is one of the newer members of the British Climbing Team. To some he may seem like your typical wall bred climber - someone who has got strong first and learnt to climb second. But this couldn't be further from the truth - Dave is 25 and already a seasoned veteran.



He's been climbing for 18 years, after his dad dragged him off to Ilkley aged just seven. Dave admits to a very traditional upbringing (trad climbing, winter climbing, alpine adventures), but these days he focuses on his bouldering. Our roving reporter Graeme Alderson caught up with Dave at a recent Team training session and subjected him to a barrage of well-crafted questions.

### Was it a long-term goal to join the British Climbing Team?

I started competing about six years ago at university. It started off as a laugh but as I started getting stronger I entered the British Bouldering Championships in 2003. My results have improved steadily ever since and once I was getting into the top ten then the British Team seemed a logical goal.

### You seem to have adapted well to the extra pressure and difficulty of international competitions. Last year you got into semi-finals 25% of the time, this year it's 75%.

I'm pretty pleased with the way things have worked out. Being in the Team and doing internationals is hard work. It involves serious graft but the extra focus is also beneficial to my general climbing outside. And seeing improvements in your strength and technique is always going to keep you motivated.

### Where's your climbing going?

I'm pretty focussed on competitions right now and my immediate aims are to start getting into World Cup finals, and of course win the British Bouldering Championships.

### Where's climbing going in general?

Climbing has been, and will continue to get bigger. And anyone who's serious about competing in sport wants to compete in the Olympics. Hopefully I'll still be strong enough to be in the Team if climbing ever gets to the Games.

### That's 2016 at the earliest, you'll be 34 by then!

Yeah. But Salavat Rachmetov (Russia) won the World Championships when he was 37 and Andy Earl has just won a round of the Bouldering World Cup despite being 30.

### Do you think that climbing should get bigger?

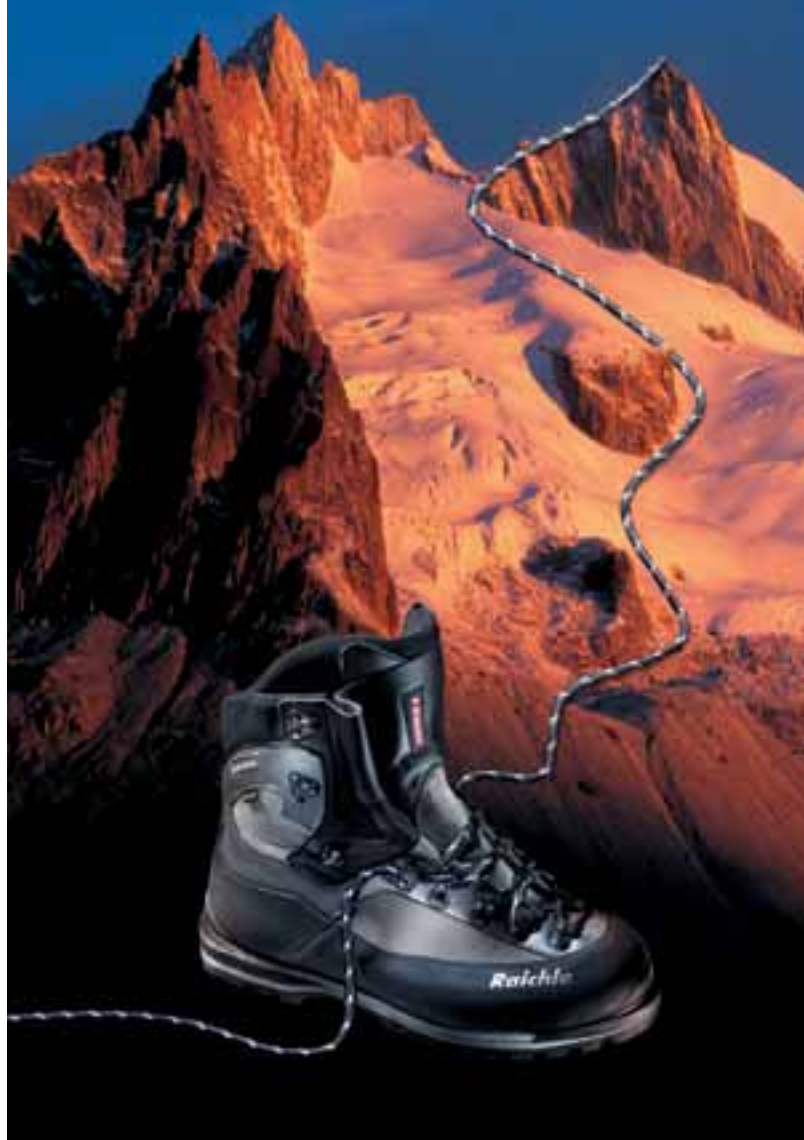
Well it's obviously not predictable, but all I can see is that the number of indoor-only climbers will increase, it won't have much affect on the crags. We keep hearing about all of these newbies fresh out of the walls and yet most crags are still pretty deserted. The honeypots are packed but they always have been. So no, I'm pretty sure it's all nimbyism. Bring it on I say.

### Have you got one tip for getting stronger?

Give up your day job.

*Dave is sponsored by Evolv, prAna, Metolius, Cotswold Outdoors and Manchester Climbing Centre.*

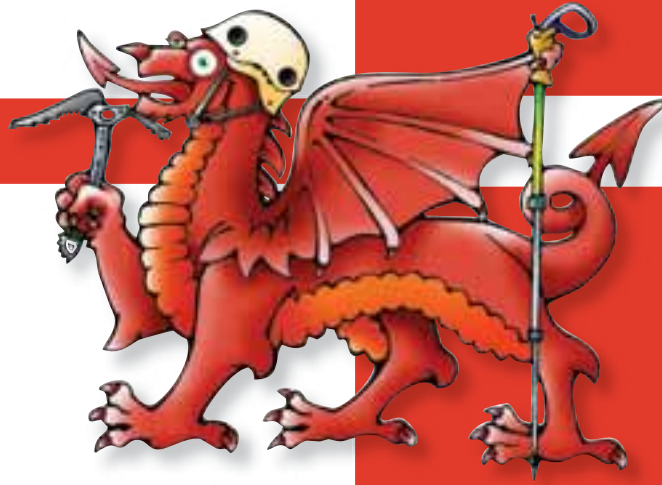
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## Ancient secrets

**Y**ou don't have to be involved with the mountains of Wales for long to come across something to do with Celtic-Romano history. Many Roman roads and hill forts reach up the lower slopes of the uplands. However it was the indigenous tribes that lived and farmed on the higher flanks. They first explored the summits, if only to bury their Princes.

In AD 61 Suetonius - the new Roman governor of Britain - stood on the banks of the Menai Straits wondering how to get his soldiers across to Ynys Mon and so complete his conquest of the west. On the other shore he could see the enemy. As Tacitus tells us, "armed men urged on to a frenzy by cursing druids and wailing long haired women covered in black wode like furies". The sight was enough to make the most hardened legionnaire quail - if captured alive in defeat they would end as human sacrifices on the altars of the druids. The problem for Suetonius was where to cross. From the narrowest point westwards he was faced with fast flowing currents, deep water and woods down to the shoreline. He needed a reconnaissance of the low water flats at the eastern end of the straits, a view from the high ground behind Bangor - Moel Wynion would have been ideal.

In the extensive Roman department of the National Museum of Wales in Cardiff is a Roman sword found on the summit of Carnedd Llewelyn in 1933. Was this soldier tempted to wander up the hill to see what was over the brow? Was he the first to climb a mountain in Wales for the same reason that most of the rest of us do it?

Museums are often the source for answering such questions. Yet the museums of Wales are deficient in the portrait of mountaineering in Wales, and of the contribution of Wales to world mountaineering. Now that we have a new government in Wales following the May elections to the National Assembly, could the BMC in Wales prepare a case for such a project?

The recurrent revenue costs of such traditional edifices are high. Capital costs can escalate. Thus some lateral thought is required. Why not a series of galleries located at appropriate locations through Wales. An identical design, bilingual (multilingual?) presentation and a comprehensive guidebook would link it all together as the museum of Welsh mountaineering emerges through time. Some locations and subjects are obvious; Suetonius and the Carnedd Llewelyn sword at Segontium in Caernarfon, the pioneering years and Everest at Pen y Gwryd, the 50 year contribution of Plas y Brenin, aerial search and rescue at Dinas Dinlle, the Outward Bound contribution at Aberdyfi. Then what about sea cliff climbing somewhere in Pembrokeshire, the contribution of local education authorities at Storey Arms and changing clothing and footwear technology at two retail outlets?

Why not lobby your local or regional Assembly Member in Wales? Let's make it happen. ■

**Clive James**  
**BMC Wales**

## Hen gyfrinachau

**N**id oes rhaid i chi ymddiddori ym mynyddoedd Cymru am gyfnod hir cyn darganfod rhywbeth sy'n ymwneud â hanes Celtaidd-Rhufeinig. Mae llawer o'r ffyrdd Rhufeinig a'r caerau bryniog i'w gweld ar lechweddau isaf yr ucheldiroedd. Y llwythau cyntefig, fodd bynnag, oedd yn byw ac yn ffermio ar y mannau uchaf a hwy oedd y cyntaf i archwilio'r copaon - petai ond i gladdu eu tywysogion.

Yn 61AD safai Suetonius, llywodraethwr newydd Prydain, ar lannau'r Fenai yn pendroni sut y gallai gludo'i filwyr ar draws y Fenai, a thrwy hynny, gwblhau ei goncwest yn y gorllewin. Ar y lan gyferbyn gallai weld y gelyn. Fel y dywed Tacitus wrthym '...roedd gwyr arfog yn cael eu cymell i orffwylltra gan dderwyddon oedd yn cyhoeddi melltith a gwragedd hirwalltlog, wylofus wedi'u gorchuddio mewn du fel ellyllon.' Roedd yr olygfa yn ddigon i wneud i'r llengfilwr mwyafrif profiadol grynu - pe'i daliwyd yn fyw, fe derfynai'i oes yn aberth dynol ar allorau'r derwyddon. Problem Suetonius oedd lle i groesi - o'r man culaf tua'r gorllewin roedd wedi'i wynebu gan gerrynt cyflym, dyfroedd dyfn a choed yn ymestyn hyd at y lan. Roedd angen gwybodaeth am y gwastadedd dwr bas ar yr ochr ddwyreiniol - byddai golwg o'r tir uchel tu cefn i Fangor - Moel Wynion - wedi bod yn ddelfrydol.

Yn adran Rufeinig eang, Amgueddfa Genedlaethol Cymru yng Nghaerdydd ceir cleddyf Rhufeinig a ddarganfuwyd ar Gopa Carnedd Llewelyn yn 1933. A gafodd y milwr ei demtio i grwydro i fyny'r bryn i weld beth oedd dros yr ael? Ai fo oedd y cyntaf i ddringo mynydd yng Nghymru am yr un rheswm ag y gwna y mwyafrif ohonom?

Yn yr amgueddfeydd y ceir yr ateb i'r fath gwestiynau'n aml iawn. Er hynny, mae'r portread o fynyddau yng Nghymru a chyfraniad byd-eang Cymru i fynyddau yn ddiffygiol. Yn dilyn yr etholiad ym mis Mai, mae gennym lywodraeth newydd yng Nghymru - oni all y BMC gyfiawnhau achos ar gyfer y fath brosiect?

Mae'r gost barhaus o gynnal y fath amgueddfeydd yn uchel. Gall cost cyfalaf gynyddu'n ddifawr. Mae angen meddwl ymhellach felly. Oni ellir sefydlu cyfres o orielau mewn lleoedd addas ledled Cymru? Byddai cael yr un math o adeilad a chynllun, yr un math o gyflwyniad dwyieithog (neu amlieithog?) ynghyd ag arweinydd cynhwysfawr yn cyplysu'r cyfan fel y bydd amgueddfa fynyddau Cymru yn datblygu tros gyfnod o amser. Mae rhai lleoliadau a thestunau'n amlwg - byddai hanes Suetonius a chleddyf Carnedd Llewelyn yn Segontium yng Nghaernarfon, byddai hanes y blynyddoedd arloesol ac Everest ym Mhen y Gwryd, cyfraniad hanner can mlynedd Plas y Brenin, chwilio o'r awyr ac achub yn Ninas Dinlle a chyfraniad y mudiad 'Outward Bound' yn Aberdyfi. Yna, beth am roi sylw i ddringo creigiau'r arfordir yn Sir Benfro yn rhywle, cyfraniad yr awdurdodau addysg yng Nghanolfan Storey Arms a chanolbwyntio ar dechnoleg dillad ac esgidiau mynyddau mewn dwy allfa adwerthu?

Pam na wnewch chi lobio'ch Aelod Cynulliad lleol neu ranbarthol? Gadewch i ni fynd â'r maen i'r wall! ■

**Clive James**  
**BMC Cymru**



Photo: Dave Turnbull.

**Hindsight is a wonderful thing. And as far as the decision to acquire Horseshoe is concerned, we are now blessed with it - so were we right?**

**I**t all began in 1982 when climbers began to creep quietly into an abandoned quarry. There was no right of access - Tarmac had responsibility for overall site security and owned some parcels of land within it. Others owned the rest. All took steps to prohibit climbing. Generally speaking climbers left when asked, but returned as soon as it was quiet. There was little point in seeking any access agreement since the answer would have just been no - a response it can be better not to elicit. But persistence has its place in establishing rights of access - agreements can emerge as landowners' legitimate concerns are allayed over time. These may transpire to be less about climbers (who in a litigious world mercifully still regard themselves as responsible for their own actions) than the consequences of more general unauthorised access.

In 1998 BMC Patron Chris Bonington created and seized an opportunity when he met quarry owners in his then capacity as Chair of the Council for National Parks. This led to an offer to the BMC in respect of Horseshoe, but it was soon withdrawn in favour of another to the National Park Authority which safeguarded access for climbing. A way forward was eventually agreed between the BMC and the Acting National Park Officer in 2003, but was rescinded a few weeks later. Back to square one. Local climbers reckoned that the only reason informal access had been tolerated was because negotiations were ongoing. They also reckoned that this was a prime site, likely to be acquired for some other purpose - industrial units, a lorry park, some other form of recreation. So BMC Area Representatives lost no time in contacting Tarmac and neighbouring landowners to make an offer of our own. We got some green lights.

The next problem was to convince the BMC that the Area's initiative should be endorsed. Rather than grasp the opportunity with open arms there was marked reluctance from the Management Committee. Policy was that any such acquisitions could only be as a last resort. The BMC was not about land ownership we were told, and land owning carried risks and costs. Aghast we asked how on earth we could expect others to facilitate our sport for us if we were not prepared to do it for ourselves? This was a prime sport climbing site for all grades - sheltered, quick drying and of easy access. There was no way we could guarantee access if we didn't confirm our offer - and before anyone else had time to make a more lucrative one. Moreover there were powerful arguments in favour of the BMC being able to demonstrate it could manage a SSSI for both recreation and conservation together, as well as for the benefit of the local and visitor communities.

At a crucial BMC Management Committee meeting in 2004 - with strong support from the then President Mark Vallance, Executive Member Graham Richmond and Peak Area Representatives Mike Hunt, Mike Pinder and Phil Robins - our arguments prevailed. No more than three weeks later I was in conversation with the neighbouring landowner. He'd been approached by a shooting club. They wanted exclusive rights to the place. You're too late he told them. But only just.

Foresight had been a better guide than hindsight. ■

*Henry Folkard*



## BMC Roaches Open Day

Roaches, 16th June

Pop along to the Roaches this month to find out more about the BMC and how you can get involved. BMC officers will be there throughout the day, and you can find out about the work of the Peak Area meeting and just how it affects you. The day will feature information, workshops and displays from such organisations as the Edale Mountain Rescue Team, the National Trust, the Peak National Park and the Whillans Hut custodians. We suggest that you sample some classic gritstone climbs before rounding off the day with beers and a barbeque in the grounds of the Don Whillans Memorial Hut.

[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

## BRYCS Final

Edinburgh International Climbing Arena, 30th June

Over 180 young climbers from more than 30 regional rounds will be competing in the National Final of the British Regional Youth Climbing Series at Edinburgh International Climbing Arena (aka Ratho). Supported by the Westway Development Trust, BRYCS is now in its ninth year and aims to be a relatively informal, fun and exciting event, whilst introducing some of tomorrow's hopefuls to the atmosphere of competition climbing.

[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

## Cliffhanger + British Bouldering Championships

Graves Park, Sheffield, 14-15th July

The British Bouldering Championships (BBC) is boldly moving outside to Graves Park in Sheffield as part of the new Cliffhanger Outdoor Festival. As well as Britain's top boulderers battling it out on specially constructed walls, Cliffhanger will feature come-and-try-it climbing walls, an open air market, reverse bungee, orienteering races, a Guinness world record dyno competition, an army display, a massive bargain area, live music, children's rides, and an alpine beer festival. Tickets to the festival cost £5 for adults / free for U16's. Admission price includes free programme and free parking.

[www.cliff-hanger.co.uk](http://www.cliff-hanger.co.uk)

## Range West Briefing

Castlemartin Camp, 28th July

Last call for Range West briefings. If you want to climb on the magnificent cliffs of Pembrokeshire's Range West this year, you must attend this last MOD briefing and hold a valid permit - then access is available to the Range until next January. The briefing is at 9am - park next to the obvious tank and ask at the gatehouse. [www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

## British Lead Climbing Championships

Blackpool, 28-29th July

The British Lead Climbing Championships (BLCC), formerly known as the BICC is also heading outdoors this year, to the 20-metre high monoliths of the Blackpool Climbing Towers. This BMC event will decide the British Lead Climbing Champions for 2007.

[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

## Student Safety and Good Practice Seminar

Plas y Brenin, 6 - 7th October

If you're involved in the organisation of student climbing, hill walking or mountaineering clubs then you need to book a place at this year's Student Seminar. In partnership with Ultimate Outdoors, based at Plas y Brenin, and supported by the Mountain Training Trust, the seminar gives senior post holders from universities across the country the opportunity to improve their club practices and help ensure safer and environmentally sustainable enjoyment of the mountains. Last minute places may be available - contact [becky@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:becky@thebmc.co.uk).

[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk)

## Kendal Mountain Film Festival

9th November, Kendal

Advance notice for the Kendal Mountain Film Festival. We'll be there - will you?

[www.mountainfilm.co.uk](http://www.mountainfilm.co.uk)



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Sheffield will play host to one of the biggest and most varied outdoor pursuits events in the country this summer. **Cliffhanger will feature:**

**Alpine Beer Festival // Come-And-Try-It Climbing Walls // Open Air Market // Reverse Bungee & Other White Knuckle Rides // Orienteering Races // Guinness World Record Dyno Comp // Demonstration Events // Army Display // Massive Bargain Area // Live Music // Kids Rides // and Much, Much More...**

It's all about taking part so **bring along suitable clothing and footwear. 10.30am - 6.30pm** both days. **Adults £5, accompanied kids free.**

**Free programmes. Free car parks, entrances off Hemsworth Road or Cobnar Road and Charles Ashmore Road. More details @ [www.cliff-hanger.co.uk](http://www.cliff-hanger.co.uk)**

# Crag Attak

Cheddar Gorge, 1st July



Are you ready for Crag Attak?  
Photo: Martin Crocker.

**A major new charity climbing festival at Cheddar Caves & Gorge is planned to celebrate the successful first year of a new climbing regime - which has seen 300 climbs restored and the season lengthened into the summer months.**

It's your last chance to climb in Cheddar Gorge before it's closed for the school summer holidays, and all sponsorship money raised will go to Children's Hospice South West. So put the 1st of July into your diary and come along to High Rock to try your luck and skills on:

- Record-breaking largest-ever first ascent of a new climb
- An open speed climb
- An "unclimbable climb" challenge
- The weirdest and wackiest ascent ever - fancy dress and fancy behaviour essential.

A super-fit volunteer is also needed for a record-breaking continuous climb challenge

of up to 36 hours. There will be demonstration climbs on some of the restored crags, a "name that climb" competition, and a new invitation-only event: The Cheddar Man.

## The Cheddar Man

This fearsome endurance circuit will see invited teams competing in:

- An onsight climb of the lower right wing of High Rock
- A team speed ascent of the 274 steps of Jacob's Ladder
- The "Heaven's 900" - 900m speed run along the skyline of the Gorge
- The "Traverse of Gladiators" - timed 60m Tyrolean between the tops of Roman Wall and High Rock
- The "High Rock Rap" - a 120m abseil, carrying a bucket of ping-pong balls which must not be dropped
- A speed climb of the lower right wing of High Rock.

## Party time

It all adds up to a great day of thrills and spills for participants, supporters and spectators. Bring the family - food and drink will be available throughout the day, and the event will gradually slip into a party for the whole climbing community to celebrate the end of the spring climbing season in Cheddar.

## Children's Hospice South West

A condition of taking part in Crag Attak is that you arrange sponsorship (or make a direct contribution) to Children's Hospice South West. All sponsorship raised will go to help the new Hospice just opened at Charlton Farm, Wraxall, near Bristol. See [www.chsw.org.uk](http://www.chsw.org.uk) for details, or email [louise.turner@chsw.org.uk](mailto:louise.turner@chsw.org.uk) for sponsorship forms.

## About the Cheddar project

Cheddar Gorge is Britain's most spectacular limestone gorge. As a Site of Special Scientific Interest and Special Area for Conservation the 450 feet high limestone cliffs require careful management. In a major conservation project, a team from landowners Cheddar Caves & Gorge has worked for 20 years to remove damaging vegetation and install avalanche fences and gully catches, which has created new climbing opportunities. Working with the landowners, local climber Martin Crocker and a team of volunteers have restored the best 300 of the Gorge's climbs, most of which lie behind the fences. Routes were surveyed and re-equipped, with abseil stations installed near the tops, so that climbers can abseil back down without damaging rare plants growing on the cliff edges. These 300 routes, described in Martin photoguide to "Restored Climbs in Cheddar Gorge", can now be climbed from 10th September to 30th June except for the Easter, May & Whitsun school holidays - a welcome change from the old regime of icy winter climbs.

## Remember

There is no access to Cheddar Gorge outside the agreed periods. Cheddar Gorge closes to climbers on 1st July for the school holidays. Visit the BMC Regional Access Database for detailed information on all crags - [www.climbingcrags.co.uk](http://www.climbingcrags.co.uk).

*Details and enrolment forms for Crag Attak can be obtained from Cheddar Caves & Gorge, phone 01934 742343 or email [info@cheddarcaves.co.uk](mailto:info@cheddarcaves.co.uk).*



# Area noticeboard

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

## Lakes

The next meeting is on **Friday 7th September**. There will be plenty of access and conservation issues to sort out, and sandwiches to consume. Plans will be laid to start some practical action on the ground in terms of crag clean-ups and rebolting of whichever crags you feel need it.

## North West

Where do I start with this lot? The next meeting is at **Egerton Quarry on Saturday 30th June**. The whole point of the day is to clean and climb more routes at this neglected 'superquarry'. The day will start at 10am, and finish around 6pm with a BBQ of epic proportions.

## London & South East

**Tuesday 12th June** is the date for your diaries. The team down here want to think about practical ways of getting climbers and walkers in the Big Smoke involved with access & conservation projects. The area will be holding a couple of events later this year with some of the great and good of the BMC in attendance. Fundraising events for the BMC Access & Conservation Trust are also on the agenda. Come along to find out more. The meeting will be at Park Crescent Conference Centre on Great Portland Street with tea and biscuits from 7pm.

## Midlands

For those of you who thought that the nearest climbing to Leicester was the Peak District, you're in for a surprise! The Area Open Meeting is pushing ahead in collaboration with BMC guidebook supremo Niall Grimes. This will see the amazing crags of Leicestershire brought blinking into the daylight. They're actually quite good and I should know because I've climbed on them with local hotshot Iain McKenzie, the man behind the guide. Come to the gathering on **Thursday 6th September** to claim your share of the fame and glory. Venue tbc.

## North East

Have you got a crag you think could do with a bit of nip and tuck? Well, this could be the place to sort it out. The current craze for crag clean-ups is sweeping the nation like lottery fever - make sure the North East doesn't miss out! **Monday 3rd September at the Tap & Spile in Durham**. Check the BMC website for direction. Traditional refreshments provided.

## Peak

With Niall Grimes' latest magnum opus (Stanage) now in the rucksacks of many, Peak guidebooks are firmly on the discussion list for the next meeting. Ian Carr, the chair of the Guidebook Committee and long time Chew Valley activist will be there, as will Martin Kocsis, editor of the nearly ready Moorland Grit. There will be news of Froggatt, Peak Limestone, Merseyside & Leicestershire too if you can handle it. Chips will be provided.

## South West

The sheer size of the South West area has meant that for many years, climbers and walkers further afield than Bristol have been under represented (i.e. not represented at all, hardly). This is about to change: **Wednesday 4th July** is the date for your diary. Scott Titt (bolter extraordinaire and SW rep) and Martin Kocsis (BMC Volunteers' Officer) will be in the lovely city of Plymouth to get the South West Action Team (S.W.A.T.) off the ground. All are welcome; the purpose of the group will be to organise crag clean-ups, agitate for rebolting where necessary, campaign for access and to give an official voice to climbers and walkers in the area. This is only the start...the group will do whatever you want it to (within reason & the law), as long as you turn up. Keep an eye on the BMC website and UKC for details of the venue.

## North Wales

Hard on the heels of the Tremadog Revival, abseil stations on Clogwyn y Grochan, bolt debates and fiery hot Vaynol chilli nights, the North Wales team moves ever forward. Under the firm leadership of Mike Raine, they are turning their Sauron-like gaze to the cliffs of Gogarth and the Ormes. Come to the Deganwy Castle Hotel on the evening of **Tuesday 12th June** for a chance to get a word in edgeways. Adam Wainwright, the brains behind "The Glorious First" (the Gogarth clean-up in other words) will be on hand to answer questions and stoke the fires of enthusiasm. Re-equipping the Ormes may also get mentioned. If you intend to come, let Mike know so he can sort the food at mikerraine@hotmail.com.

## South Wales

Although not yet an 'official' group, this hasn't stopped them getting their act together in double quick time. From a well-attended meeting at Dynamic Rock in Swansea to an amazing makeover of Penallta near Tredegar/Pontypool was a simple step. If you go, you'll hardly recognise the place, trust me. Huge thanks to Simon Rawlinson and his team from us here at BMC High Command, and from the folks in North Wales too. Once we get the go ahead from Countryside Council for Wales and other interested parties, we're hoping that the next action down here will be at Paviland Main Cliff, on the Gower in early summer - BBQ guaranteed. Keep an eye on the BMC website, the magazines and UKC for further details

## Yorkshire

Kilnsey path repairs, bird bans at Blue Scar and elsewhere, new crags "ripe for bolting" and Dave Musgrove's latest foreign cragging trip are all on the agenda for this meeting on **Monday 11th June at the New Inn, Cononley**. Good beer, delicious food and a convivial atmosphere make this a hard one to avoid.



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





**This issue Martin Kocsis heads to the deepest, darkest depths of Staffordshire to track down a certain Andi Turner - grit master, teacher, and now BMC Access Rep for the area. But just what has he let himself in for?**

## **Why have you volunteered to look Staffordshire access?**

Staffordshire really draws you in. I was brought up on the Yorkshire grit and moorland sandstone - sworn to forever hate limestone and never to trust anyone from south of the Humber. This saw me in good stead for many years, until I found myself bewildered, lost and living in this oatcake county. I was soon absorbed into the Staffordshire scene - a quiet, somewhat esoteric scene perhaps, but generally forthright and in a good state of development. And now it's the most precious place in the world for me and where I'm most happy, either tearing around the Roaches, falling off Hen Cloud or shadow boxing the midges in the Churnet Valley. Every crag has something that I know is important and worth preserving, and maintaining access to it all is of paramount importance.

## **How do you manage to hang onto pebbles?**

I once did an all out pebble move - with both hands on pebbles and both feet up to another pebble which I matched before getting a pocket. This was down the Churnet Valley however, where the bunter pebbles are more like cobbles, so I don't suppose it really counts. To be honest, I actually struggle with pebble pulling; it's a knack I've never mastered despite the Roaches Lower Tier being the place to do it. I generally avoid them either by lurching past them or by proclaiming that my immense 13 stones is too much for them and they should be preserved for future generations. My good friend Justin Critchlow was born from a pebble however. He nipple-pinches them between his thumb and index finger knuckle. He can mantle them, no bull.

## **What do you do to get the money to climb?**

I'm a trainee Geography teacher in an inner city secondary school in Stoke-on-Trent called Edensor Technology College. It's lots of fun but a constant battle to keep my workload down and my climbing up. I've always worked in similar surroundings either in outdoor education, children's crisis intervention units or schools. I once had a kid tell me he was going to "murder me, wrap me up in plastic and bury me alive". Thoughtful but lacking attention to detail I thought: D+.

## **The last time I climbed with you was on Yellow Walls last summer. Have you been up to much since?**

Yes, the year only got better from there really, since I set myself the onerous task of getting up to date on the Churnet Valley. This culminated in a ground-up second ascent of Inaccessible, a Simon Nadin route which had sat festering and developing a "status" for some time, then the third ascent (by about ten minutes) of Boyson's totally amazing The Pride. Both routes

having been ignored for well over a decade. I was then lucky enough to get a first ascent of a route at Hen Cloud that I called Catharsis (E7 7a) which climbed the wall right of the notoriously pumpy Caesarian.

## **Dave Bishop must be a hard act to follow - are you scared?**

Dave Bishop is the dude. The things he has quietly done for Staffordshire climbing are exemplary. I'm a little scared as I wouldn't want to undo any of the great stuff he's leaving as his legacy - it'd be a bit like selling your Grandad's Victoria Cross. He's doing a great job tolerating me following him around and seeing what he does. It should make the change over seamless. That's the plan anyway.

## **What would you like to see more of from the BMC?**

The events they run are fantastic. Two of my favourite weeks climbing ever have been spent on the summer International Meets. It'd be great if they could become an annual event. Other than that, just more of the same as regards access and conservation, and I suppose, just letting the public know that this is what they do. From where I stand, they're doing a fantastic job.

## **Some of the landowners in Staffordshire are a bit scary - any good in a punch up?**

Yeah, I love scrapping, it's where I get my beauty from. I learned my art from Doug Moller, the old eye-patched self-proclaiming Lord and King of the Roaches. He recommended raking the shins with the outside of your foot and then pummelling the kidneys like pistons. It seems to work quite well. Other than that I can call on my right hand man Mark Sharatt for a spot of back up.

## **If there's a problem somewhere, how do people get hold of you?**

I'm usually online if I'm not at the crag so drop me an email at turnera700@aol.com. I'd like to hear about any problems or issues that anyone has, however small, so that things can keep rolling. You never know, what might seem a small issue to you might be part of a bigger catalogue of problems coming together. Other than that, use a Klieg searchlight to project an image of Hen Cloud above Leek and I'll come running.

## **Cream horn, chocolate flapjack or fruit slice?**

At this this time of year I'd go for fruit slice, but it'd have to be quite big - I can't be doing with crappy little bits of cake. And Martin, your obsession with cake is bordering on madness, you need to discover biscuits, despite them being taxable. You could start on Jaffa cakes, they're the halfway house. ■



# Essential Skills: Tick alert by Janine Hall

There's nothing quite like discovering a tick on your body to make you squirm with disgust. That head buried in your skin, those little legs wiggling contentedly as it feeds on your blood. It's a natural instinct to want to rip it out immediately, but wait. Tick-borne diseases are on the rise in many climbing and walking areas - stack the odds in your favour by removing the critter properly.

## What are ticks?

Ticks are small arachnids, about the size of a poppy seed. They are external parasites that live off the blood of birds and mammals – including you. They are second only to mosquitoes for carrying diseases to humans, and in the UK can carry such pleasures as Lyme disease, Ehrlichiosis, Babesiosis and Bartonella. Plus in the USA and parts of Europe they can be responsible for transmitting Tick Borne Encephalitis, Rocky Mountain spotted fever and Colorado tick fever. Global warming and changes in farming practices mean that across Europe there are now more ticks in the countryside.

## How do they attack?

Ticks live in the soil and emerge to climb tall grass, shrubs, bushes and low level tree branches up to a height of 20-70cm in search of a blood host. They attack when you, or an animal, brushes past and look for an area of soft skin to insert their feeding organ and

suck blood. They can attach themselves almost anywhere but prefer dark creases like the armpit, groin and back of the knee. You won't feel a thing, as the tick injects a toxin to anaesthetise the bite area and once embedded they will steadily engorge as they feed on your blood. They can also leave you with a nasty farewell present.

## Lyme disease

Lyme disease is caused by the bacteria *Borrelia Burgdorferi* (Bb), and many popular UK and European climbing and walking areas have Bb-infected ticks. But don't panic, simply being bitten by a tick doesn't mean you'll contract Lyme disease - many believe that an infected tick has to be on you for over 24 hours to transmit the bacteria in their saliva. However the risk is out there – the Lyme Borreliosis Unit at the Health Protection Agency has seen the number of infected people increase year after year, from 292 reported cases in 2003 to 684 in 2006. However, they estimate around 2000 cases per year go unreported.

The most famous symptom of Lyme disease is a bull's eye rash (erythema migrans), consisting of a red ring-shaped rash which gradually spreads from the site of the tick bite, usually with a fading centre. Kind of like a brownish-red or pink expanding polo mint. It appears 2 - 40 days after infection and is the only sure-fire symptom of Lyme disease - so if you develop one take a photo immediately to show your doctor in

case it disappears. Less than 50% of people with Lyme get this rash, and if left untreated a whole range of symptoms can develop, including a flu-like illness, facial palsy, viral-type meningitis, arthritic-like joint pains, nerve inflammation, disturbance of sensation or clumsiness of movement and encephalitis (swelling of the brain).

If you suspect you have Lyme disease then head straight to your GP. There is a blood test for Lyme but it's acknowledged to have a very high rate of false negatives, so if your GP suspects Lyme, they should begin antibiotic treatment right away, without waiting on the results. Medical opinion is fiercely divided on the best antibiotics and dosages needed to eradicate symptoms, so it's impossible to make recommendations.



An engorged tick. Lovely.  
Photo: Chris Dainton.

## Expert Q&A



This issue's hill skills expert is Lynda Bramham. As a nurse adviser at MASTA Ltd, Lynda provides advice and training for doctors and nurses on travel health topics. MASTA run a network of travel clinics throughout the UK and maintain a website providing health briefs for those planning to travel abroad.

**Q.** What time of year am I most at risk?

**A.** Ticks are most active in the spring and summer months - between March and October.

**Q.** Does insect spray work against ticks?

**A.** Yes, good insect repellents will help to reduce the number of tick bites. Protective clothing can also be helpful, although ticks may spend several hours wandering around looking for a good feeding spot once they've managed to find you. Treating clothing with an insecticide could be helpful.

**Q.** How long do ticks remain on a person?

**A.** Some ticks will feed for a few hours. Others will suck blood for up to three weeks if they're not removed. If you are camping or walking in infected areas, check your skin regularly - at least every evening. Pay special attention to warm areas like armpits, groin, and back of the knees.

**Q.** How do I remove a tick?

**A.** This can be tricky as many ticks use a cement-like substance to glue their mouthparts into place whilst they're feeding. The best

method is to get a good pair of tweezers, grip the tick as close to your skin as possible and pull it straight out with an anticlockwise twist. Remove ticks as soon as possible to reduce the risk of infection and take care to remove all of the mouthparts. To reduce the risk of infected materials being injected in to you, avoid squeezing the body of the tick, applying substances like Vaseline or burning it - no matter how tempting it is. Consider retaining the tick in a sealed container in case you develop symptoms later.

**Q.** Can I be vaccinated against tick-borne diseases?

However taking antibiotics prophylactically ('just in case') is a bad idea: the risk of catching a nasty from a single tick bite is very small.

Areas where infection has been acquired in the UK include Exmoor, the New Forest, the South Downs, parts of Wiltshire and Berkshire, Thetford Forest, the Lake District, the Yorkshire moors and the Scottish Highlands. Two confirmed cases of Lyme Disease have also recently been reported in the Peak District by members of Glossop Mountain Rescue Team.

## TBE

Another treat carried by some ticks in Europe is Tick Borne Encephalitis (TBE) - a viral disease that attacks the nervous system and can result in serious meningitis, brain inflammation and death. TBE incubation time is 6-14 days and at first it can cause increased temperature, headaches, fever, a cough and sniffles. The second phase can lead to neck stiffness, severe headaches, photophobia, delirium and paralysis. There is no specific treatment for TBE.

Climbers and walkers are again particularly at risk from TBE and ticks carrying the disease are found in many new destinations growing in popularity. TBE is endemic in the forest and mountainous regions of Austria, Belarus, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland and Ukraine.



## Prevention is better than cure

Taking steps to prevent tick bites is better than digging the things out of your legs:

- Avoid unnecessary bushwacking and walk in the middle of paths.
- Keep your arms and legs covered. Light coloured fabrics are useful since the ticks stand out.
- Check clothes and skin frequently. Ideally do a buddy check every 3-4 hours. They're large enough to be easily spotted in summer, but you need to look carefully in

spring; they'll be as small as the dot on this 'i'.

- Check that ticks are not brought home on clothes, pets and bouldering mats.
- Check children carefully, especially along the hairline and scalp. ■

Janine Hall got bitten by a tick whilst bouldering in Fontainebleau and developed Lyme disease two weeks later. It was cured with four months of munching antibiotics. She no longer rattles with pills and now lives in the Highlands.

**A.** There is a vaccine available for TBE. Those camping and walking in the infected areas of Europe and Asia in the spring and summer months can get advice from their doctor or nurse or visit a travel clinic. Allow plenty of time; two doses at least two weeks apart are required to provide protection. This should be completed at least two weeks before going in to the risk area. There is no vaccine for many of the other diseases transmitted by ticks.

**Q.** Is the level of tick disease rising?

**A.** A number of European countries have reported an increase in cases of TBE over recent years including Switzerland, Germany, Poland and Czech Republic. Other areas have reported a decline in the number of cases.

## Find out more

[www.masta-travel-health.com/tickalert](http://www.masta-travel-health.com/tickalert)

Further information on ticks and a map showing the infected areas of Europe.

[www.masta-travel-health.com](http://www.masta-travel-health.com)

Health briefs and details of the MASTA travel clinics.

[www.hpa.org.uk](http://www.hpa.org.uk) / [www.bada-uk.org](http://www.bada-uk.org)

Lyme Disease information.

[www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/leaflets/](http://www.lymediseaseaction.org.uk/leaflets/)

A UK charity promoting awareness of Lyme Disease - they produce a range of informative leaflets.

### Tick extractor

A handy tick extractor is available to help remove ticks efficiently. Ask for it in good outdoor retailers, or see [www.careplus.eu](http://www.careplus.eu).

### Ticks, your pets, your family and you

£8 / £8.99 (non-members)

By Alison Blackwell, George Hendry and Darrel Ho-Yen.

This handy pocket guide, written in an accessible, jargon-free style, contains all the practical information you need to keep your family and your pets safe.

Available from the BMC online shop.





## Essential Skills: Speeding up by Baggy Richards

**It's day four on the North West Face of Bionassy. It should be a two-day route but it's just become apparent that we're unfit, have the wrong type of kit and too much of it. We're using time consuming techniques and can't move fast enough. Sound familiar? There's an old saying that you can spot a Brit in the Alps a mile away. It was true for us then and it could be true for you now. But how can you speed up?**

### Kit

Most Brits use Scottish winter experience to prepare for the Alps. That's great, but don't just blindly pack the same kit. Gear has advanced immensely (as has the cost!). But giving it some thought will pay dividends. Make the right choices and you'll be carrying less weight, feel lighter and more agile - and so speed up. Don't be taken in with manufacturers claims though - many may use the words alpine and lightweight, but it's not always the case. Ever weighed your kit? I suggest you do. The first time I did I was astonished at how much it all weighed. You may well have a favourite sack but I bet you that it's too heavy. Do you really need heavy-duty waterproofs? Go for some Paclite instead, and if it's a good forecast leave them. Carry the lightest pair of boots you can. Could you get

away with approach shoes for the descent, perhaps adapting lightweight crampons to fit? The list goes on: axes, harnesses, the rack, ropes, boots, and clothing - it all adds up. Only take what you really need and don't be afraid to adapt kit, get the scissors out if need be. Your aim is a small and light sack just like the Guides you see.

### Guidebooks

Look at different guides for the same route. This gives you far more detail, especially for the descent. Photocopying the route and descent for all climbers means that you can all look at the description whilst on the lead or at any belay.

### Fitness

The fitter you are the faster you will move. To get fit for the Alps means effort, and it's not much use remembering this a couple of weeks before a trip. Get out biking, running and mountaineering months before. Gym work is not enough. You need long mountain days focussing on speed and efficiency with your alpine partner. Work together to get rid of your old habits and bring in the new.

### Efficiency

Being able to place and remove gear and belays quickly whilst leading and



Moving together on a Conville alpine course. Photo: Steve Long.

seconding is a key attribute that cannot be over emphasised. It's vital for alpine speed but often overlooked. Build single point belays if swapping leads, or use the rope (often quicker) if you're block leading. Block leading is where the leader climbs consecutive pitches, a useful technique but one rarely used by Brits. It's ideal if the two of you have different specialities - five crack pitches followed by five slab? Get the right person for the job. When seconding, climb quickly, if it's tricky then just strip the runners and leave them on the rope until you reach the belay. On the stance forget racking gear as you do at home - it wastes time. Use bandoliers or slings and swap them on stances. Yes, it is different; you need to change your habits.

## Expert Q&A



This issue the climbing expert is Steve Long - British Mountain Guide, MIC holder and founding member of the Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI). Having worked at Plas y Brenin for 14 years he is now the Chief Officer for Mountain Leader Training UK.

**Q. What rock grade should I be able to move fast on?**

**A.** The simple answer is the grade of the route you plan to climb! But there's more to it than that. Practice linking multiple mountain routes together to simulate the scale of an alpine climb - see what grade you can move fast on, and still have something in reserve for the crux pitch.

**Q. How do I know when to move together?**

**A.** Moving together is a way of climbing fast without pitching and is a dark art to Brits. Good

communication and trust are essential, you and your partner need to vary the ropework according to your ability, the level of the climbing and your acceptance of risk. At the fastest end of the spectrum you'll both move together with a short length of rope between you, using the occasional solid spike or boulder as a quick direct belay for the occasional awkward step. At the slow end of the scale you'll be pitching the route in a UK style. Somewhere in between you'll pay out maybe a third of the rope and move together with the leader placing fast runners, and then regrouping once all the gear has been deployed.

**Q. What are your fave lightweight items?**

**A.** Photocopy the route and descent description. Use Blizzard bags for the best value warmth to weight ratio. For simple brews the Jetboil style of stove is fantastic. And if you must carry an axe then get one with a light shaft but steel head if it's only for easy ground. Don't worry about contradictory advice, experiment on non-committing climbs and decide for yourself. For example, personally I prefer to use a simple water bottle - they cost nothing, are very light, less prone to freezing and don't have that stupid mouthpiece that comes off and

## Moving together

Moving together is often avoided by Brits but is essential on many routes. Practise this at home with your alpine partner; learn to climb efficiently and quickly. If you don't know how then seek expert advice.

## Hydration

This is a real catch 22 - carry too much and it slows you down, don't drink enough and it slows you down. Stack the odds in your favour. Drinking loads the night before, in the morning and on the approach ensures you'll be well hydrated as you start the route. Carrying a platypus means you can keep topping up whilst climbing. Including an isotonic drink helps, and gives you added calories. Avoid Powerbar type snacks en-route as your body uses a lot of liquid to digest these. For bivis take herbal drinks, as these aren't diuretics. And finally, carry a piece of tube in your helmet to suck up any water you find en-route.

## Huts and uplift

See these as an aid not an expense. Using them means that your legs are fresh, your bivy kit is in the campsite not on your back, and there's no need to carry all that extra food.

## Attitude

If you're taking your annual 2/3 weeks off work and heading to the Alps then don't mess around. Aim to be successful. Don't

Owen Samuels tops out in evening alpenglow on the Aiguille Sans Nom North Face.  
Photo: Rob Jarvis / [www.highlandguides.com](http://www.highlandguides.com).



do all you can to make the trip as cheap as possible then fail to prepare, blaming the weather or conditions for failure. You and your partner need to mean business whilst climbing, it's no good one or both of you being negative. Start handling the rack, ropes and climb with a sense of urgency. C'mon, speed up. You're not on holiday now you know. ■

AMI member Mark "Baggy" Richards has been climbing in the Alps since 1980. He holds the MIC, is an AMI committee member and formally worked for Plas y Brenin. He is now Head of Centre at Blue Peris Mountain Centre in North Wales.

wastes all your water over your spare clothes. My favourite item though is a luxury - I carry a light waterproof camera on a neck sling. It's the work of a moment to grab a photo or some video and the memories are priceless.

### **Q.** Should I climb in big boots to save weight?

**A.** This is about speed, not weight. Wear mountaineering boots when they are faster (on routes with lots of snow or mixed climbing, or climbing that is mostly below grade III). Otherwise, change into rock shoes. I climbed the Walker Spur in dry conditions on a busy day and out of all the people I met on the route, I was the only one climbing in big boots.

### **Q.** What's the bottom line for moving fast?

**A.** Teamwork and efficiency. A harmonious and well-prepared team can enjoy the climbing, chill out on the summit and cruise back down, if they communicate well and avoid "faffing". They will overtake people who rush in between bouts of ferreting around inside a rucksack. In the morning, an organised team can be at the front of any queues for food or toilet facilities. That means getting ready the night before. And the most important tip of all; do your research. Compare guidebooks and seek advice. The hut guardian in particular can be a mine of information - if handled diplomatically!

## Further Information

### **Alpine Essentials DVD**

£10.99 / £15.99 (non-members)

Packed with information and advice on all the skills and techniques necessary for alpine climbing, this is essential summer viewing. Jointly produced by the BMC and the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, it's available in the BMC online shop.



### **Association of Mountaineering Instructors**

The Association of Mountaineering Instructors (AMI) is the representative body for professionally qualified Mountaineering Instructors in the British Isles. Full AMI members hold either the Mountaineering Instructor Certificate (MIC) or Mountaineering Instructor Award (MIA). Trainee membership is open to those who have completed their MIA training course. With over 1000 members, AMI is also one of the BMC's largest affiliated member organisations.

Visit [www.ami.org.uk](http://www.ami.org.uk) to find a freelance instructor.





## Tech Tips: Via Ferrata equipment by Dan Middleton

Climbing Via Ferratas is exciting, challenging and popular. The winning combination of new “iron ways” being put up across the Alpine regions, and safe, modern equipment means that more people are having a go each year. But don’t be fooled by appearances - you still need to know what you’re doing and have the right equipment for the job.

### What are Via Ferrata?

Via Ferrata 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. These days a whole range of routes is present from roadside attractions to serious mountain adventures.

### Via Ferrata equipment

To get started on Via Ferrata you need standard alpine walking gear, plus a helmet, gloves, and a comfortable harness. The harness can be a sit harness (with chest harness if you feel the need) or a full body harness. And attached to the harness is the single most important piece of equipment specific to Via Ferrata - a purpose designed energy-absorbing lanyard. This is essential. In the past people have used ordinary slings clipped to the wire cables for protection, but this gives potential for very high fall factors (up to 5), which can cause catastrophic equipment failure. The danger of such a high fall factor cannot be stressed enough, since in normal climbing situations the greatest fall factor you’d encounter is 2.

### Energy absorbers

There are a number of modern lanyards on the market, produced by Mammut, Camp, Petzl and Simond amongst others. A Via Ferrata lanyard consists of an energy absorber, two arms which connect to the cable with karabiners, and a means of connecting to the harness. The energy absorber can be rope or tape running through a friction brake, or a block containing tear-out webbing. Without this energy absorber a fall might cause serious injury or death. Lanyards should meet the EN958 standard, but they can also meet UIAA 128, which is an optional higher standard.

### V or Y lanyards?

Modern lanyards use a “Y” tape configuration, and offer protection if both arms of the lanyard are clipped into the cable. However you may come across earlier models using a “V” shape. “V” lanyards were the first to be developed but suffer from a major limitation - it’s essential to only be clipped into one arm if you fall. If both arms are clipped onto the cable and you fall, the energy absorber won’t work. In fact, clipping the spare arm into anything can lead to disaster. So if using this type, take extra care when moving past an intermediate anchor point. Some lanyards also have a short third arm, which allows you to rest on steep sections. Whatever you choose, make sure you read the instructions.

### Klettersteig karabiners

Type K or Klettersteig karabiners must be used on the ends of the lanyards. Check there is a K for Klettersteig 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. Type K karabiners are made specifically for Via Ferrata - they have a wider opening than normal, and have a self-closing mechanism. Those meeting the optional UIAA standard must pass additional strength tests, which simulate forces likely to occur in a Via Ferrata fall.

## Expert Q&A



This issue’s equipment expert is Ian Fenton. Ian Fenton was BMC Youth Officer, who is now back instructing and coaching in the UK and Southern France. He is especially keen on all forms of Via Ferrata. See [www.mountfenton.com](http://www.mountfenton.com) for more details.

**Q.** What’s the best way of attaching my lanyard to my harness, should I use a karabiner?

**A.** No. Most modern lanyards have a sling, which you larks foot around your harness belay loop. This is secure and introduces no extra weak link to the safety chain. It also reduces movement of the textile parts during a fall which could cause melting.

**Q.** I’ve got a friction brake at home, can I make my own lanyard up?

**A.** You could make your own set up with some spare dynamic rope and a brake, but choice of rope

diameter and correct configuration are vital. And with ready made systems including specially designed spring loaded Klettersteig krabs, costing as little as £30, there’s really not too much incentive for a DIY job.

**Q.** Do I need a back-up rope?

**A.** Remember, a lanyard will not prevent a fall, so depending on the Via Ferrata and the participants, a rope and a few slings may prove invaluable. A tired, injured or scared climber can be safely belayed through any difficult sections. This equipment will also help out in the event of coming across a damaged

section of cabling, a real possibility if you’re the first party up that season.

**Q.** What sort of harness do I need?

**A.** Either a full body or a standard sit harness. Most climbers will just use their existing sit harness. But a full body harness will help prevent you being flipped over if falling with a pack on - and is also recommended for children. One option is to buy the harness as a complete system with a self belay set. Complete sets of varying sophistication are available in many shops.

High on a Dolomite Via Ferrata.  
Photo: Alex Messenger.



Watch out if you're taking younger kids out too - they may love the climbing but their hands can be too small to operate the Klettersteig karabiners properly, or they may lack the grip strength required for repeated operation. Check this before setting off and keep a sharp eye out en-route.

## 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. 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.

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. ■

Dan Middleton is the BMC Technical Officer. Email him at [dan@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:dan@thebmc.co.uk) with those technical questions.

## Q. How hard are Via Ferrata?

**A.** The main guidebooks use a two tier grading system. Technical difficulty goes from 1 to 5, and seriousness from A to C. Hence an easy short route in unthreatening terrain would score 1A, whereas a long, hard mountain route would weigh in at 5C. As a rough guide most confident scramblers should be happy jumping on a 3B and above.

## Q. What boots should I wear?

**A.** Approach shoes have the edge when it comes to comfort and actually climbing the routes, whilst you'll be thankful for a beefier boot on long scree descents. It's going to be a compromise either way. Your choice will also be dictated by the amount of snow cover.

## Further Information

The following two guides are very detailed and a great introduction to Via Ferrata:

- Via Ferratas of the Italian Dolomites Vol 1 (North, Central and East)
- Via Ferratas of the Italian Dolomites Vol 2 (Southern)

*Both by John Smith and Graham Fletcher, Cicerone. Available from the BMC priced £11.95 (members), £12.95 (non-members).*

[www.petzl.com](http://www.petzl.com) - Detailed product info on Via Ferrata kits.

[www.planetmountain.com](http://www.planetmountain.com) - Italian climbing and VF site.

[www.uiaa.ch/?c=310](http://www.uiaa.ch/?c=310) - For details on equipment standards.

## Via Ferrata checklist

Pack what you'd normally take for a high-level ridge walk in the UK, plus:

Gloves	Guidebook
Harness	Helmet
Headtorch	Self belay set
(Rope)	(Axes / Crampons - check locally)

Remember that whilst Via Ferratas are maintained, many are very much a mountain experience, starting and finishing in serious terrain.





# Dreamon

Jenny Towill is psyched for climbing and life

Jenny Towill on The Smile (E1 5a),  
Sharpnose. Photo: Rory Shaw.



I started my first job when I was 15. Living in a Devon seaside town this meant long hours in a pasty shop, doling out enormous portions of pasties, clotted cream and ice cream to sunburnt visitors who all looked rather too large to start with. I was a few years younger than the other girls that worked there, so I looked up to them, I wanted to be where they were. I was a mere pasty server while they had the privilege of making the ice creams. I so wanted to be them - 19 and cool, mixing ice cream. Not 15 and just finding my way.

Now I've found my path - I'm driven by climbing. I love the physical movement on the rock, the adventure, the head game - well, at least when I win. And I've learnt that to climb to the best of your ability there is one major factor that overrides everything else - you have to be psyched. Within a year of starting to climb I'd led Flying Buttress on Dinas Cromlech. Nice climb, but what I really remember is sitting at the bottom of my route, awestruck by the sight of someone climbing Left Wall. At that point in my climbing history the person could've been halfway up any of the Cromlech routes and it wouldn't have made a blind bit of difference to my amazement. I didn't understand the concept of "E" grades, and I certainly didn't realise the amount of people who would be capable of heading up this monster of an E2. All I saw was an amazing route threading a beautiful line up the centre of an awesome wall. I couldn't believe that someone could climb it.

"If you want to be there enough you have to be prepared to be scared, to be pumped, bleeding and sweating onto the holds"

To get psyched you need three things: to have the ability, to believe in your ability, and to want to do it. It's good to be psyched; about life, about climbing. If you want to go somewhere, do something, be someone, then aspire to those that are already there and make a damn good effort to join them - you almost certainly will.

The climbs won't always come easily. You have to be able to imagine yourself there, on a route, in a position. Not to ask, but to tell yourself that is where you are going to be. If you want to be there enough you have to be prepared to be scared, to be pumped, bleeding and sweating onto the holds. To be able to laugh at your leg as it judders uncontrollably to a crazy rhythm you're unable to hear. To sing and curse, or

whatever it takes to get your breathing and heart rate to something near normal, and your leg under control to make that crux move.

But when you make that move, and you're through it, it's the best feeling in the world. That first jug, that first ledge, the first bit of bomber pro that lets you know that the winger isn't happening, at least not today. The top out, with forearms screaming, heart racing, and legs wobbling, before you lean back into an exhausted heap, all moments of doubt forgotten. Wondering just what the heck you were doing - why did you ever start up this route?

Why did you even start climbing at all? This is no way to be spending a Sunday afternoon, slipping around on a sidepull and a blood covered crimp thinking to yourself, "why the hell aren't I at home watching the cricket?". But now you're through, at the top, where you aspired to be, and let's face it, you knew you'd get there one day, somehow. You're up there, with those who could waltz up it when you could only dream, and as your partner shouts "how was it?" you look down with a huge grin and reply: "f\*\*\*ing awesome".

Left Wall didn't go down without a fight, the biggest winger I've ever taken, and the most pumped I've ever been. But I eventually topped out and that sling was the sweetest thing I've ever clipped. It may not have been my most stylish climb but it was one of my proudest moments, and the beer that night was the best I've ever tasted.

I managed to get to the heady status of ice cream maker too. In fact I think there was even a point where I was the best damn ice-cream maker in the whole shop. There was even a short period when I was content, proud, to be in that position. It didn't last for long - I got psyched for something else. ■

BMC member Jen Towill lives in North Wales and is a keen environmentalist and climber. She is currently working for the RSPB and escapes to the Llanberis Pass crags at every opportunity.