summit:42

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BMC

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Hiding from the British Royal Navy?
Here's a good spot.

Tiny Pitcairn Island is one of the most remote places on earth. Rising from the vast South Pacific Ocean off the eastern edge of French Polynesia, it is home to 47 people. On this day, the residents of Pitcairn are visited by climbers Mark Synnott, Greg Child, Kevin Thaw, and Jimmy Chin. They've sailed here to explore the rugged volcanic coastline and retrace the path of the world's most famous mutineers—Fletcher Christian and the crew of the *HMS Bounty*. To learn more about this expedition and the history of the *Bounty*, go to www.thenorthface.com/eu/pitcairn. Photos: Jimmy Chin.

Tel: 01539 738882 - E-mail: uksales@vfc.com

Ellin's Tower, South Stack, Gogarth. Photo: Adam Long.

Sea Sides

Will we be fighting them on the beaches?

For outdoor types a trip to the beach usually means one of two things. Strolling along the cliff top remarking how beautiful the cold, dark waters of the North sea appear, or for the more energetic, the opportunity to shake up some salt-slick climb before trying to belay off a rabbit.

All bracing fun, but as yet, no decision has actually been taken on how public access can be improved to one of our most important natural treasures - the English coast. Inland there's now good old CRoW, but back at the seaside, the Natural England partnership (that's the Countryside Agency, English Nature and Rural Development Service to you and me) is still researching and fact-finding to find the best access option. Their ambitious aims are to "improve the coastal wildlife, landscape, and quality of enjoyment", and make the coastline more accessible to boot.

But will this actually make any difference to what we already experience? Well, currently about half of the foreshore is owned by the Crown Estates, and beaches are under a variety of ownerships including local authorities and the National Trust. Much of this access is often permissive or de-facto, a luxury which can, and has, been revoked on occasion. The public footpath system around our coast is similarly variable in quality and doesn't allow for a continuous journey. So, in short, yes, improvements could be made.

The nature of these rights has yet to be decided however, and a number of options have recently been presented, including statutory improvements to linear rights of way, a mapping approach, and a non-mapped, descriptive method. The first option, a strict "rights of way" approach would simply be too restrictive to deliver that full coastal experience that us islanders need. The second is using a CRoW-like methodology - mapping with consultation, however this may be complicated and time consuming, mapping a small corridor of the wide and varied coastal margins. This leaves the descriptive process - it could be less accurate than mapping and might be open to misinterpretation by landowners and public alike, yet it may offer the most realistic and easily implemented solution.

Whichever method is chosen, the BMC would like to see full access to the coastal zone including the foreshore, an area adjacent to the foreshore, and a distance back from the cliff face or adjacent land. Only this would give the access that climbers and walkers expect, and need. And as ever, it's a balancing act - stronger conservation legislation, and reduced concerns of occupier's liability also need to be addressed.

The situation in Wales is slightly different again. The options, similar to those presented in England include "coastal access enhancement initiatives" with a round-Wales trail, a CRoW type approach and CRoW variant to include fields adjacent to the cliff top as well. There has already been a consultation process in Wales and these options are now with the Welsh Assembly - who have hopefully all had an early summer beach holiday and want to totally embrace the idea of access to the coast, not just a strip of footpath around the edge of it.

Of course the situation is very complex. Our coast is made up of a number of different and sensitive environments including estuarine areas, sand dunes, urban areas and sea defences, so the combination of the options needs careful consideration. But access to our shores needs to be inclusive and beneficial to the complete spectrum of users. So what happens now? Well, presently the BMC is lobbying for what we see as the most sensible coastal option - an "open access" approach to the coastal zone. But at the same time we understand the importance of this environment for conservation and would of course continue to support necessary agreed restrictions to ensure the protection of wildlife.

The Natural England partnership has just reported to the Department for the Environment, and a public consultation document will be produced this October. The Welsh options are currently with the Assembly Government and it is hoped that they too will produce a consultation document in the next few months. Things should only get better for the coastal visitor, but at this stage the type of improved access is still unclear. Whatever happens, rest assured the BMC is doing the spade work, and we're on your (sea) side.. ■

- Cath Flitcroft - BMC Access & Conservation Officer. cath@thebmc.co.uk.

WELCOME TO...
ISSUE 42
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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Doctor's Appointment

"BMC President, why do you want to do that then?" spluttered Jim Curran over his pint, "I thought you didn't like committees!" True, bureaucracy never was my strong point, but I'm truly honoured to be the new President and look forward to helping steer the BMC.

I come from an expedition background, chugging up easy alpine routes until I became enthralled with the Himalaya in the 1960's. Trips followed to Kishtwar, Kanjiroba in West Nepal, and Swagarohini - the 6000m peak in Garhwal and scene of my only proper first ascent in 1974. Ambling down the Tons valley on horseback, my frostbitten feet in bandages, I had a telegram: "Chris Bonington has invited you to Everest next year to be the doctor. I said yes. Hope that is OK. Love Mum."

And so my course shifted, and I was lucky enough to be involved with some major expeditions; Everest SW Face '75, Kongur '81, Everest NE Ridge '82, and Menlungtse '88. Back on the home front, I climbed throughout Britain, dangled off cliffs in Lundy and escaped to the Alps whenever possible. Then finally in 1996 I began some exploratory journeys to Sepu Kangri with Chris Bonington, culminating in a pretty wild horseback trip through the eastern Nyenchen Tangla.

Fresh to the BMC, I see extraordinary commitment from two groups of people - the volunteers who freely give time and expertise, and the professionals fired with enthusiasm. The BMC is in a happy place right now, but let no one underestimate the hard labour of my predecessor Mark Vallance and the forceful partnership he forged with CEO Dave Turnbull. Mark set the BMC on a firm financial footing after some shaky years, and we'll all feel his legacy for many years to come.

So where are we heading now? Well I'm really interested in ideas from members, so get in touch via the office if you've got any suggestions. But here's one to start you off. Let's find a secure lasting home for mountaineering, somewhere to bring together history, literature and endeavour. A place to encompass the many facets of our sport - hill walking, first ascents, desperate rock and ice climbs, competitions, walls, access, conservation and youth - with offshoots into technology, science and medicine.

Another man with a few ideas of his own was John Mann MP, Chief Guest at this year's AGM. If you were there you'll have heard his exciting views on how we, BMC members, can influence government and promote mountaineering widely for all to enjoy. And if you weren't, then simply rest assured that we've got at least one person where it counts who's firmly on our side. Have a great summer.

Charles Clarke

Charles Clarke
BMC President

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SPECIAL OFFERS

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Your chance to win: Entre-Prises Hangboard, Rab Drillium eVent Jacket, Black Diamond Tracer Helmet, Raichle 90-degree GTX boot, Neil Gresham books and training DVDs.

ON THE COVER: Ben Heason climbing Morning Dove White, Happy Boulders, Bishop. If you're heading abroad this summer don't forget to pack some BMC insurance. Photo: Alex Messenger.

CONTENTS SPREAD: Perfect. The end of a warm evening on Derwent Edge, Peak District. Photo: Alex Messenger.

News

Block vote axed

BMC adopts one-member one-vote at AGM

A new voting structure adopted at the recent BMC AGM heralds the end to the block vote for clubs and gives equal voting rights to all members. Dave Turnbull, BMC Chief Executive said, "This is an historic moment for the BMC; it marks the culmination of three years work towards a one-person one-vote structure, and sets the foundations for a more modern and relevant BMC in the coming years."

The greatly anticipated change means that all adult Individual Members and all adult Club Members (i.e. members of BMC affiliated clubs) now each have an individual vote. Although this has always been the case for Individual Members, under the previous system affiliated clubs voted on behalf of their members in a block vote proportional to the size of its membership.

The adoption of "one-member one-vote" sees a move to a fairer and more democratic system. A couple of years ago, emotions were aroused over whether clubs should still be able to use the power of the block vote to sway important decisions such changes to subscriptions fees. It's true that the BMC was set up by clubs and they are unquestionably instrumental to the development of the BMC, but Individual Members now outnumber Club Members and many members, including those within clubs, saw the original voting system as outdated.

The new voting structure forms part of the amendments to Articles and Memorandum of Association voted in by members at the AGM in Buxton on 22nd April. Clubs including the Climbers' Club and the Fell and Rock Climbing Club voted in support of the amendments. With the new system in place, it is important that Individual Members and Club Members alike use their votes to full effect – after all, it's your BMC. "One-member one-vote" was one of the visions laid out in the BMC's latest Future Policy Review. We can confidently say that implementation of the Review is now fully in swing.

Other key changes mean that all affiliated Club Members are now able to attend BMC Area Meetings and there will also be greater transparency in reporting to the National Council – the new name for the Management Committee. You can read the Articles and Memorandum of Association in full on the website, as well as the recently finalised Future Policy Review.

Charles Clarke elected as new BMC President

The BMC warmly welcomes Dr Charles Clarke as the new BMC President who takes over the baton from Mark Vallance. Mark has completed his three-year presidency, which has seen the BMC grow both in financial strength and in its vision, culminating in the publication of the Future Policy Review report and the adoption of the new Articles and Memorandum of Association. Bill Renshaw and Michael Hunt were both re-elected as Vice Presidents and Rab Carrington has taken up the third Vice President post - read more about what makes Rab tick on page 16. Vic Odell stays on as Honorary Treasurer and Honorary Memberships have been awarded to Dave Bishop and Les Ainsworth.

Charles Clarke (L) and Chris Bonington (R) taking a break at The Roaches. Photo: Bonington collection.

Summit fever

If it's May, then it must be Everest.

Despite every man and his Yorkshire Terrier now having climbed the big hill, the media's appetite for stories about it seems undiminished. What's more, micro-innovations in the style of ascents seem limitless. This year we had the first ascent by a double amputee - New Zealand climber Mark Inglis, who lost his legs to frostbite after being trapped on Mount Cook 24 years ago. Despite chafing on his stumps, and some frostbite in his fingers, Inglis reached the summit and New Zealand's Prime Minister, Helen Clark, herself a mountaineer, hailed the achievement. "As a very amateur climber myself with two sound legs and having got to 19,700 feet, I can appreciate what an amazing achievement this is and I offer him my full congratulations," she said.

But almost immediately, news that Inglis had climbed past dying climber David Sharp, a 34-year-old engineer from Guisborough in Teeside, prompted questions about the ethics climbers display in trying to reach the summit of the world. Sir Edmund Hillary himself joined in criticising how Everest is being managed. "It is just ridiculous having 15 or 20 or 30 expeditions all attempting the mountain at the same time," he said after questioning why 40 climbers passed Sharp as he lay stricken. Sharp was seen fiddling with his oxygen equipment, but only Inglis's Sherpa offered him any help. Hillary said: "People are still going up in vast numbers and people are dying on the mountain. 190 people have died on Mt Everest. I don't think that is a statistic that is particularly attractive." With the papers full of bad headlines for climbing, perhaps the time has come to reach an international consensus on how climbing on Everest should be managed.

All of this is a bit bewildering to ordinary climbers for whom Everest increasingly seems like an irrelevant sideshow. But at least we can cheer the success of guide Kenton Cool, who became the first Briton to climb the mountain three times while guiding for Sheffield outfitters Jagged Globe. The evergreen guide Victor Saunders reached the summit for the second time as a guide too, at the age of 56. And two teenage lads on their Gap Year, Rob Gauntlett, of Petworth, Sussex, and James Hooper, of Wellington, Somerset, both 19, reached the summit via the north ridge on 17th May, becoming the youngest Britons to have climbed it.

Staying cool. Kenton Cool - the first Brit to summit Everest three times. Photo: Simon Lowe / Jagged Globe.

International liaisons

Eighth BMC International Meet a flying success

The motley crew. Photo: BMC.

Once again Plas y Brenin was the venue for an international week of climbing madness in early May. Over 40 climbers from 22 countries including China, Hungary, Israel, Luxemborg, South Africa, India, Serbia and Montenegro, Croatia and the USA, made the journey to North Wales to be hosted by 35 British climbers for a week of (almost) perfect Snowdonia weather.

The summer International Meets have been running every two years since the early 1990's, and they aim to showcase British climbing and promote British ethics to the world. All the guests were incredibly keen to experience this "strange British adventure climbing, " they'd all heard so much about, and lacking any preconceptions they threw themselves at anything and everything. Sometimes their desire for the full trad experience scared even the most hardened UK host, such as 19 year-old Gedas Simutis's near miss. His gear ripped following a 50ft fall on Big Boys - a rarely repeated no star E5 at Rhoscolyn - leaving him 6ft from the ground only for his final gear to then blow - dumping him firmly amongst the boulders.

Meanwhile on North Stack Wall Jerzy Stefanski from Poland learnt a lesson in belaying when English host Jordan Buys popped a foothold on the Cad and took a 65 footer onto the hollow flake. Watching this didn't seem to phase Slovenian Tomas Jakofcic however - he coolly led the route shortly afterwards - again without clipping the bolt stud. Elsewhere Colin Hawes, Rob Davies and Alan Hinkes spent a more relaxing week ticking classic VS to E1s with a team of enthusiastic Indian climbers from Bombay.

As ever the staff of Plas y Brenin excelled, and the evenings were spent in slideshows and lectures covering climbing in Sardinia, the Bugaboos, Trango, Greenland and many other venues. Croatian climber Boris Cujic summed up the feeling for many, "This was my first chance to climb the legendary British death routes and for someone coming from good protected limestone it was a unique experience. I have realised that it is not so dangerous as it looks - I will try to import your climbing spirit to Croatia!"

Surprisingly the meets are never over-subscribed - the perception that they are for top-end climbers is simply not the case. International guests tend to cover the full range of abilities from virtual novices upwards and they are open to all British hosts with good experience of climbing in Snowdonia or Scottish winter. Why not give them a look-in next time around?

BMC gets into bed with MPs

Valentine's Day gave an appropriate occasion for the BMC to strike up a new relationship with MPs - with the establishment of an All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) for Mountaineering. The group currently consists of 16 MPs and members of the House of Lords who have mountain-related interests. This presents a new opportunity for the BMC to influence politicians and Government on issues such as Government funding for mountaineering and mountain training, Work at Height legislation, extension of CRoW to include coastal land, and any potential for new climbing facilities in light of the 2012 Olympics. The Chair of the APPG, John Mann MP, was guest speaker at the BMC Annual Dinner where he spoke of the importance of members making their views on the future funding of their sport known to their local MPs. Watch this space for advice on how you can help the BMC with its lobbying.

Female participation up 10%

It's official - climbing is no longer the sole preserve of beardy men in breeches. The results of the BMC equity survey are in, and it shows that 25% of our members are female - a huge increase from the 16% last time we researched this in 2000. There were some more predicable findings too - almost half of those who replied were aged between 25 and 44, and we had no response at all from Muslim or Sikh religions. Perhaps the starkest figure relates to ethnic background though; 98% being white with only 2% coming from all the other categories combined. The next step is to consider whether there are any barriers to participation that we can work towards removing. We will be seeking guidance on these matters in line with the Sports Councils' Equity Standard. Thanks to all those who took part, and Katrina Henren, L. A. Boyce, T. J. Wiseman, Russ Chapman and Huw Price are now the proud winners of a brand new Berghaus rucksack. See full details of the survey online.

In Short

Regional Access Database

The all-new Regional Access Database (RAD) is nearing completion and will soon go-live on a new BMC website. It's been fully overhauled to include new CRoW advice, and easier ways to search. Over 700 crags are being updated by the Regional Access Reps as we speak, but we need your help. A trial version of the database is currently accessible at **www.climbingcrags.co.uk** and includes a feedback facility, so if you spot any errors - now is your chance to let us know.

Castle Inn Quarry

Since it was equipped with DMM Eco bolts in the 1990's, Castle Inn Quarry has become very popular. However the top belays were showing signs of wear so North Wales locals have remedied the situation. Contributions to the North Wales Bolt Fund are always welcomed, send contributions to: V12 Outdoors, High Street, Llanberis, Gwynedd.

New online Cotswold discounts

BMC members can now get discounts when shopping online with Cotswold Outdoor, as well as in-store. Simply enter the promotional code GBMC when placing your order for 10% off.

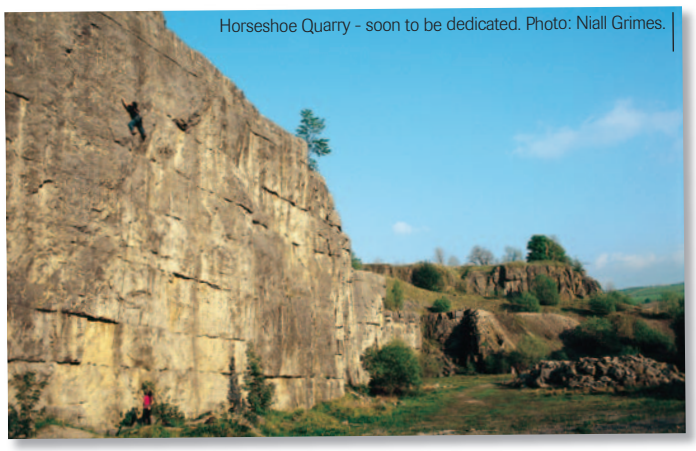
MLTA

The Mountain Leader Training Association (MLTA) is the new association for climbing and walking leaders. It aims to provide good communication between the leaders and the mountain training

(continued overleaf)

That's dedication

The BMC is about to dedicate its own land as open access for climbers and walkers to enjoy forever.


Horseshoe Quarry - soon to be dedicated. Photo: Niall Grimes.

Three sites, covering a total of almost ten hectares will be dedicated, making the BMC one of the forerunners in the Countryside Agency's initiative to encourage landowners to dedicate land not already designated as open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. Dave Turnbull, BMC Chief Executive said: "We are delighted to dedicate our land as access land so that climbers, walkers and others who wish to enjoy it will have a legally binding right of access. We hope many more organisations will be encouraged to do the same."

The first two sites to be dedicated by the BMC are in the Peak District; Aldery Cliff, a limestone crag near the village of Earl Sterndale, and Horseshoe Quarry near Stoney Middleton. When the dedications come into full effect in October, the public will have the same statutory right of access for open-air recreation on foot to the dedicated land as they now get to land designated as open access under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act. A third site at Stone Farm Rocks in West Sussex is in the final stages of the dedication process. This is a sandstone outcrop within the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty near East Grinstead.

Both Horseshoe Quarry and Stone Farm Rocks are situated within Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). Dave Turnbull continued: "The BMC is one of the first organisations to dedicate land with SSSI status. We are working closely with English Nature and other relevant authorities to ensure the biological and ecological interest of the land remains protected and enhanced". The BMC is committed to dedicating any further land that comes under its ownership.

To read more about land dedication see www.countryside.gov.uk/access

NERC bill

Following the Royal ascent of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (NERC), two new organisations, Natural England and the Commission for Rural Communities, are due to be formally established on 1st October. Cath Flitcroft, BMC Access & Conservation Officer said, "The BMC welcomes this legislation. It's encouraging to see a national organisation embracing access and recreation alongside the conservation of our natural environment". Natural England partners are currently preparing a strategy on Outdoor Recreation covering Natural England's work on improving factors such as healthy lifestyles, tourism and leisure, managing the land to improve and extend access and providing for disabled groups. The strategy will be available for public consultation in the summer.

Find out more at *www.defra.gov.uk/rural/ruraldelivery/bill*

Mike Holton 1927 - 2006

We are sorry to report the death of former BMC Honorary Secretary and Hon. Member Mike Holton following a road accident in late March. Mike was a founder member of the RAF Mountaineering Association during National Service in 1948 and later represented RAFMA on the BMC committee. In 1955 he was asked by the Alpine Club to become the fourth Honorary Secretary of the BMC, a post he held with great efficiency until 1960. This was when the BMC was a completely amateur organisation, very cost effective, as it was surviving on a subscription income of £150 per year!

He had hoped to come to this year's AGM and Dinner in Buxton to renew old friendships but sadly he died just a few weeks before the event.

- Derek Walker

Instructors wanted

If you have an appropriate mountaineering qualification (MIA, MIC, SPA, Summer/Winter ML) and fancy volunteering to help out at the BMC Student Seminar at Plas y Brenin on the 7 - 8th October then get in touch with jon@thebmc.co.uk You'll get board and lodging onsite and travel expenses will be covered.

Best of both worlds

The BMC is supporting a new website for outdoor activity providers and land managers to help people enjoy the outdoors with minimal impact on the environment. The Best of Both Worlds site (**www.bobw.co.uk**) is a partnership programme between English Nature, the Countryside Agency and the Council for Physical Recreation (CCPR).

In Short

boards. Membership is open to leaders who hold or are registered for any national award of the UK's Mountain Training Boards. Find out more and join at **www.mlta.org.uk**

Cartridge recycling

Help raise money for the BMC by using the enclosed freepost envelope for your empty inkjet cartridges. For every cartridge sent, the BMC will receive a generous donation from EAH Recycling - so not only will you be helping to improve the environment, but assist us in our work.

BMC Youth Meet

The BMC Training and Youth Committee want to support a one-day Youth Meet this autumn, and need volunteers to help out on the day. The meet will be open to both new and experienced young climbers, with volunteers hosting the meet and providing guidance where necessary. If you're interested in volunteering for the day please contact Nick Colton on 0161 438 3305, or email nick@thebmc.co.uk. And if you want to organise a BMC Youth Meet in your own area, then the BMC has guidance outlining how such an event should be managed too.

Second Vixen Tor protest

Climbers, walkers, and local people joined forces for a second peaceful protest at Vixen Tor on Saturday 6th May. About 80 turned up to draw attention to the ongoing situation at this once popular Dartmoor landmark. The situation at the Tor remains the same and the BMC is continuing its campaign for access.

Photo: Dave Turnbull.

Folkard

There's no such thing as a typical week's work for a BMC Access Rep Henry Folkard gives an insight into his schedule, showing just why we should never take access for granted.

A week's work

MONDAY was mostly spent on the phone about two huge developments with permanent consequence for the landscape and environment on the Peak National Park - and for BMC members who want themselves and their children to enjoy what's left of it. One involves quarrying and the other roads. There were also a few things to attend to after Saturday's meeting of the Local Access Forum, including mounting a BMC campaign against the proliferation of new fences which effectively deny the access we won under CroW, plus preparation for meetings over the next four days, and a quick visit to Horseshoe to litter pick and check temporary signs.

TUESDAY was the meeting of the Alport Advisory Group - a really positive initiative to restore one of the Peak's grandest and quietest valleys to a natural state. No access problems, this was more about management and work plans. But before the meeting, a quiet word with the appropriate landowner resolves a vexed matter of belay stakes at a popular crag, and after it, a detailed discussion on BMC strategy on the major road scheme. I report back to other access reps and someone involved in a 1979 campaign before snatching an hour in the garden.

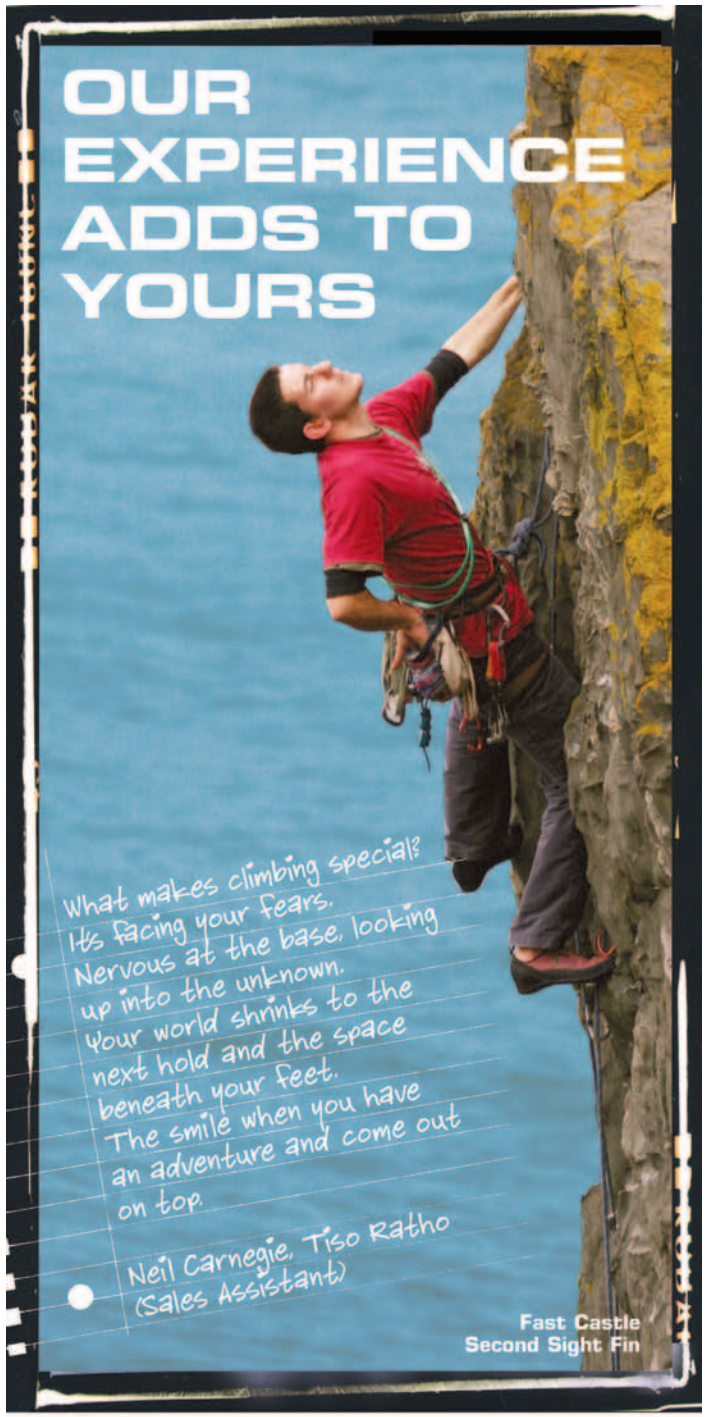
WEDNESDAY is "Rights of Way Improvement Plans" day. An analysis of three huge questionnaires to inform strategy for future priorities, and the opportunity to feed in views expressed by the Area Committee. Over coffee we clear up one or two items with the Local Access Forum secretary and my opposite number from the Ramblers' Association.

THURSDAY - the Stanage Forum Steering Group was told that it had been decided to erect a large number of large interpretive signs round and about the crag. "Oh no," we said, "Stanage is about open wilderness, not an exhibition ground for manmade intrusions." This rather upset some people who liked their sign - tough. There was also an update on Ring Ouzels and car crime - not, apparently, related.

FRIDAY came and it was time to attend a National Park extraordinary meeting on the quarry issue. The BMC is being represented at the Public Enquiry. I had not registered a wish to speak formally, but managed a word with the National Park Chairman, Chief Officer and Director of Recreation (who is later also berated by a local Councillor and Authority member about those signs), and also discussed a land management issue at Horseshoe Quarry with the manager of a local extractive industry business. Back home, and I contact a guidebook editor about access notes for a private publication - he welcomes a steer from the BMC. In the evening it's off to the Village Hall to advise local Parish Councils on access issues.

That's all, apart from over ten phone calls to other Access Reps and Head Office - some quite lengthy. What will next week bring? Who knows! ■

Henry Folkard



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Regional News

LAKES

Chapel Head Scar
A pair of peregrines were recently showing typical nesting behaviour at the crag, so a nesting restriction was implemented by the local Park Authority ranger. It now appears the birds have decided on another area and departed from the crag - the restriction has been removed.

The Lake District Green Climbing Guide
This partnership publication is a photo-illustrated guide to the flora and fauna of the mountain environment, packed with best practice conservation advice for those who like to get out and about in the Lakes. It's available from walls, gear shops, or download from the BMC website.

Next area meeting: 18:00, Fri 22nd Sept, Penrith LC Wall.

NORTH WEST

Craig y Longridge
The BMC acquisition of this unrelentingly savage bouldering crag is at the draft contract stage. We're nearly there.

Hoghton Quarry
The BMC is currently involved in a project to save the area's best quarry from ever-encroaching foliage. An ACT and Duke of Edinburgh assisted project intends to fell a number of trees, remove accumulated litter, and improve the fencing.

Next area meeting: Sat 17th June, Egerton Quarry - Clean up & BBQ.

WALES

Snowdonia Parking
Rumours galore have been flying around about the Ogwen parking situation. Read opposite to separate the myth from the reality.

Next area meeting: 19:00, Sat 10th June, Plas y Brenin, Capel Curig.

NORTH EAST

Holwick
For reasons yet to be determined, the North Pennines AONB (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Partnership has installed a prominent interpretation sign in Holwick village, which ends with the line, "there is no public access to the scar". As those of you who have followed developments in these very pages will know, the BMC put a considerable effort into restoring access to the crag - we will be getting this mistake corrected.

Park Nab
The recently installed stock fencing was encircling the crag, so access rep Peter Hay has built an access stile over it. Sorted.

Next area meeting: 20:00, Mon 12th June, Sunderland Wall.

YORKSHIRE

Limestone
The BMC has recently employed an independent consultant ecologist to monitor the nesting success and behavioural ecology of peregrines and ravens at a number of the county's limestone crags. The work will contribute to the national body of evidence the BMC continues to compile on these crag-habitual species.

Next area meeting: 19:30, Mon 12th June, New Inn, Cononley.

PEAK

4th Cloud
The peregrines decided not to nest at the crag, and the restriction has therefore been removed.

Millstone
Everyone is in a flap (sorry) about the peregrine recently spotted swooping around in the North Bay. It seems the birds are not checking out the finishing sloper on Saville Street, but are in fact making a nesting attempt. So please adhere to the on-site signs and avoid the area until June 30th.

Stanage Bus Returns
Good news for people without a car. The Park Authority has launched an experimental new bus service on Sundays and Bank Holiday Mondays, to run until October. Sheffield Community Transport is providing the service with a 29-seater bio-diesel bus with space for wheelchairs, bikes and climbing equipment. This will cart you from Sheffield Interchange to Stanage and Hathersage for just £1.50 single and £2 return - with free transfer between the Stanage car parks. So, Sheffield-ites, why not put your money where your mouth is and "hop on the biobus" to reduce congestion in the Peak. See www.derbysbus.net or www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/stanage for online timetables.

Next area meeting: 20:15, Thurs 15th June, Whillans Hut, Roaches.

SOUTH WEST

Avon
A nesting peregrine on the Main Wall means that Bristol Ornithologists Club has requested that climbers avoid Main Wall right hand section until July 1st. See on-site signing for details.

Next area meeting: Sun 1st October, venue & time tbc.

LONDON & SOUTH EAST

Harrison's Rocks
The handover from Sport England to the BMC continues to progress towards the final stages.

Stone Farm Rocks
The BMC is in the final stages of dedicating this crag as Open Access land, and in his last act as the region's access rep., Graham West has started a woodland management project at the crag. Many thanks to Graham for his sterling work over the years.

Next area meeting: 19:00, Tues 13th June, Westway Climbing Centre, London.

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.
See: www.thebmc.co.uk/rad/rad.asp.

Area meeting dates and time are subject to change. See www.thebmc.co.uk/thebmc/areacom/areas.asp for the latest details and to download additional information.

SNOWDONIA PARKING

If you've visited Snowdonia recently, you may have noticed changes to the car parking in the honey pot areas such as the Ogwen valley. Many BMC members certainly have, and they've been getting in touch - worried that the second working plan of the Snowdonia Green Key Partnership appears to be reducing the amount of car parking available. Time for a closer look.

Q. WHAT IS THE GREEN KEY PARTNERSHIP?

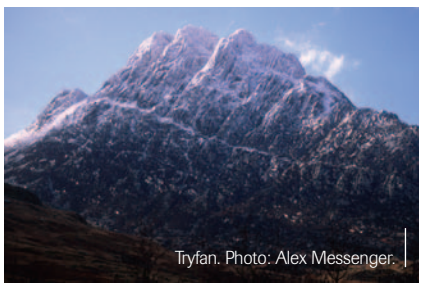
A. The first incarnation of the Snowdonia Green Key Partnership (SGKP) proposed to reduce the available parking in Snowdonia National Park whilst encouraging visitors to use a park-and-ride bus scheme. However the details were ill thought out and it met with considerable opposition, so went back to the drawing board to produce the current second working plan. This is now underway and involves work on some of the region's car parks.

Q. WHAT IS THE CURRENT STATE OF PLAY?

A. A number of organisations were consulted, and the BMC (via the Committee for Wales) submitted a response detailing the concerns of climbers and hill walkers. The overall stated aim of the SGKP is to better manage the existing parking and not prohibit acceptably safe, historic parking practices. However it won't promote the construction of large, new parking facilities on this land - designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and a European Special Area for Conservation (SAC).

Q. WHAT DOES THAT MEAN IN PRACTICE?

A. The SGKP have started improving the quality and safety of parking in the Ogwen and Llanberis valleys, and will soon issue the next phase of the working plan - generated through consultation.



Tryfan. Photo: Alex Messenger.

Q. HOW HAS THE PARKING BEEN IMPROVED?

A. At the Bochlwyd lay-by (serving Tryfan and the Glyders) the section of old highway and popular parking area has been brought up to the required safety standards with landscaping and filling-in of potholes. At the Ogwen Cottage (Snowdonia National Park Authority) car park, a popular starting point for the footpath to Llyn Idwal, the SGKP plan to enhance and extend the parking to accommodate another 11 -18 cars - subject to planning agreement. At Bryn Melyn (by Llyn Ogwen) the parking will be landscaped and formalised to accommodate the maximum number of cars, and on the Gwern Gof Uchaf straight (serving Milestone Buttress and Little Tryfan) the edge of the highway has been strengthened and resurfaced to improve safety.

Q. HOW MANY SPACES ARE ACTUALLY AVAILABLE?

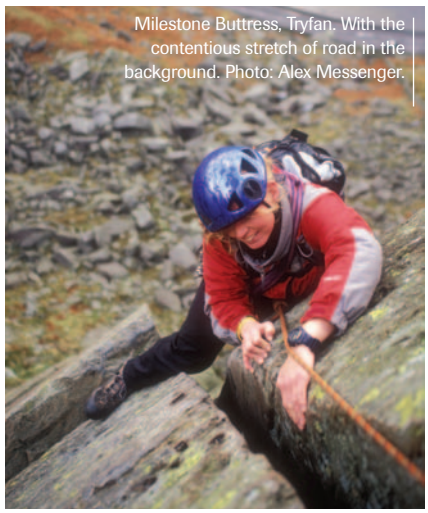
A. With the proposed extensions and tidying up it seems there will be a slight overall net increase to approximately 350 available spaces within a two mile stretch of the Ogwen valley, about the same capacity as a big city centre car park. Considering the valley has an unrestricted 60 mph road, is in a National Park and has both SSSI and SAC status, this is an impressive balance.

Q. WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE PARKING IS FULL?

A. The most convenient parking spots quickly fill up on certain weekends, in which case we advise you to check the other places down the valley. In addition, a couple of the local farms charge about £1/day to park in their fields.

Q. ANYTHING IN THE RUMOUR THAT PAY MACHINES WILL BE INSTALLED?

A. Unfortunately yes, the SGKP is considering introducing payment at the formalised sites. This has not been fully agreed yet and the BMC would hope that if a payment scheme were introduced, it would operate on a voluntary basis only - like the successful Peak District scheme. The National Park currently have season parking tickets available, but these are valid for their own car parks, and SGKP is investigating the possibility of an annual parking pass valid for all sites within the Park.



Milestone Buttress, Tryfan. With the contentious stretch of road in the background. Photo: Alex Messenger.

Q. I DON'T FANCY THAT, IS THE SHERPA BUS STILL RUNNING?

A. Sure is. The Snowdon Sherpa day ticket allows you to hop on and off the Snowdon Sherpa network all day as many times as you like on the day of purchase. The ticket is valid between Bethesda, Llanberis, Llanrwst, Porthmadog, and Waunfawr/Carnarvon. See www.wbrua.net/sherpa for the full service timetable and map. ■

FURTHER INFORMATION

Web photo gallery: See the results of the road improvement online.
www.thebmc.co.uk/news/galleries/ogwen/index.htm

Have your say: The Green Key Initiative team are more then willing to hear public thoughts on the parking situation and how to enhance accessibility through an integrated public transport network. Contact the following:
Huw Percy, 01286 679615, huwpercy@gwynedd.gov.uk
Megan Oliver, 01286 679901, meganlynneoliver@gwynedd.gov.uk

Letters

Got an opinion? Then let us know! Email: summit@thebmc.co.uk to get something off your chest.

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

Dogging

I read Henry Folkard's recent article about dogs with interest and mounting incredulity. And I wasn't entirely sure what point he was trying to make. He states that he doesn't own a dog himself, well, that much is obvious as he clearly has no understanding of dogs or their owners. I have been active in the British hills for 40 years, mostly in the Peak District and always enjoyed the company of my dogs. In all that time my dogs have never chased sheep. And at nesting time I stick to main paths where birds don't nest or quickly learn to move. My dogs are never on leads and can walk through a field of lambs without looking at them and causing them no distress. I always carry a lead in case a farmer asks me to use it (but this has never happened).

I've never seen a dog owned by another hill walker attack sheep either. I have seen sheep worried in the Goyt Valley or Lyme Park but always by a dog owned by a day-tripper or tourist - people not members of the BMC or covered by their access agreements. 99% of dog attacks on sheep occur where urban areas and farmland are in close proximity and are carried out by loose dogs under no control at all. This is a serious problem in the Hattersley/Longdendale area of the Peak District and has nothing to do with hill walkers.

I would consider a day in the hills without the company of my dogs a sad and empty experience and have no intention, as Henry suggests, of leaving them at home. I would urge him to remember that he is there to act for all hill walkers and climbers and not just those who he approves of.

Chris Gilley, Stockport

LETTER OF THE ISSUE

Hypocrisy

Are you joking? The "issue" in Summit 41 raves about your equal opportunities policy. But glancing through the magazine I noticed that whilst you may promote your policy, the photos within the magazine do not appear to follow this agenda. I did a little scientific investigation, and of the 76 people in Summit 41: 25 are staff, 6 are profile pics, 20 are people where it is difficult to identify their gender, 15 are male, (white, European), 9 are female (white, European), and only one is a black male.

So, if Summit is anything to go by, you may have a lovely policy but you seem to be struggling to put this into place. A newcomer to the sport, picking up the magazine for the first time, could reasonably conclude that climbing and mountaineering are exclusively for white men, and maybe their young, white, girlfriends.

So come on BMC, either ditch the hypocrisy and pretence of equal opportunities or follow your own policy and have plenty of photos that do not reinforce the stereotype of the white male climber. Otherwise all we can ever really hope for is yet more young men to take up climbing whilst their girlfriends sit on the side!

Tony Nicolas, Brighton.

- In Summit the photos must relate to the content, represent all aspects of climbing, hill walking, and mountaineering, and be of high quality. A mission in itself, considering that Summit does not commission any photos - all are submitted voluntarily, and usually taken in the photographer's own time. As a result we are rarely lucky enough to dictate their exact nature, be it a person's race, gender, age, clothing, or whether they're wearing a helmet. If you'd like to help out then email summit@thebmc.co.uk to join the photographers' mailing list.

Sign of the times

Whilst in the Lakes at Easter, I was surprised and slightly alarmed to see so many people heading off up mountains such as Scafell Pike, Great Gable and Helvellyn with inadequate equipment and clothing, and not even a map. Approximately 10% of mountain rescue call-outs last year seemed to be caused by ill-equipped people getting into trouble, so isn't it time groups like the BMC did something to address the problem? It'd be a great idea to put signs in prominent places, such as at campsites and the starts of popular walks warning people that they are entering remote mountain areas and should be sufficiently equipped for the conditions. This is already done in some areas of Scotland - why not England and Wales too?

David Keiller, Wiltshire

Old blues

Speaking as a paid-up old fogey, I think your excellent magazine should really pay more attention to the needs of the typical climber, who, if the list of Climbers' Club aspirants is typical, is well on the wrong side of fifty. For instance, on page 27 in the last issue, there are 18 sub-headings in blue on a black background. Now your teenage readers can see these, no problem, but not we wrinklies. Give us a break, or at least start producing large print editions!

Roger Wilkinson, Cumbria

- We do strive to make Summit as readable as possible in more ways than one. But sometimes yep, we get those colours wrong. Apologies.

WIN A BERGHAUS DUEL CLIMBING SAC WORTH £60!

berghaus

Let off your steam with a letter to Summit and you could win a brand new Slimline Duel climbing sac from Berghaus.

The Duel is designed to hold everything you need with the minimum of fuss. Made from abrasion resistant Ardura 600 RS, with a durable Ballistic front and base, it's built to take anything you can throw at it. A built-in front pocket gives a slim, compact exterior, allowing you excellent freedom of movement in tight situations, combined with the technical Fusion Pro back system so it fits and moves naturally with the body's form.

With a 35-litre capacity, compression straps, gear loops, ice axe holders, internal pocket and bladder pouch the Duel can be used as a great all round daysac or technical companion for your adventures.

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

Perfect balance.
Christian Schou seeking divine balance in his Ice Light Jacket, Gausdal, Lillehammer, Norway. Photo: Nils-Erik Kjellman.
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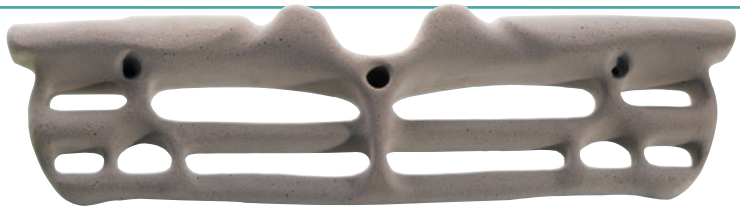
Stuff

BMC Insurance

Always great value!

If you're heading abroad this summer then don't forget to pack some BMC insurance. As used by many leading climbers and mountaineers, BMC insurance guarantees you peace of mind, and has an enviable reputation for quality. And that's not all - we've reduced our premiums for 2006. Yes, that's right, all our policies are even better value than last year. Get an instant quote and cover with our new, improved online system, or simply call the office on 0870 010 4878. Plus all profits from the scheme go towards working for climbers, hill walkers, and mountaineers, so the only one to benefit is you.

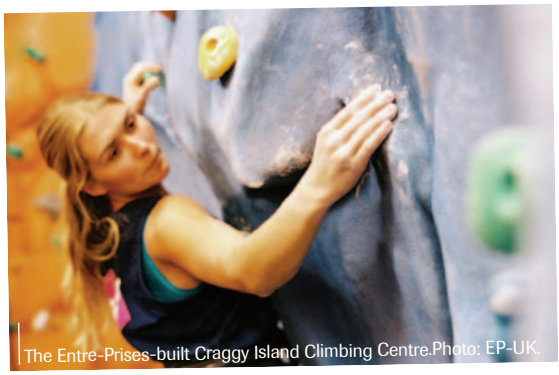
Read more about how BMC insurance can help you on page 36.



Entre-Prises Hangtime Fingerboard £39.99

Entre Prises (UK) are official climbing wall supplier to the BMC. Their creations feature at many climbing walls around the country, and are the centrepieces of big international events such as the World Bouldering Cup at Climb '06. But you don't have to leave your house to take advantage of their hold-honing skills - yes, you can get strong fingers and watch Big Brother at the same time. The Entre-Prises Hangtime fingerboard is a compact design, so it won't dominate your ultra-cool decor, yet has a wide range of smooth holds and grips to give you a good workout. They also make a full range of holds for when you decide to upsize to a fully featured cellar board. And for the truly upwardly mobile, they'll even build a custom wall in your very own house.

For further information see www.ep-uk.com



The Entre-Prises-built Craggy Island Climbing Centre.Photo: EP-UK.

Win one of five Hangtime boards

Win a Hangtime fingerboard and make those weak fingers a thing of the past. Just find out:

Q. Name one Entre-Prises (UK) sponsored climber.

How to enter the competitions

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

Closing date is 01/08/06

RAB Drillium eVent Jacket £160

Looking to shed some weight for the holidays? Then why not consider the new Rab Drillium jacket. The Drillium weighs in at a meagre 350g - the lightest Rab eVent jacket to date. The eVent fabric ensures that this is one of the most breathable and comfortable jackets on the market. It's perfect for lightweight summer hill walking, and also performs well as a highly breathable waterproof shell for mountain biking and mountain marathons.

Features include:

- eVENT® 3 layer storm fabric
- Roll-away wire peak hood
- Separate protective collar
- Water resistant front zip and internal storm flap
- 2 outer self-draining pockets
- 1 laminated inner pocket
- Folds away into pocket
- Available in S - XXL in amber, blue and black

For further information see www.rab.uk.com.

Win one of two Drillium jackets

We've got two of these lightweight wonders to keep you dry. Just find out:

Q. Which Rab-sponsored walker recently completed all the Scottish Munros in a continuous winter walk?

Issue 41 winners

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

Black Diamond Tracer Helmet £59.99

The new Tracer climbing helmet from Black Diamond offers lightweight protection with a great fit, so you can keep your head in one piece this season. Weighing in at just 235g with a low profile, you'll hardly notice wearing it. This co-molded EPS foam helmet comes in three sizes and has a one-handed adjustment system allowing it to be easily adjusted on the go. A total of 14 vents give excellent airflow with a mesh screen to stop debris coming through the top vents.

Features include:
- Headlamp clips
- Weighs just 235g
- Available in three sizes (S, M, L) plus a kid´s version
- Minimalist design in orange, pacific blue, slate or white

More information is available from www.blackdiamondequipment.com.

Win one of three helmets

We've got three Tracers to keep you ahead. Just find out:

Q. Where is the Black Diamond headquarters?

Raichle 90-degree GTX boot £200

Swiss boot supremos Raichle have launched a range of mountaineering boots, plus a handy "try-before-you-buy" scheme to make sure you get the right fit. So if you need to splash out on new mountaineering boots but don't know where to turn, then this nifty scheme that will solve your problems. The initiative, which is currently available at West Coast Leisure in Fort William and V12 in Snowdonia, offers customers the choice of the 90-degree crampon compatible leather mountaineering boot plus five other mountaineering models for hire at a minimal hire charge. Wear them for the day and see how they fare. If you're so impressed that you'd like to buy them, then the hire charge will be knocked off the purchase price.

For more information see www.raichle.com or call 01625 508218.

Win a pair of Raichle 90-degree GTX boots

"Try -before-you-buy" is due to be rolled out nationwide later this year. But if you can't wait, then find out the answer to the following question, and you could win a pair of Raichle 90-degree GTX boots (as pictured) absolutely free. Features include:

- Leather Gore-Tex lined upper
- Vibram Vertige sole
- ATD tongue with separate high-cut water flap
- High-cut rubber rand
- Internal Motion Control Concept
- Memo foam in tongue and ankle area
- Crampon compatible

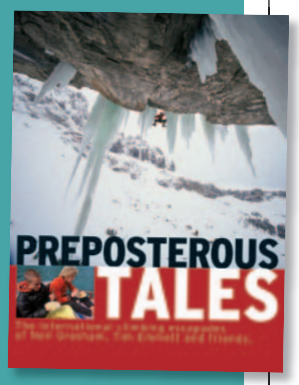
Q. When was Raichle founded?

Neil Gresham Masterclass DVDs £20

Got some big climbs on your dream tick list, but struggling to make them reality? Tired of making the same mistakes in your climbing but don't know where to turn? Well, give the wall a miss and settle down in front of these DVDs instead - they could be your best chance yet to rocket up the grades. Traditional training books are all very well but they don't show you how to develop that most essential of skills - good technique.

The Masterclass DVDs are a two-part package that can be used to troubleshoot every aspect of climbing performance. Film one covers technique and training whilst film two is all about getting the most from yourself on the crag. There are plenty of guest appearances and top tips too, from climbers like Seb Grieve and Steve McClure. You might be familiar with half the tips and information covered, but it's the half you don't know that's going to make the difference!

Presposterous Tales By Neil Gresham & Tim Emmet £20



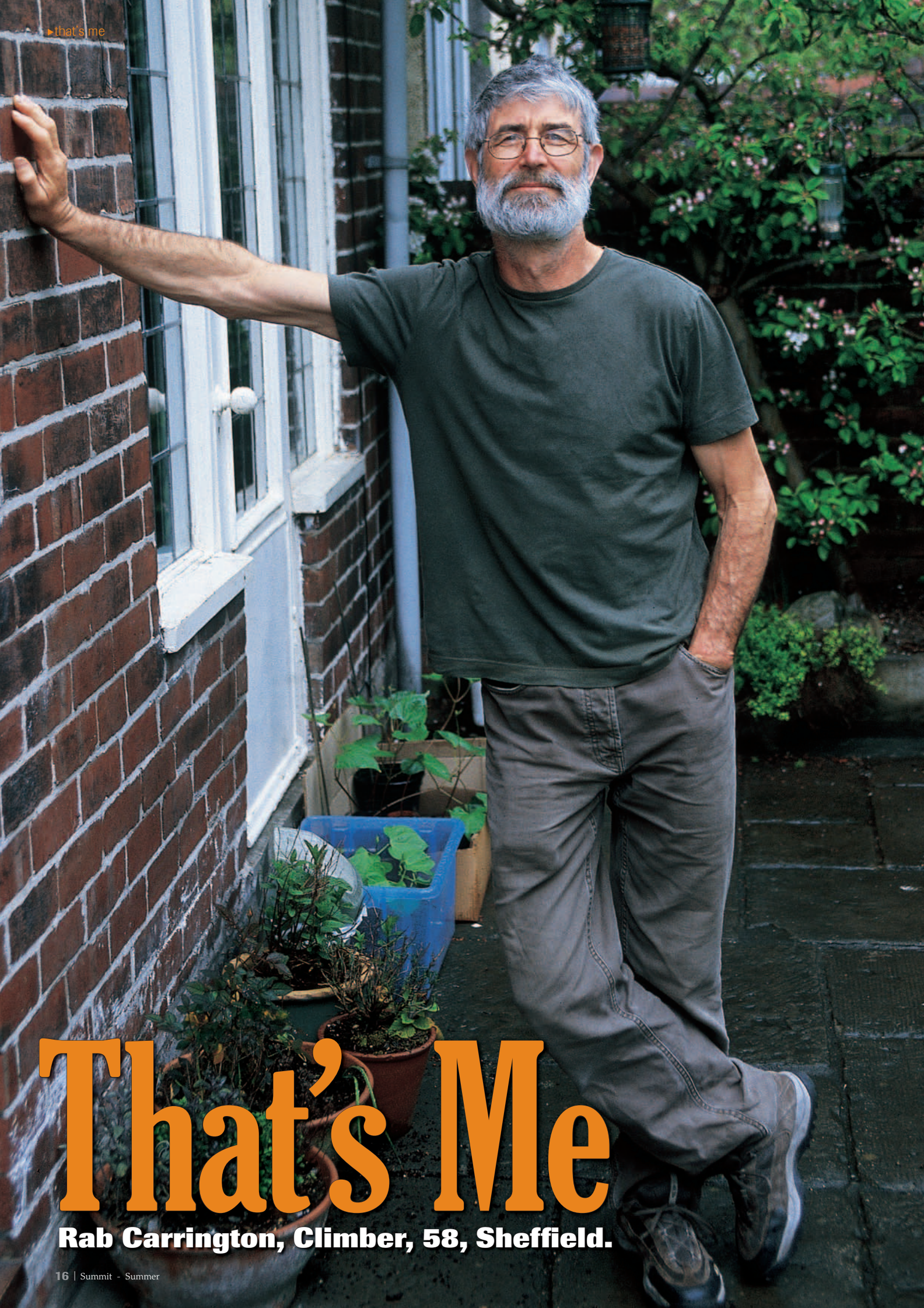
Climbing has changed so much in recent years, and who better to document the energetic edge of our weird pastime than the dynamic duo of Neil Gresham and Tim Emmet. Their new book, Preposterous Tales is a whistle stop tour of their climbing exploits around the world - from repeats of some of the big grit scareys like Equilibrium and Meshuga, to epic wobblers on new E8's in Brazil, and near misses with collapsing WI7 ice pillars in Switzerland. Slickly designed with pace and urgency, this is sure to inspire you to get off the sofa and head outside.

The Masterclass DVDs and Presposterous Tales are both available from www.cordee.co.uk or all good climbing stores.

Win a fantastic bundle: Signed copies of Preposterous Tales + Masterclass DVDs

Improve your climbing and get fired up with enthusiasm in one easy hit - just find out:

Q. Which E10 did Neil Gresham make the second ascent of?



That's Me

Rab Carrington, Climber, 58, Sheffield.

Rab Carrington was born in Glasgow in 1947, where he also grew up, and stayed for university. His growing climbing passion eventually inspired a move to the drier climes of Sheffield, where he joined in the very healthy mountaineering scene based there at the time. An interest in bigger mountains led to many trips to the Alps, South America and the Himalaya - many of these in the company of the legendary Al Rouse, with whom Rab formed a very successful partnership.

After his stint of virtually full-time climbing, he set up a company making sleeping bags in the early 1980's. From small beginnings, this company, Rab, grew steadily and organically, becoming synonymous with high-quality down and shell products. Rab recently sold the company, and has used the increased free time afforded by retirement to both climb more frequently, and offer himself up as a Vice President of the BMC.

In the 70's, you weren't a rock climber, you were a mountaineer. In winter you ice climbed, in spring you tried to get rid of the winter fat, in the summer you went to the Alps, then you did a bit in the autumn before it closed in for the winter - the drinking season.

I was supposed to do well at university. But as each year went by, and I got more and more in to climbing, the education ended up on the heap.

It rains too much in Scotland. Some people were only getting 30 routes done a season when I was there. That's no good. So I moved from Glasgow to Sheffield in 1973.

In 73/74 we started going to the Alps in winter. We went out, a team of Brits, not knowing much, doing our own thing. We were aiming for a speedy style, but the first route took Al and me two days, and we later found out that Patrick Vallençant had skied down it in about 15 seconds.

The whole team of us shared an apartment. That was a wild time, totally drunken and debauched. We didn't get our deposit back at the end of the season, that's for sure.

I learned how to make sleeping bags by accident. Al Rouse and I had a completely abortive trip to Patagonia in 1973, when we travelled overland from the USA. We got to Buenos Aires to pick up our climbing gear - which was being shipped out from Liverpool - only to find the gear hadn't even left the port thanks to a dock strike. We partied instead, but I also ended up working for Hector Vieytes, a friend of mine, for six months in Argentina, and that's were I learnt the basics.

I fell out with Al Rouse in Kangtega. We were very successful, Al and I, and had gone on lots of great trips together over the years. We'd just done Jannu in 1978, were going to Kangtega in 1979, then on to meet Doug Scott and go to Nuptse, then Makalu the year after, then we'd a chance at Everest. But we'd grown apart, we had a different emphasis. He was more into publicity and success à la Bonington, I was less in to that - we separated.

I started my business when Liz, my daughter came along in 1981. It was the only thing I knew how to do. I worked on a building site in the day and in the evenings I sat upstairs in the attic and sewed sleeping bags.

I felt part of a shared outlook back then. There were a lot of independent climbing shops - Paul Braithwaite's, Nick Estcourt's, Joe Brown's, and the people running them were all my age, doing the same thing. It was an easy way in to commerce.

Initially, the people were fantastic. They had a similar feeling for what they were doing - opening a shop to fund their climbing - but as it progressed it became more commercial and professional. The love for the product diminished as the years rolled on, and at the end of the day there was more consideration given to the margins rather than, "oh this is a great piece of kit and I've got to have it."

I'm glad to be out of it. Two years ago I was just offered a large sum of money and I decided to take it. It was a relief; I knew that to compete in this market I'd have to change. I was working out of Sheffield and paying high labour costs. Going to China was a decision I knew would have to be taken at some point, but I had a very loyal workforce.

I did Body Machine late last year, my first 7c, which pleased me a lot. I'd like to think I could still achieve 8a.

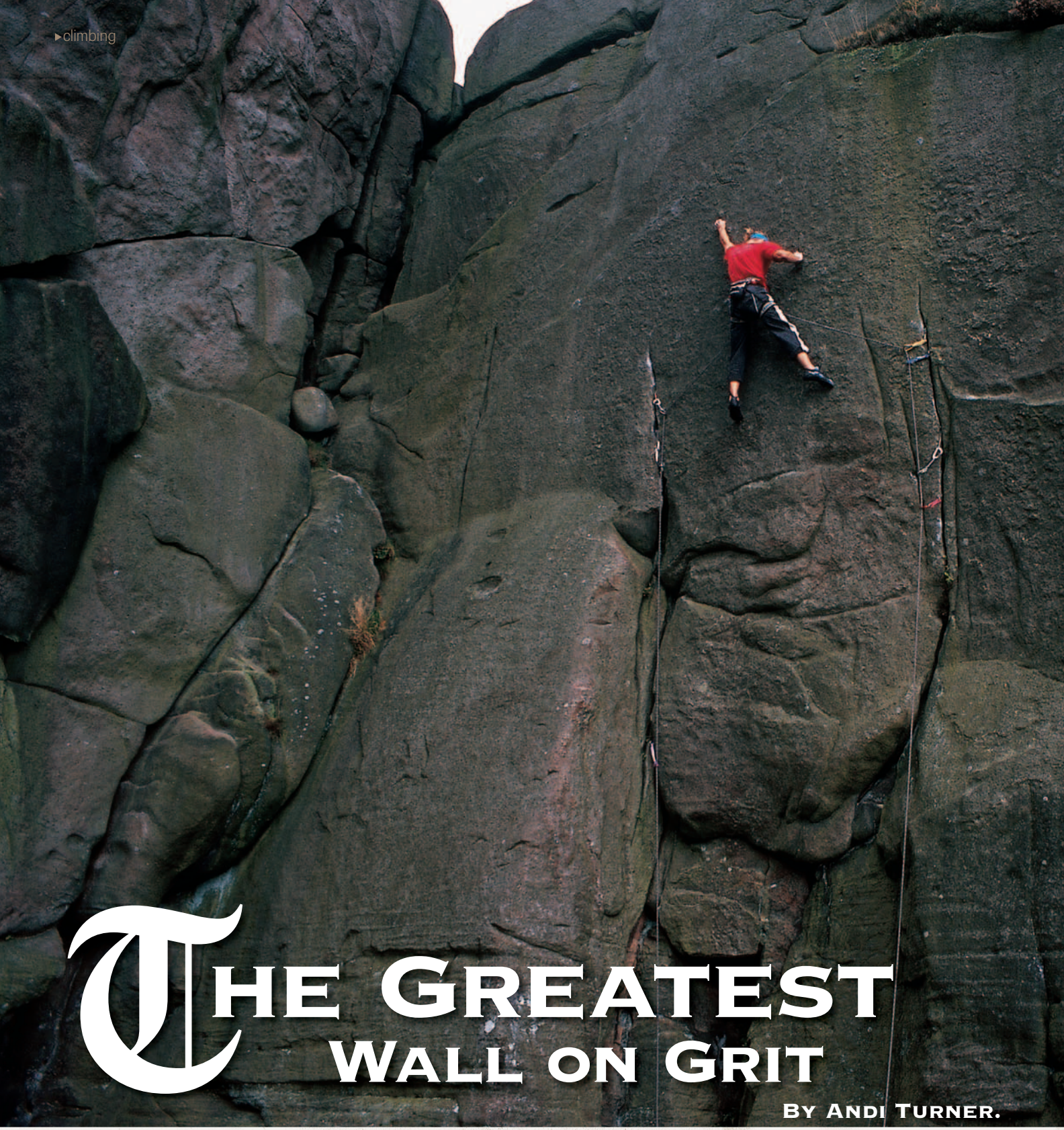
Retirement takes time getting used to. My wife Sue and I worked in same building every day, went to same home every evening, then we suddenly found ourselves wondering what to do. The first thing I did was get an allotment, it gives you another geographical space you can call your own.

I volunteered for the BMC to keep myself busy. I feel I can bring something to it. Lots of things such as access are very much under control, but I'm more interested in seeing how more modern attitudes such as walls and competitions can fit in to the BMC structure. I look upon myself as the young voice of BMC - I'm 58.

Looking back, I survived the 1970's, but only just. We all lost a lot of friends in Sheffield back then. We went to enough memorial services, we knew what went on, but you also had, as a youth, this idea that you were indestructible.

There's only so much danger your brain will take. My last mountaineering trip was to Latok in 1981 with Martin Boysen and I've not done any alpine since. There's too much danger and discomfort. ■

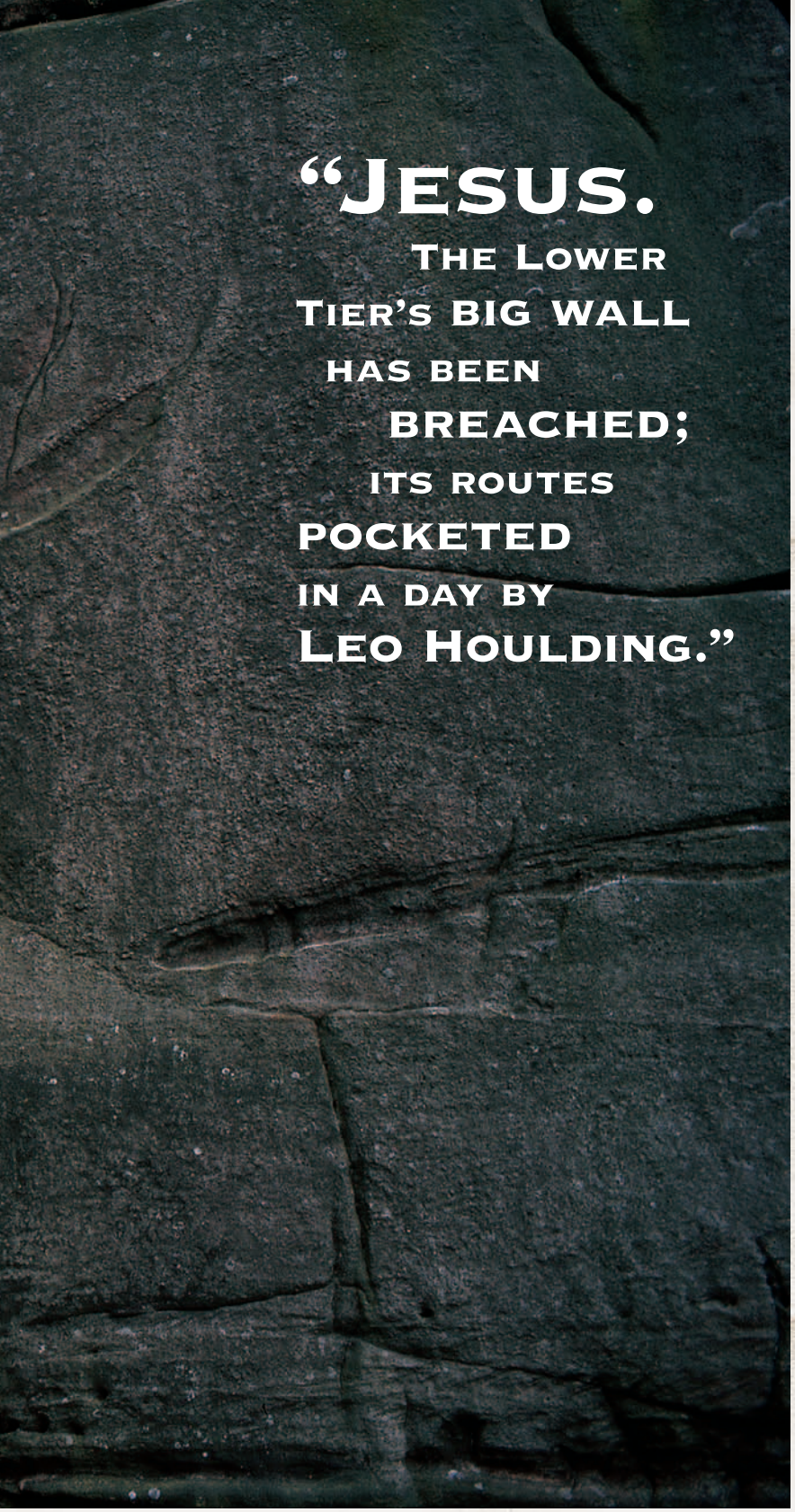
Interview by Niall Grimes.



The Greatest Wall on Grit

By Andi Turner.

Way back in ancient history,
man had been drawn to this wall,
etching in the flying figure of a swan.
Anonymous time passed
before man was again drawn
into its mesmerising call
and the flying figures went
from a premonition to reality.



"Human Fly" Leo Houlding making the first ground up ascent of Against the Grain (E6 7a), The Roaches. Its big brother, Thing on a Spring foot traverses that tenuous looking rightwards ramp before making a pop for the break. Photo: Adam Long.

"Jesus. The Lower Tier's big wall has been breached; its routes pocketed in a day by Leo Houlding."

It's 1986. Across the Peak climbers are propping up the bar doing bicep curls with their pints. In the Lazy Trout pub, a mile southwest of the Roaches, Falco is pumping "Rock Me Amadeus" out of the jukebox as snow begins to drift up against the walls and cover the road linking Meerbrook to civilisation.

The sky turns purple-grey and the cormorants on Tittesworth ruffle feathers and tuck beaks to black breasts. Local man Septimus decides that he should make a break for home before it gets too heavy and besides, his tea is waiting for him at home. He grabs his hat and strides out into the cold to the jeers from people at the bar; heckling him for making them endure a brief bitter blast from outside. He glances up to the craggy horizon and through the whirling static of snowflakes he thinks he spies a car parked up at the Roaches. "Eet cayn't bay," he mumbles in a potteries drawl. He drags his feet through the snow back to his front door as the blizzard closes in and wipes the horizon from view.

Up on the hillside a rock master is doing battle with the Lower Tier's miniscule holds when all about him is an apparition of whirling cotton wool. The route's holds all recline so unhelpfully that no snow would stick to them, their friction lingers on. The gothic bastion of Rock Hall propels wispy vortices of pine smoke into the atmosphere, only to be snatched away by the wind. These wisps pass this stick man as he rocks up, pressing down with three tips on a crystalline crescent crimp out of sight down and right. The left latches the mini-hold below the last hard move, one foot is smearing insanely, the other poised in space, its sole catching a flake of snow. His body tightens, each anchor at its absolute limit, friction being at its maximum before it gives. He relaxes again, at a point of perfect poise, his unwound body ready to stretch. Bringing the right hand up and over, the sloping ledge is grasped, the barn door is punted shut and the left hand comes up to match. Feet are skiffled across and the *Secrets of Dance* are swarmed up to the summit. The sky turns a deeper grey and the ancient walls are left to gather their snowy blanket in peace.

When the snow melted, the Lower Tier's most technical masterpiece remained; no one would follow his tracks up this bare wall for another fifteen years. It was against the grain for the time, that's for sure. Climbers back then generally spent the winter months doing a few pull-ups and drinking beer - or if they were real athletes they went caving. But things were evolving, a new breed of climber was emerging - a dedicated and scientific breed which would change the course of climbing history.

In the same year, the wall to the right was breached by tip-toeing along the wall's lop-sided smirk using, "a series of frustrating pulls on pebbles which usually result in air-borne retreat". *Thing on a Spring* was born. But the frustrating pulls on pebbles were actually a single

Pat King stepping onto the leftwards ramp of Thing on a Spring (E6 7a), the Roaches. Although keen for an ascent, on this occasion Pat was denied even a glimpse of the crux. Photo: Adam Long.

pebble pull and when that pebble pulled, the wall remained impregnable. The two routes sat together, the beautifully technical and sustained *Against the Grain* and its bigger, uglier brother *Thing on a Spring*, with its massive moves above an empty expanse. Neither route ever aging, just slowly returning to some semblance of neutrality.

As time passed the rumours grew that neither could ever be climbed again - too much had departed from the rock for a route to exist now. Locals still talked of their folklore, of that stick man, Simon Nadin repeating *Thing on a Spring* without recourse to its customary side runner in *The Swan,* or of him heaving himself back from the point of over balance with just one finger on just one pebble during a photo shoot. But the reality remained, and John Read's internet Grit List said it all - unclimbable at present.

York was a reasonable place to grow up as a climber. Especially when my Dad chipped crimps into the dead Dutch elm stump at the bottom of our garden, and screwed two blocks of wood above the back doorframe for chin-ups. Even better, Almscliff was only forty minutes away and three times a week I'd follow the familiar trail through Tadcaster and Boston Spa and up to the cliff. Every early grade boundary I pushed through was forged there; *Low Man Easy Way, Birds Nest Crack, Zig Zag Direct, Great Western, Dolphinian, Black Wall Eliminate* and *Western Front*. The evening before my A-level Geography exam was spent ticking *The Big Greeny*. A fortnight later I fell off *Pebble Wall* and broke my leg. To top it all, I didn't get the grades I'd anticipated and my meal ticket to Sheffield University vanished in a puff of smoke. However Stoke-on-Trent was still willing to take a chance with me - I set off west.

Arriving in darkest Staffordshire in 1999 I found a whole new region to explore. And unhindered from the pressures of the funkier Sheffield scene I could develop at my own pace. An unsullied start in a new county, and I was ready for action. I'd heard of *The Sloth, Elegy* and *Valkyrie* of course, who hasn't? But one route fascinated me beyond all others - *Thing on a Spring* - with its hefty price tag of E6 7a. And if it was English 7a before the crystal parted company, what could it be now - it didn't

bear thinking about.

Undeterred and game for a laugh, I tied on to the familiar safety of a top rope one day with local legend Gary Cooper and dared to try the moves. After shovelling up the lower crack system, a single stem is climbed until it peters out. Stepping right, a six-inch wide ledge curves off to a point and this is edged along like a Manhattan skyscraper suicide attempter. The end of the ramp is a lonely place; a bald wall with low and useless handholds that simply hold you in place and sloping footholds. At wits end, I tried the only recourse left, a pop for the top. Incredibly it went. It was a big jump, but well, I'd never liked pebble pulling anyway.

Weeks passed, waiting for a truly frictional day. And even though it was the middle of June, my prayers were somehow answered. Now back, but at the sharp end, I took several gut-wrenching falls going for that pop; I could actually feel my hair blowing upward with the speed of each whipper. The falls felt violent, I'd borrowed a harness that was too big and each fall snatched my body around, straining my back. And having two belayers meant I'd come tight on each rope individually dragging me one way then the next like the baby before King Solomon. Battered, bruised, and with bleeding tips, I tried for one final time.

I uncoil once again and the top is held. I heard Justin make a very weird screeching noise in celebration and I came flooding back into the real world, my out of reach ambitions achieved - a 7a on a route. I started to panic a little that I might fluff it on the easy romp to the top, a section I'd normally solo happily but Justin reassured me, "if you fall off now you've still ticked it," he giggled from his filming perch on top of Raven Rock. The day was the route's 15th anniversary - which has no gem stones attached to it. A little like the route. A coincidence – I think not.

Simon Nadin is a legend. Once commonly described as the "one you're unlikely to have heard of," although this can't really be the case any more – his secret is out. He's mostly remembered for being a modest, lanky, beer-drinking climbing world champion. Someone to aspire to. It is true what they say, that by repeating his routes you tend to get a measure of the man. An absolute all-rounder; technical, bold, powerful, delicate, it didn't matter and all light years ahead of their time. All his routes represent new levels, a breakthrough in boldness and technicality which still command a great deal of respect today and all from a man who we could see in ourselves. A dude who would drink beer and play down his ascents with a modesty seldom encountered in today's sponsor fuelled arena, where bullsh*t and headline grabbing seem to be the new order of the day.

I'm also a little aggrieved to tell the truth - he left so little to be done. All the lines taken and only a few gems remaining, top roped or led with side runners for us to pluck in the future, but you know they're not going to be easy. Whilst the fraternity were listening in on louder routes erupting from the Sheffield scene, Simon just steadily plucked away on local routes and occasionally crossed the threshold to see what was happening on the other side. His on-sight solos of *Kellogg* and *Menopause* at Stoney Middleton certainly muted his doubters; they were all there, witnesses, with their very own eyes.

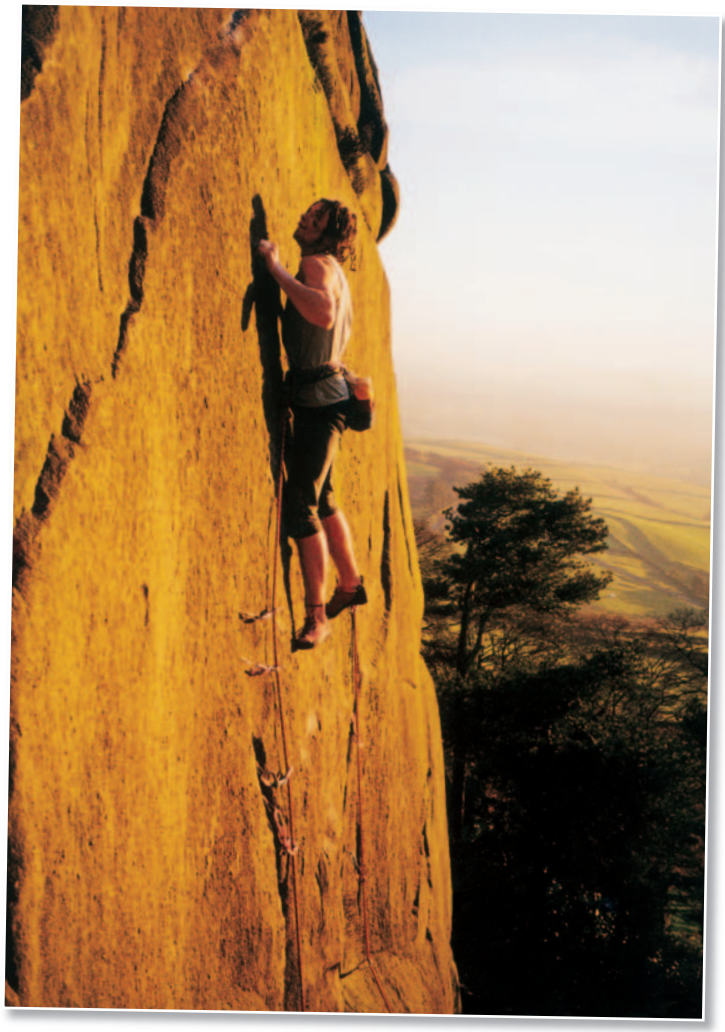
I was out with John Perry and Simon Nadin a month or so later. I was quiet, Simon was a hero of mine and I said very little to him, in case I came out with something stupid, as I usually did. As a kid, growing up in climbing, I was awe-inspired by the rock climbing elite who I'd see at the crag. I'd aspire to climb routes they'd done, the pictures I'd seen in magazines gave a reason in itself to climb. John raised the point to Simon that I'd repeated *Thing on a Spring* and that I'd jumped through the crux, missing out the mislaid pebble to re-climb his route after all these years. Simon gave a glib smile and simply said, "well he's not done it then". There's just no pleasing some people.

Thing on a Spring may have been alive once more, but it took until December 8th 2001 for its older brother, *Against the Grain* to be resuscitated, its second ascent deservedly falling to the technical skills of Justin Critchlow, his wiry frame and horizontal attitude going a long way to get him up the increasingly blank rock. His antics were well-documented urban myths in Staffordshire: like the time he broke his arm at Baldstones and simply waved it around saying, "it's a good break that one," or the time he soloed *The Sloth* with a paper bag over his head. One of the last times he soloed *The Sloth*, Justin went to the lip, but then decided to reverse the route. A few moments later another climber was leading at the lip, the flake broke and the leader crashed into the Great Slab – it should have been Justin. Someone was watching over him that day.

Not long afterwards Justin quit climbing for several years, coming back in time for the new millennium. Brought up in the climbing sense by the likes of John Perry, Paul Higginson and Julian Lines his pedigree is second to none and his feet seem to smear on nothings. His method of ascending the problematic wall was simple ballet. I was upset inside though, it had developed into a race for the second ascent, not a good thing between friends, and he'd finished first. I'd won the toss, had three goes and lowered off. Justin

"When the snow melted, the lower tiers most technical masterpiece remained; no one would follow his tracks up this bare wall for another fifteen years."

"Up on the hillside a rock master is doing battle with the Lower Tier's miniscule holds when all about him is an apparition of whirling cotton wool."



Andi Turner resurrecting Thing on a Spring (E6 7a), The Roaches. Long thought to be unclimbable since the loss of a crucial pebble. Photo: Andi Turner collection.

had three goes then did it on his fourth - magic.

A year would pass before I got back on that wall, I couldn't face it. But sure enough on a lonely, foggy and damp day, I experienced the greatest friction I've ever known and the third ascent was mine. This was a real weight off my shoulders, the route had taken a lot of time and energy, and it was overdue for mopping up. The ascent was catharsis and I felt I could progress on to something fresh and new; I bouldered almost exclusively for the rest of the year.

The years ticked on and the walls remained quiet, the arena of dreams was reclaimed by the Valkyries and the nesting birds. A singular blip occurred when a very on form Mark Sharratt sneaked up from Leek for his turn at ascending *Thing on a Spring*. He said afterwards that he would have exchanged all his hard extremes for that one route - a bold statement reflecting the importance of the moment to him. On his ascent I belayed, and it felt great to be watching something that was so ingrained in my brain. He made it look a breeze, although he did complain of pain in his arm for weeks afterwards from when he swung into the rock on the now customary fall. The route was not only living again, it was growing up, quietly.

But the peace was rudely broken in October 2005. It was the first day of the grit season, and the circus had arrived. It was one of those days when you walk up to the crag and rub your head, feeling a migraine coming on - you're not gonna get any peace today. The east had descended on our western civilisation. I'd been in the Churnet that morning with friends and strode up to the Roaches from somewhere far from *our* parking spots. We were a little disgruntled by having to walk from beyond the tea room but there was a spring in our stride, we'd climbed E7 that morning and could spend the remainder of the day shooting the breeze and generally swaggering around - our favourite pastime.

The majority of the invading hordes were on the Upper Tier finding contrived problems to do in their sticky trainers or doing laps on the *Loculus* roof. Fred Crook, long term resident and guardian of local ethical practices, was none too impressed by this. But meanwhile down on the Lower Tier the new Human Fly and his compadre were getting in a muddle on gritstone's biggest wall. They started with *Secrets of Dance*, but by foot traversing the ledge made it more of an E2 than the necky E4 that it was supposed to be. So they came and asked me what this was all about. I had a feeling where this was going, Leo Houlding bringing his big wall experience to the biggest wall.

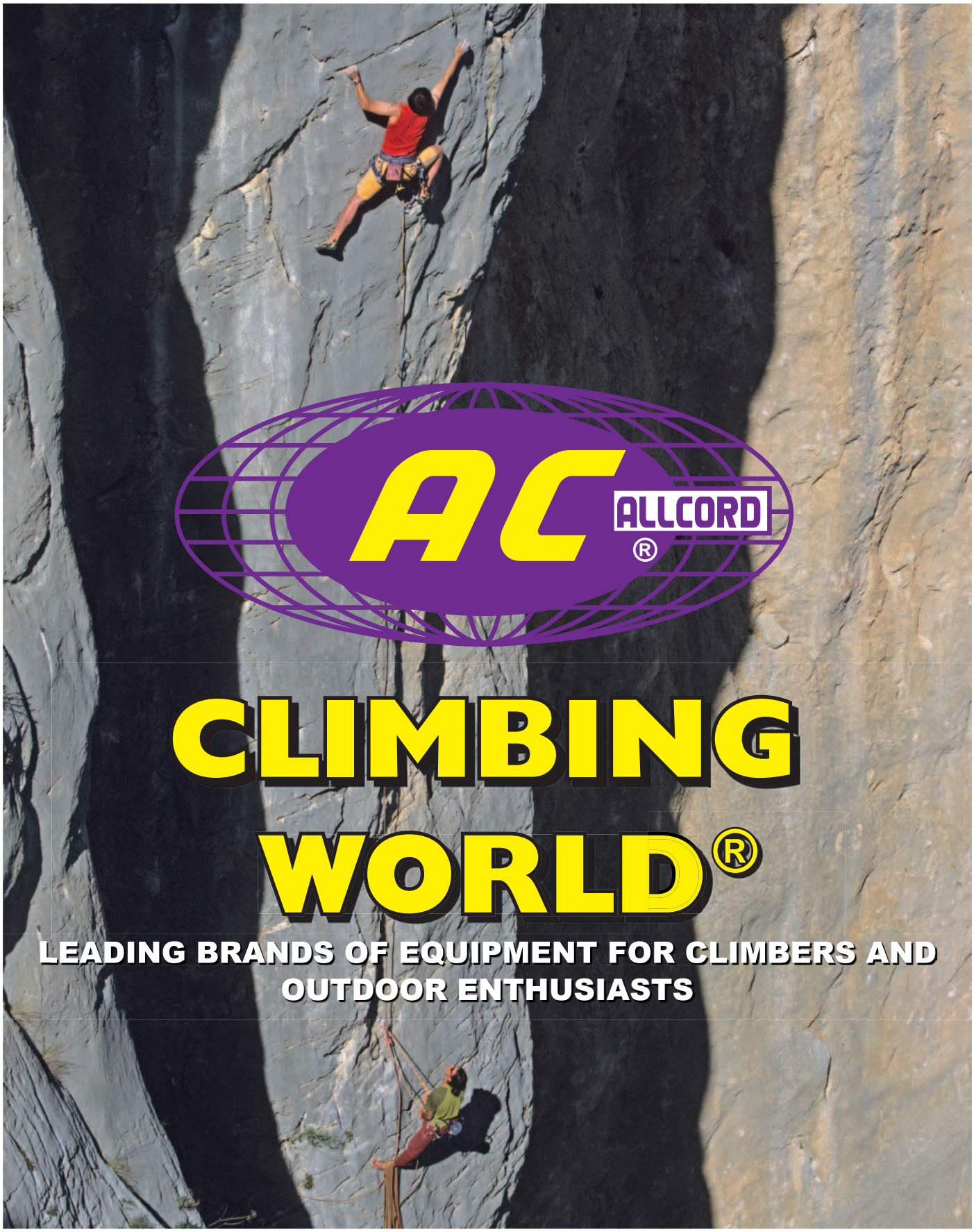
A while passed and finally we were talking beta, he was going to get on *Against the Grain*. A few tentative goes later and he was at the sloping rail, yet his body was too straight and it swivelled out away from the rock. Baby bouncer time. But it was straight back on for the Fly and he was up, poetry in motion. The fourth ascent and the first improvement on style, his ascents requiring nothing more than a little recce and a brush from adjacent routes without recourse to abseiling or pre-practice.

With his gear still in the bow shaped cracks, the attention turned to big brother and again after a measly four attempts he was legging it up the final cracks to the top. Jesus. The Lower Tier's big wall has been breached; its routes pocketed in a day by Leo Houlding. The talented Sheffield climber Pat King was bursting for a go. He tied on but the doors were closed, the *Thing on a Spring* wasn't ready for trade route status just yet, he wasn't even allowed a glimpse of the crux. Perhaps one day he, or someone else will return for the first fall-free ascent.

And so the story draws to a close. I still always pause to stare at this wall when I walk past and transport myself onto it, proud of my part in its history. The emotions flood back and keep me inspired, keep me climbing, keep me searching. The lichen may be growing over the holds once more, but the moves are still fresh in my mind, burned into my psyche like a favourite theme. The wall is now familiar, fashioned by a legend, matured into a myth, befriended by its local boys and finally coaxed back into reality. I don't imagine any routes will hold the same importance to me, they certainly haven't since. But at least I can keep seeking and returning to here - to sit beneath the Greatest Wall on Grit. ■

"The wall is now familiar, fashioned by a legend, matured into a myth, befriended by its local boys and finally coaxed back into reality."

Andi Turner is 25 ¾ and a BMC member. He lives in Leek in Staffordshire and was heavily involved with the latest BMC Roaches guide. He teaches at a local high school and is still finding inspiration in climbing in the Staffordshire region after seven years.



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Spellbound

Jeremy Cowen walks amongst the legends of South Tyrol.

Evening alpenglow warming the western walls of the Rosengarten (Catanaccio) and Vajolet Towers. All photos: Jeremy Cowen.

For the second time in as many months, I was standing at the feet of this giant, gazing at its unwieldy bulk. High above the picturesque village of Seis, the imposing form of the Schlern filled the southern skyline, overseeing all that lay in its shadows.

A complex citadel of limestone towers defined its lower limbs, thrusting upward towards the Santnerspitze, a dominant sentry guarding the shoulder of the summit plateau. Yet its full identity remained unseen; protective vertical armour shielding its head from sight whilst a cloak of cloud shrouded higher reaches, intermittently revealing new features, inviting the unwary to approach.

Dancing shadows over the Schlern (Sciliar) loom above the village of Seis.

Since the Middle Ages and beyond, the people of the Schlern region have held strong beliefs in supernatural forces. In such dominant surroundings, this is easy to understand. Here, recent history has failed to eclipse ancient mystique. Realignment of borders after the signing of the Treaty of Saint-Germain in 1919 had consigned South Tyrol to Italy, yet local Austrian traditions prevail. Local dress, music and cuisine is distinctive, whilst stories of witches and demons abound, passed down between generations, inextricably entwined in the lives of those living under the Schlern.

Seis nestles quietly on a shelf overlooking the Eisacktal valley, at the western end of the Dolomite chain. The regional capital of Bolzano, a short distance to the southwest, serves as a gateway into this heartland of South Tyrol. Although the local language is predominantly German, remnants of ancient Ladin dialect are still to be found. Indeed, the name Schlern is thought to derive from "Salara", a Ladin term for the flow of water, reference no doubt to the incessant trickles from the cliffs also known as "Schlernblut" (Schlern blood). The Italian name for the mountain is "Sciliar" and to compound the confusion, all local place names succumb to such double treatment. However, the region suffers no such crisis of identity as Tyroleans and quiet alpine villages blend into their mountain setting with ease.

Tales of the Schlern witches are well established in local folklore, now told to enchant and amuse. However, several hundred years ago, so strong was the belief in their presence and evil, that hundreds of women were rounded up and condemned to death, burned alive at the stake or drawn and quartered. Unexplained infant mortality and sinister murders of local priests were attributed to the witches, who were further accused of association with the devil and denunciation of Catholicism. Across Europe between the 15th and 18th centuries, countless numbers suffered the same fate with estimates ranging from 100,000 to several million.

A short distance from Seis lies the charming village of Völs am Schlern, where the Urgichten (interrogations) and burning of nine local women at the beautiful Prösels Castle early in the 16th century is well documented, thought to be one of the earliest such cases in South Tyrol. It is said that witches still control the weather. In the nearby town of Kastelruth, three witches in the form of birds will descend from the Schlern and circle the church tower three times prior to every storm. Formerly, at each end of the summit plateau, at Burgstall and Roterspitz, burnings and offerings would be made in an attempt to pacify the coven of witches gathering here at night to dance and plot.

Full of curiosity, the lure was irresistible, and I was soon wandering across the lush alpine pastures of the adjacent Seiser Alm to discover for myself the secrets that lay above. The Seiser Alm is the largest high alpine meadow in Europe, ablaze with colour in spring and summer, and bedecked with snow in winter to form one of the largest connected skiing areas in the world; a true playground for all seasons. From the Alm, the signature silhouettes of the Plattkofel (3181m) and Langkofel (2958m) loom to the east, whilst the incisive Rosszähne guard the horizon to the south, abutting the Schlern plateau. My

The Langkofel (Sassolungo - 3181m) and Plattkofel (Sassopiatto - 2958m) dominate the eastern horizon of the Seiser Alm.

intention was to spend a night upon the Schlern before traversing the ridge of the Rosszähne by means of the Maximilian Way via ferrata, then onto a circuit of the Plattkofel and Langkofel. Palatial mountain huts are conveniently scattered here, enabling light travel for those seeking adventure of varying ambition.

The trail meanders over a rolling landscape passing numerous farmers' huts, where fresh hay is gathered for winter. A veil of cloud enveloped the Santnerspitze and its twin peak, Euringer, yet for now stubbornly refused to yield. Steep switchbacks cut up a flank towards the desolate plateau, through forests of ground-hugging conifers. Colours flashed from the undergrowth, the late summer flora strained to absorb the emerging suns rays. After several hundred metres of ascent the angle relents and new horizons emerge. My eye was drawn to the Rosengarten (Catanaccio) chain in the southeast, standing proudly above thickly forested slopes which roll towards the Latemar "Stone Puppets" further south. To my right the mists parted to finally reveal Petz (2563m), the highpoint of the Schlern where a cross adorns the summit rocks, a warning perhaps to evil spirits lurking in wait of nightfall.

A short distance below the summit lies the Schlernhaus, or Rifugio Bolzano, a sturdy haven owned by the Italian Alpine Club, audaciously set on open slopes with commanding views of the Rosengarten. As the evening sun warmed the jagged limestone spires, I recalled the story of King Laurin who is said to have lived here with his loyal dwarves and Simhild, a kidnapped princess, amongst rose-filled meadows below. After seven long years, Simhild's location was traced. A battle ensued whereupon she was freed. King Laurin was ruined, mocked in captivity, yet finally managed to escape. Returning to his kingdom, weary of conflict and strife, King Laurin realised that the beauty of his realm had led to his demise, drawing Simhild's saviours to their quarry. Thus, he cast a spell over his garden of roses, turning it to stone, forever to be concealed from view during day and night. The spell was cast, however failed to hide the garden at dusk, which was neither day nor night. One can still see the alpenglow of the Rosengarten at sunset, as the rocks bathe in the fiery setting sun like glowing embers, a magnificent sight, whilst the sound of rockfall is said to betray the presence of dwarves amongst the cliffs.

At dusk I sat quietly on the Petz summit of the Schlern. Weakening blades of light struggled to pierce a distant curtain of cloud. Serene stillness surrounded the peak, as if frozen in time. The summit topography bore a strong resemblance to a volcanic crater, complex boulder fields tumbling into the caldera's unfathomable depths. Ghostly mists drifted in the golden twilight, casting dancing shadows on surrounding cliffs. As darkness fell the cool air sank slowly towards the valley floor, dragging the mists downward towards sleeping villages far below. Stars glistened overhead as I made my way along the crater rim and retreated into the warm glow of the Schlernhaus. Was there a haunting in those mists? I would never know.

Some days later, the walls of King Laurin's Rosengarten rose above me, still and frigid in the morning shade. An early chair lift from the Frommer Alm had deposited me at the

South Tyrol: Essential Info

How
All corners of the South Tyrol are within easy reach from Venice, Treviso, and Verona. Car hire (Hertz is discounted for BMC members) is simple. Many of the towns are linked with a free bus services connecting to chairlifts.

When
The walking season is late June to mid-September.

Maps
Maps are plentiful and produced by a number of companies. The Touring Club Italiano (TCI) produce useful 1:200,000 scale road maps of the wider area. The Istituto Geografico DeAgostini 1:250,000 Tre Venezie sheet serves the same purpose. For mountaineering use there are several main publishers, the most established of which are the Tabacco and Kompass series. However, the newer Bolzano produced Tappeiner series are of superior quality, provided with aerial photomaps and an overlaid grid, suitable for GPS users.

Guidebooks
Cicerone Press (www.cicerone.co.uk) publish a number of walking guidebooks to the area and their *Via Ferratas of the Italian Dolomites: Vol 1* (ISBN 1-85284-362-4) provides an excellent overview of some of the most popular via ferrata in the region. Many other guides are available in local shops, although mainly in German and Italian. Climbing is covered by the same guides as described in the climbing following on page 30 of this issue.

Language
In the Schlern region, German is the first language, although Italian is also spoken by younger generations. As ever, its advisable and polite, to arm oneself with some vocabulary beforehand.

Where
Five star camping is available in the tiny hamlet of St Konstantin, close to Völs. Details at www.camping-seiseralm.com. The villages of Völs, Seis and Kastelruth have a distinctly affluent feel to them - i.e. predominantly hotel accommodation.

For more information see www.suedtirol.info

The Schlernhaus (Rifugio Bolzano) is one of an extensive network of superb huts in the region.

Haunted mists at dusk from the Schlern summit.

Kölnerhütte, where climbers made last minute checks of route descriptions and kit before setting off in search of summits. I checked my watch and made haste up the initial rocks that would lead toward the famous Santnerpass via ferrata. A glance to my right identified the descent from the Tschagerjoch over which I would come a few hours later. On the western flank of this mountain wall white scree slopes soon gave way to a rising series of ledges weaving their way into the heart of the mountain, twisting through gullies and beneath spires, cable sections appearing with increasing frequency to protect the more exposed moves. Soon, the narrows steered sharply to the right above a precipitous drop to arrive at the unlikely flattening of the Santnerpass, beneath Punta Emma.

As the early sun warmed the ground, I chanced upon a summit book and left my mark, pausing to gaze westward to the Ortler Alps, home to some of the eighty 3000 metre peaks strewn across South Tyrol. Further north the Ötztaler Alps glistened where, on the 19th September 1991, two German mountaineers had stumbled upon the remains of a body lying in the ice near the Tisenjoch on the Austrian border. In the days that followed, the seemingly suspicious circumstances lead to the launch of a criminal enquiry. However, the ice refused to release its victim until four days later, by which time it had become apparent that circumstances were far from routine as suspicion gave way to intrigue. The grisly discovery turned into one of the world's most astonishing archaeological finds of the century. At the University of Innsbruck, an Austrian forensic team examined the body and the accompanying artefacts, performing the first of countless tests. Radio carbon dating established an estimated date of death between 3350BC and 3100BC, some 5300 years previously. This unprecedented find has helped to unravel anthropological mysteries of the region, and now forms the basis for a fascinating collection of related exhibits in the South Tyrol museum of Archaeology in Bolzano, where "Ötzi" now resides in a carefully controlled cold cell, visible to the public.

After a short break, I was on the move again, pausing below the stunning Vajolet Towers, shining as golden pillars set against a deep blue sky. Several parties were moving up the popular South West arête of the Delago tower as others prepared to descend, having made an early start from the nearby Gartlhütte, whilst guided parties arrived to lay claim to later ascents of the day. A path descends to the east towards the Rifugio Vaiolet in the Val di Fassa, where subtle clues point to a transition into more Italian territory. Turning right before the refuge, I traversed underneath the huge 600 metre eastern face of the Rosengarten where familiar chimes indicated the presence of climbers, barely visible, yet making steady progress on the 1929 Steger route. Vowing to return, I turned my back on the looming verticality and snaked my way up the zig zags to the Tschagerjoch before running down screes to complete the loop at the Kölnerhütte, concluding a memorable mountain day.

This picturesque corner of South Tyrol has much to offer all year round for those in search of adventure and relaxation alike. The Dolomite range forms just a part of the South Tyrolean character, which is defined by a unique landscape and eclectic mix of cultures and people. Should one ever find themselves in need of mountains of inspiration, these hills will not fail to provide. ■

BMC member Jeremy Cowen works as a Patent Examiner for the UK Patent Office, escaping to the mountains whenever possible. He's happiest crunching up frozen nevé on an alpine dawn.

Legendary Trails (Trekking delle leggende)

In the Trentino Dolomites, the majesty of the mountains is matched by the legends themselves: witches and fairies, elves and dwarves are still believed to haunt the peaks. But even without fairy dust, these legendary trails are compelling enough. Welcome to a walker-friendly circuit with easy access and inviting accommodation, which covers the **Val di Fiemme**, **Val di Fassa** and **Pale di San Martino** peaks.

"Trekking delle Leggende": the first walking circuit to unite the best classic high trails in the Trentino Dolomites.

- Total track length: 200 km
- Overall inclination: 16.000 m uphill
- 9 legs
- Possibility to reach your hotel at each leg via a dedicated transfer

Dates	Hotel**	Hotel***	Hotel****
10.06.-08.07. 02.09.-09.09.	€ 309,-	€ 337,-	€ 407,-
08.07.-22.07. 26.08.-02.09.	€ 330,-	€ 365,-	€ 465,-
22.07.-05.08. 19.08.-26.08.	€ 365,-	€ 386,-	€ 540,-
05.08.-19.08.	€ 435,-	€ 463,-	€ 610,-

Departure/Arrival: Saturday. Price per person in double room sharing.
2-night stay on request.
Price includes:
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For more information, please ask for **a free DVD of the "Legendary Trails/ Trekking delle leggende"** and find out more about these fantastic Dolomites trails.

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Feel the Forst

Do you crave big trad climbs? Do you want something that gives a real mountain day out, combining a sense of history, climbing variety and ever-changing vistas, yet all at the amenable grade of VS? If so, look no further - Craig Cook has the answer.

May the Forst be with you!
All photos: Craig Cook.

Imagine enjoying pitch after pitch of exquisite moves. Gradually making your way through majestic rock architecture via the occasional piece of historical protection - a relic of previous passage of so many hands and feet. Your solitude on these limestone towers only broken by the gentle tinkle of roaming cow bells across the lush green alpine meadows far, far below. It's everything a British adventure climber should want, but strangely Dolomite climbing seems to have fallen out of favour in recent years. So here to whet your appetite for the coming season are five classics to inspire, and a hearty dash of hard-won local knowledge.

Secret delights

It was a trip six years ago to tackle some of the sterner Via Ferrata that really opened my eyes to the jagged horizon of peaks here. These well-equipped iron-ways gave an introduction into the deceptive topography of the rock walls, first appearing vertical and unforgiving but in fact strewn with features; ledges, aretes, slabs and chimneys. I've returned each summer since, discovering the many delights within the Dolomites range, from the mighty Tre Cime di Lavaredo and secret Cadinspitzen in the east, to the more central, orange giants of the Tofana group overlooking Cortina. Then further west is the king-sized glacial Marmolada, the Cinque Torri playground and the twisting Sella Pass with its infamous three towers. And just a stone's throw away to the north, east and south of here stand the majestic peaks of the Val Gardena, Sassolungo and Catinaccio areas.

It's an immense playground popular with Austrian, German and Slovenian climbers, but pretty devoid of UK visitors. Perhaps an unjustified reputation for loose rock and hazardous descents, coupled with a general lack of English guidebook or magazine coverage puts people off. But where else can you recuperate après-climb at your hut or valley base with a glass of Forst, watching the sun set across today's route as you eagerly await the delights of fresh pasta and pizza emblazoned with the legendary speck ham?

Stepping through history

It is fair to say that for the most part, the climbs here are far from demanding by modern standards. Any modest VS climber with sound multi-pitch and/or alpine experience and the ability to move quickly over ground with minimum protection (apart from the in-situ pegs and plentiful natural thread and nut placements) will be in their true element. And treading in the footholds of legends such as Comici, Dibona, Trenker, Preuss and Dimai is an ultimate pleasure - they had a wondrous capability for unlocking passages through these peaks. Each line is rarely without a notorious crux pitch, which all too often keeps you wondering for the majority of the ascent until its arrival. But when it does, often at the point of no return, its usually quite amenable. We've got sticky rubber and advance protection to thank for that.

Five classics

Each spring I duly create a tick list of intended daily classics for that year, each route being worthy of a single trip alone. The lines ever enchanting; steep faces with pocketed holds, delicate airy traverses avoiding the major hurdles above, and juggy cracks and chimneys that always deposit you on welcome summits. So why not join me this year? Here are five classics, an introductory and progressive tick list for any future daring Dolomite debutant. Come on - what are you waiting for?

Piz Ciavazes, 2831m South Face, Little Micheluzzi route (IV+/V-)

A sunny introductory climb. Situated below the Sella Pass, Piz Ciavazes has a magnificent southern wall below its Chamois Terrace, or Gamsband, containing many classic lines. The Little Micheluzzi is just a 15-minute approach from the road, and has 8-9 pitches in its 300m height. The climbing is steady up to the steep, central wall which then offers UK 4b/c moves in exposed positions. Just as you get accustomed to it, you emerge onto the wide terrace and the busy road now seems far below as you take

Classic 2: The Thumb's broken ridge and subsidiary towers loom above the northern moraine below. Climbers: Mark Thrush and Raffaele Barbolini.

Don't forget your BMC reciprocal rights card, when checking into your next altitude

The excellently situated Langokel Hutte (CAI), on the side of the Sassolungo range of peaks.

The positive appearance of the good lady can often be found at various points on Dolomite routes - think of her as a reassuring waymark.

A spectacular evening sunset looking north into the Val Gardena from the Rifugio Vicenza.

Climbers on the 300m South face wall of Piz Ciavazes.

the spectacular hour-long traverse left along the terrace to abseil back to the roadside.

Punta Delle Cinque Dita, 2998m Thumb North Ridge Traverse (IV)

The fingered peak of Punta Delle Cinque Dita, with its Thumb and skyline North Ridge to the right.

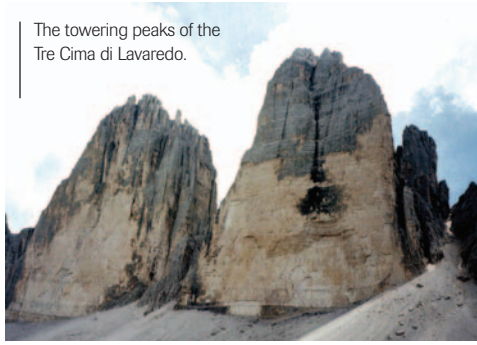
From the Sella Pass (2180m), your eastern horizon is filled by the majestic trio of peaks in the Sassolungo group. Two massive peaks stand astride of the dwarfed and central Punta Delle Cinque Dita, itself 3000m in height. The Cinque Dita (five fingers) is well named, as its north-south ridge is made of five proud rock towers. Your objective is the most singular of these towers, commonly known as the Thumb. Starting from the very doors of the delightful Toni Demetz Hut and its neighbouring cable car station, this provides over 250m of climbing. The climbing is quite amenable - at around UK 4a at its hardest moments - however the exposure is breathtaking with the northern snow-filled couloirs behind and the opening Marmolada glaciered vista in front. A summit gendarme is turned before you reach the final belay and a choice - to descend or continue to traverse the other four fingers.

Sasso Levante (Grohmannspitze), 3126m South Face, Dimai Route (IV)

Craig Cook makes his way through the Man Trap to access the upper cracks on Grohmannspitze's Dimai South face route.

Cinque Dita's big brother is the mighty Sasso Levante or Grohmannspitze. Its 500m south face towers over the town of Canazei and is our next classic tick. The hour and a half approach walk ensures solitude on this soaring, clean line. Its first ascent took over 18 years, before Antonio Dimai finally found a breakthrough to the overhanging roof sections - now forebodingly known as "The Man Trap". Again the climbing is consistent around the UK 4a/b grade. However there is a feeling of isolation and commitment, and it would be easy to become intimidated at times by the surrounding scenery, route finding, exposure, and long pitches with little protection other than ample threads. Once you've commenced the delicate hand traverse right to gain the infamous "Trappola Umana" there is a feeling of walking the plank - much like on our very own Tower Gap. With modern peg protection the bark is worse than the bite but you still only have just passed halfway and will need to keep your foot firmly on the gas as once you reach the summit the descent is as committing, exposed and not obvious. In fact I recall that oblivion was lurking at the end of each rappel. Keep focussed until you reach the col with Cinque Dita and finally make the couloir descent in search of carbohydrate overload in the valley.

Cima Grande, 2999m South Face, Normal Route (III)



The towering peaks of the Tre Cima di Lavaredo.

The Tre Cima di Lavaredo or Drei Zinnen group is a legendary set of peaks. They protrude from the moraine like huge molars, each with a chillingly overhanging north face. However for us lesser mortals there is still plenty of opportunity, none more so than the magnificent South Face of Cima Grande. With over 450m of ascent incorporated into 20+ pitches, this route although tame in grade at HVD should not be under estimated, and a first light start is highly recommended. Depending on your confidence much of the route can be either soloed or you can move together to save on the clock. Anyone attempting to pitch all 20+ pitches is likely to have a torrid time and get caught up in the descending traffic too. But a confident approach will pay dividends and ensure you have plenty of time to take in the summit panorama before retracing your steps for tea and medals in the hazy afternoon sun.

Gran Piz da Cir, 2592m South East Ridge, Demetz Route (V+)

The first four classics could be called obvious, but even to seasoned regulars my final candidate may be unknown - it's a real hidden gem. It's unlike any of the previous routes and I only discovered it when our tick list plans were abandoned last September when a massive dump of snow left us freezing under the Vajolet Towers. We needed to find sub-2700m routes and fast, so ended up running north to the Gardena Pass with a sample copy of the new Alpine Club Dolomites guidebook to defrost on a few Via Ferratas. There we saw the impressive

The crux overhanging niche of the Demetz Route is well protected by in-situ pegs.

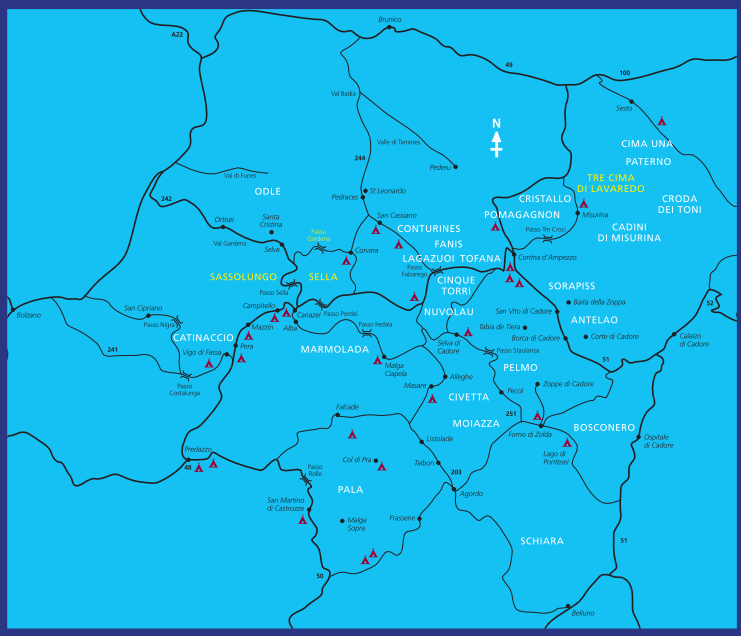
Gran Piz da Cir, the daddy of this range and we sat below it, feeling the need. It's an impressive peak with a subsidiary tower on its south east ridge and later that afternoon we found a topo lurking in a souvenir shop - our destiny was set. The route gets going from the off with steep crack climbing to belay under an overhanging canopy. The crux is then clear to see - a well-pegged overhanging niche offering a break right in the roof. A bold approach is required (UK 5a moves, worse case A0), then you're free, confronted with good holds up a steep wall to the top of the tower above. A short 15m abseil then deposits you off the tower and beneath the 250m summit headwall, the climbing is again steep and at times intimidating, but good holds and protection abound. Before long you're in the swing of things as the huge summit iron cross comes into view, and it's time for a rather more gentle cable-protected descent home.

So when you're racking your brains for your next summer rock adventure, don't overlook the Dolomites. Make that long overdue trip and let your dreams rekindle themselves. Just remember to "feel the Forst", and always "respect the Speck". See you out there. ■

BMC member Craig Cook is a creative and marketing professional. As one of the next generation of members of the Alpine Club (AC), Craig used his design skills to assist with the newly published AC Dolomites East/West guidebook and is currently working on a selected Alps 4000m peaks guide. Contact him at craigc@thoughtcom.com.

How

Northern Italy is well served by the likes of easyJet and Ryanair, and sometimes cheap charter flights. Head for the east (Treviso and Venice) or the west (Milan-Bergamo, Brescia and Verona). Hire a car (not that cheap, Hertz as good as any) and it's usually a 2-3 hour drive to your chosen destination. For longer trips you could drive from the UK (approximately 12 hours).



When

The season is late June to mid-September depending on the area, altitude and the previous winter's snowfall. However some ranges hold snow on approaches and in couloirs most of the summer. August is the peak Italian holiday period, but later in the month things ease off and it can be an ideal time to enjoy routes.

Where

Italy must boast some of the best accommodation at altitude, and whether you use the private hotel-like huts or the Italian Alpine Club (CAI) refuges you'll not be disappointed. Most offer a menu to rival your local restaurant, draught beer, and a truly welcoming greeting. The extensive hut network allows you to climb routes and then traverse to another hut within most areas. Camping is available although you'd be advised to book in advance since sites are scarce.

Guidebooks

The lack of English language guidebooks has probably been instrumental in the decline in the Dolomite's popularity, however this has been solved with:

The Dolomites West & East, Ron James, The Alpine Club.
A definitive two volume selected guide.
ISBN 0-900523-65-4.

Classic Dolomite Climbs
A perfect companion to the AC guide. Translated from the original German. ISBN 1-898573-34-4.

Both these guides are available in the BMC online shop.

Local guide Mauro Bernardi has also created two outstanding colour volumes in his Dolomiti series, one for Cortina and one for Val Gardena. Although only available in Italian and German they are quite simple to interpret, see www.val-gardena.com/maurobernardi. There are also a number of locally available guidebooks covering trad and sport, most with English sections. See and www.loboedition.de.

Grades

If unfamiliar with the Alpine/UIAA grading system, the grades can be a little confusing. In essence, Dolomite climbing requires steady progress with protection being taken when available, sometimes this can be just a handful of pieces in a 50m pitch. Comparison to UK traditional grades cannot be exact however a grade V route should be ideal for the VS 4c leader and a grade IV route applicable to the S 4a leader. Generally the "half-an-hour-per-pitch" rule will stand you in good stead, so start off within your limits before you get the measure of things.

Gear

You need to move quickly so streamline your rack. A good set of nuts is essential, perhaps supplemented with some smaller tricams for water worn pockets. Good threads are the staple protection on most routes, so you'll require a selection of thin slings. Most crux moves and belays have pegs but leave the sport draws at home and opt for some of the extendable variety. Double ropes would seem sensible especially for the abseil descents, but personally I've found a single, thin 60m rope to be ideal. Rarely are the abseils more than 25-30m at a time and most of the ascent lines are pretty direct. You'll also need your helmet, head torch and a comfortable pair of rock shoes. You will be carrying a rucksack, so a water bladder is essential to keep hydrated on the move, and we've found that small walkie-talkies save a lot of time in communication. Finally, a lightweight shell jacket helps to beat the breeze the higher you get.

Supplies

The larger villages often have supermarket stores, while most towns will have gear shops offering most of your wants. Huts and refuges usually offer souvenirs, postcards, snacks, maps and some guides.

Pure Chemistry

What makes the Dolomites so special? Local Giovanni Benedetti gives an Italian point of view.

The moody Vajolet towers. Photo: Giovanni Benedetti.

"So what is it all about?" he asked. I stared at him for few seconds, wondering whether that question could ever have an answer - "it's all in the carbonates."

The story began so many centuries ago that even your epics on the seventeen pitches of the Catinaccio East Face would feel like a whisper compared to it. Believe it or not, all this was once a calm, immense sea, these mountains its own personal reef. Then the sea dried up and calcium and magnesium carbonate began their long struggle for dominance.

But your organic chemistry book won't tell you why your gear sits so sweetly in the cracks up the awesome Cima Piccola di Lavaredo - which with its two bigger sisters has been a test bench for so many climbers before you. And you could read piles of physics reviews but none will convince you that those tiny, oh so tiny spikes you find on the Pelmo all the way up to the Ball's ledge will hold your fall. But you know they will. That's the reason why, under the vigilant gaze of a crouching Civetta (owl) you keep climbing on, until the summit ridge.

When you touch it you don't get this, do you, the magnesium and the calcium, and their eternal fight for supremacy. All you feel today, when you put your hands on the first pitch of the Delago Tower in the Vajolet triptych, is pure balance. A balance between beauty and struggle, gravity and lightness. Between fear and will.

And that's the key. That's where this whole adventure begins: the split second when you decide to pick up the challenge. Just look at the Sella massif. In its motionless immensity it seems to mock you, because you know that fortress won't be conquered so easily, those towers are there for a reason. "That's why we're here," you tell yourself, "to bring down the monster. No matter what it takes." And it will take a lot, more than you could ever imagine.

But as you walk down Passo Sella, where tonight at dusk these valleys will meet again, like they have been doing for centuries, carrying the last few rays of a dying sunset, you breathe in all the crisp, electric air and realize how lucky you are, being here now, side by side with these silent giants who will always be preparing new epic journeys for you.

And when you set off on these rocks, be aware that like all true stories in life, there's also tragedy and desperation, and these mountains demand you to respect that. If you stop for a second, maybe you'll see the blood of so many young Alpinos, the soldiers from the Alpine Regiment who fought our wars on these mountains, dragging whole disassembled guns in their packs up and down the Marmolada, giving their lives to conquer the Col U of the Croda Rossa. They were our grandfathers, and their fathers.

"When your granny came back after the war was over, I didn't want anything to remind me of those terrible months, waiting for him. That's why I threw his uniform away." Even his hat. She dumped even the hat, the thing an Alpino is more proud of than anything.

"Sul cappello che noi portiamo,
On the hat that we wear
c'e' una lunga penna nera,
there's a long black feather,
che a noi serve da bandiera,
which is a flag to us,
su pei monti a guerreggiar"
up on the mountains where we wage war...

But I guess that not even the fiercest war could take away from those men what these mountains give you. Some call it tranquility, some sense of immensity, some pure beauty. I call it magic. The Sassolungo, for instance. The legend has it that it was a mischievous giant who was laid underground by his exasperated fellows, and nowadays only his head and right hand stand out of the ground. And when you climb up and down the route of the Cinque Dita [Five Fingers] you just can't help wondering whether or not he deserved this.

So maybe it's not all about carbonate after all, maybe it's the chemical and emotional perfect mix of all these elements that create the skin of these old trembling companions, whose souls will live on for many, many centuries to come. ■

Raichle
OF SWITZERLAND

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There's no getting away from it – mountaineering is a pricey sport and with safety and comfort at stake there's no room to take short cuts on equipment purchases.

So we've partnered up with two leading boot specialists at key mountaineering locations: V12 in Snowdon and West Coast in Ben Nevis to offer you the chance to try before you buy.

Starting: 1st February 2006
Hire from V12 or West Coast a pair of Raichle mountaineering boots and put them through their paces. If you decide to buy them we'll refund your hire cost.

With prices of Raichle mountaineering boots ranging from £130 – £600 it is essential that the boots are thoroughly tested, you'll have plenty of opportunity to do that on the mountains.

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HELP

Every year thousands of you take the same phone number abroad. A number we hope you never have to call - Assistance International. But what exactly are they, and what do they do? Tina Gardner does a recce.

A helicopter heading into Torquassak Fjord, Southern Greenland to rescue an injured climber. He was insured - are you? Photo: Alex Messenger.

Insurance may not be the most enthralling of subjects, but Fortis Insurance in Eastleigh, Hampshire arguably bucks the trend. The phones ring hot in the Assistance International office - Fortis' own in-house 24-hour medical emergency helpline - and multi-lingual staff work around the clock co-ordinating logistics for those in medical strife.

BMC members take out a whole variety travel insurance policies each year, and last year about a thousand of those ended up with claims. Of these, about 20% were medical emergencies such as broken bones, altitude sickness or mountain falls, and it's these cases that show the real reach of our policies. If the worst does happen on the other side of the world - it's time to ring the emergency number on your policy card.

You'll end up speaking to one of a team of 15 co-ordinators, all trained to the same level so they can deal with any situation, day or night, all year round. They are part of a truly international operation; clocks around the office walls show the times in different countries around the world and whiteboards list policyholders being treated in hospitals worldwide. On the day I visited Fortis there was just one BMC member's name up on the board - someone from a trekking party who was taken ill on the Annapurna circuit and required a helicopter rescue to a hospital in Kathmandu.

There is a busy yet calm vibe in the office. The staff are recruited at graduate level and they are usually fluent in at least two languages. The

About BMC Insurance

The BMC offers a range of five policy options, covering leisure, travel, gap year, hill walking, trekking, climbing, skiing and mountaineering activities. For instant cover apply online at www.bmc.co.uk or call us on 0870 010 4878.

The Policies

TRAVEL
Cover for individuals or family members who are not participating in any sports but require basic medical, travel and baggage cover.

TREK
Includes all activities in TRAVEL plus: Hill walking, trekking, backpacking and scrambling.

ROCK
Includes all the activities in TRAVEL and TREK plus: Rock climbing and bouldering on outdoor crags (including the use of leader-placed gear and all forms of fixed equipment). And the use of indoor climbing walls (leading and bouldering).

ALPINE & SKI
Includes all the activities in TRAVEL, TREK and ROCK plus: All forms of skiing including piste, off-piste, telemark, nordic, downhill, touring and snowboarding, and snow and ice climbing in non-expedition alpine mountains.

EXPEDITIONS
Includes all activities in TRAVEL, TREK, ROCK and ALPINE & SKI plus all mountaineering activities including climbs and expeditions to remote and inaccessible glacial regions and difficult or high altitude peaks anywhere in the world. ■

three most senior staff have over 60 years of experience in the field between them, so you can rest assured they've seen it all. Whatever your accident or illness, they'll know the best way to organise medical assistance or, where required, repatriation. Karen Barnes, Controller of Claims and Assistance heads up the office. She's seen pretty much everything she says, "there's a great deal of variety – from holidaymakers with gastroenteritis to calls via sat phone from Everest."

Out of the office there's a worldwide network of agents, and Wings Medical Service in Bristol who supply the specialist medical advice. Karen explains, "we work around the clock, organising rescues and repatriation, liaising with doctors, keeping track of the patient's progress, booking new flights and making payments for medical treatments, transport and accommodation. We see to it that all patients receive the medical treatment they need as soon as possible."

Assistance International works closely with airlines and has built up a detailed knowledge of small variations so they can get you home quickly. For example, some airlines won't let you fly for six weeks after a heart attack, and British Airways no longer accommodates stretchers. And it's not just medical repatriation, policyholders who need to return immediately for a medical emergency at home also benefit.

One BMC member who has had his fair share of contact with Assistance International is expedition organiser Dave Lucas. In 2003, Dave suffered a

BMC Travel Insurance Q&A

Q: Do I really need insurance?
A: No, but if you have an accident, need helicopter rescue, or medical help abroad and don't have insurance you could be faced with a massive bill. In addition, the speed of having an insurer sort out your medical help can make a huge difference.

Q: When do I call Assistance International?
A: Only call the medical emergency helpline when it's a real emergency and you or the person you are calling on behalf of needs medical attention. If you've lost your skis or need to cancel your flight then call the claims department instead. Assistance International's time and expertise is best spent helping those with medical emergencies.

Q: What's the situation with E111/EHIC?
A: At the start of this year the European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) replaced the E111. The EHIC is normally valid for 3-5 years and entitles you to reduced cost medical treatment because of either illness or an accident while you're in a European Economic Area (EEA) country or Switzerland. The EEA consists of the European Union (EU) countries plus Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway. The card gives access to state-provided medical treatment only and you'll be treated on the same basis as an "insured" person living in the country you're visiting. Remember, this might not cover all the things you'd expect to get free of charge from the NHS in the UK. For further information on EHICs, eligibility and to apply for a card online see www.ehic.org.uk.

Q: Do I need to get an EHIC even if I have BMC cover?
A: It makes sense to have an EHIC as this could help speed things up if you need medical assistance. Having an EHIC also helps to keep premiums low as Assistance International won't have to apply for one on your behalf in an emergency.

Q: I'm only travelling in Europe, do I need BMC Insurance even if I have an EHIC?
A: The EHIC usually covers in-patient hospital costs in the EEA but it isn't going to get you home. The EHIC doesn't cover any additional costs such as rescue, accommodation or new flights, plus in some countries you would still have to pay for a percentage of medical bills. So it's well worth having insurance both for your peace of mind and your bank balance. ■

Behind the scenes at the Fortis HQ. From L-R: International clocks and boards keep track of incidents around the world, the office building, Paul Martin, Manager for Special Risks Underwriting, and Alice one of the coordinators takes a call. All photos: Tina Gardner.

bad deep muscle tear as a result of a rockfall while he was climbing a new route in Guatemala. The initial injury wasn't too bad but due to the lack of local emergency care an infection set in - after a local doctor had sewed up his wound.

Dave explained, "When I went back to get it checked out, the local doctor refused to say it was infected. So I called the Assistance International who put me on to one of their doctors. They trusted my word and arranged for me to fly to Mexico, where the rest of my expedition group had moved to, so that I could get suitable medical care. They flew my girlfriend too as my insurance covered the transport required for a companion."

In such a case, Assistance International would liaise closely with the doctors at Wings. If repatriation was involved, experts in aviation medicine would also decide whether it was safe for someone with certain medical conditions to go in an aircraft, what effect the increased pressure in the cabin would have on the body, and whether they might need extra oxygen.

In Dave's case, the doctors were happy for him to fly to Mexico but not to fly long haul back to the UK until after he had received proper medical attention. Dave said, "During my two weeks in hospital, Assistance International kept in touch with me daily until I was fully discharged. They even sent a nurse to accompany me on the flight back to the UK and I got to fly First class to keep my leg elevated, minimising

the risk of clots."

Dave still takes out the worldwide expedition cover and recommends it to everyone on his expeditions too. "I've got BMC Insurance to thank for saving my leg. I've heard so many scare stories about people who haven't had insurance. It's careless not to have it, especially if you're climbing. Otherwise I'd have had to fork out £21,000 for just two accidents - neither of them needed long-term care."

Back in the office, when the emergency is over and a patient has been discharged from hospital their name is wiped off the whiteboard and the red folder containing all their details is passed upstairs to the claims department to be processed. And although Assistance International will keep in touch with the patient regularly while being treated, what the clients don't see is the network of agents on the ground constantly working to make sure they get the best deals - a cost containment that is in turn reflected in the premiums.

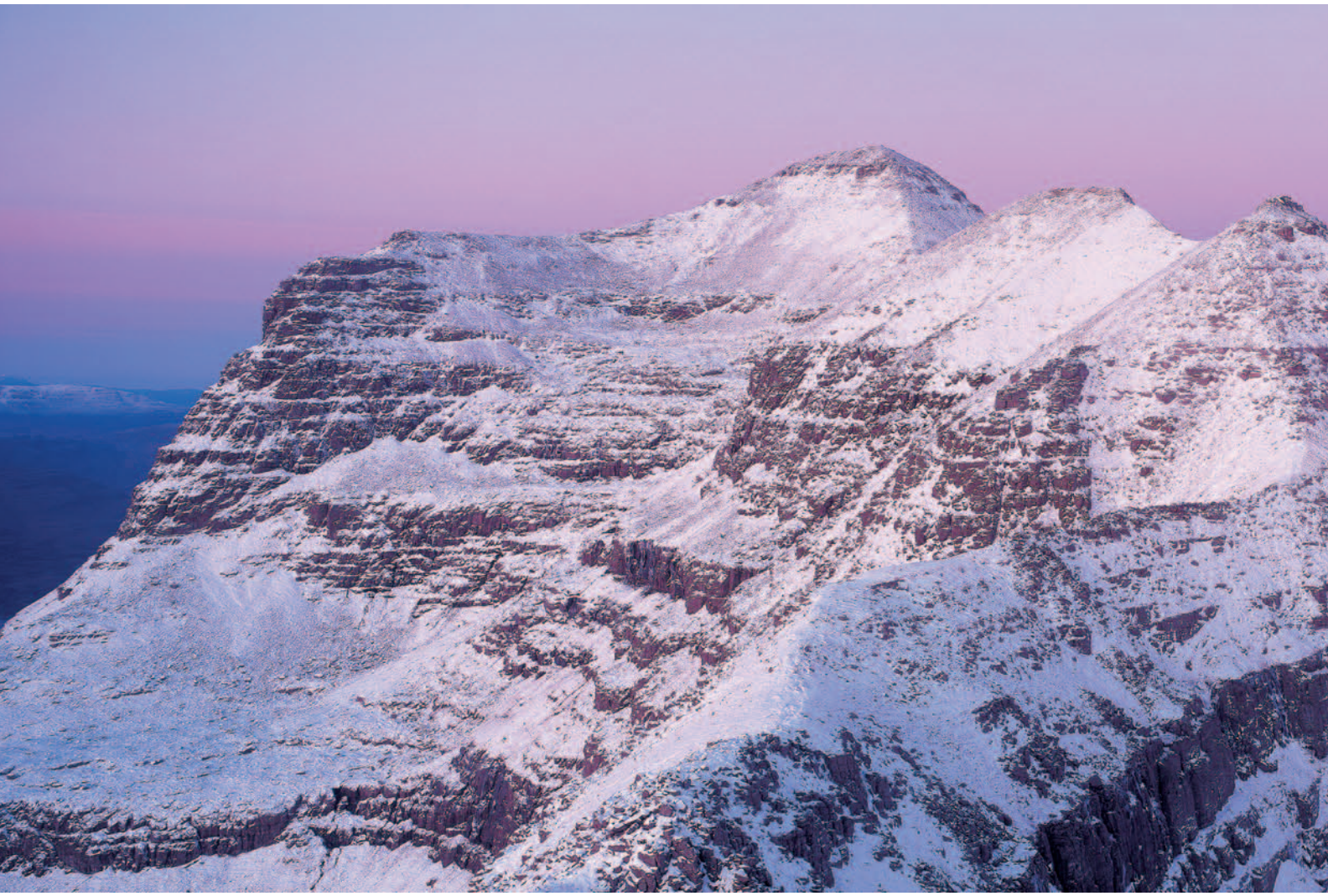
Paul Martin, Manager for Special Risks Underwriting at Fortis explained, "Fortis have acted as underwriters for BMC travel insurance for last five years so we've a good understanding of the specialist cover required by BMC members and offer a range of policies to suit. We're constantly working with the BMC to secure the best premiums for their customers and this year the premiums have actually decreased."

Ray Perry, insurance guru at the BMC office, is enthusiastic about what he sells to members on a daily basis too, "A lot of people don't recognise how special our policies are and just how much they cover. For instance the Rock policy has no restriction on experience, nor any special requirements for soloing, and our Expedition policy has no limitations for route or height. You'd be hard pushed to match that anywhere else."

So this summer, no matter where you're heading or what adventures you've got planned, if you've taken out BMC Travel and Activity Insurance then pack that phone number somewhere safe. And if you've got a problem, if a situation arises where you need emergency medical assistance - you know who you're gonna call. ■

Tina Gardner is the BMC Press and PR Officer. Contact her at tina@thebmc.co.uk.
Thanks to Dave Lucas - see www.verticalworld.co.uk.

Rescue can be an expensive business. For example, here in Greenland there aren't dedicated rescue helicopters - airline ones are used instead. So your bill would include the cost of alternate arrangements for all the original passengers. Photo: Alex Messenger.



Don't fight the light

For artists, light and landscape have always held an irresistible allure. In part two of his inspirational series for Summit, Colin Prior turns to lighting and how to capture it in photographs. All photos by Colin Prior.

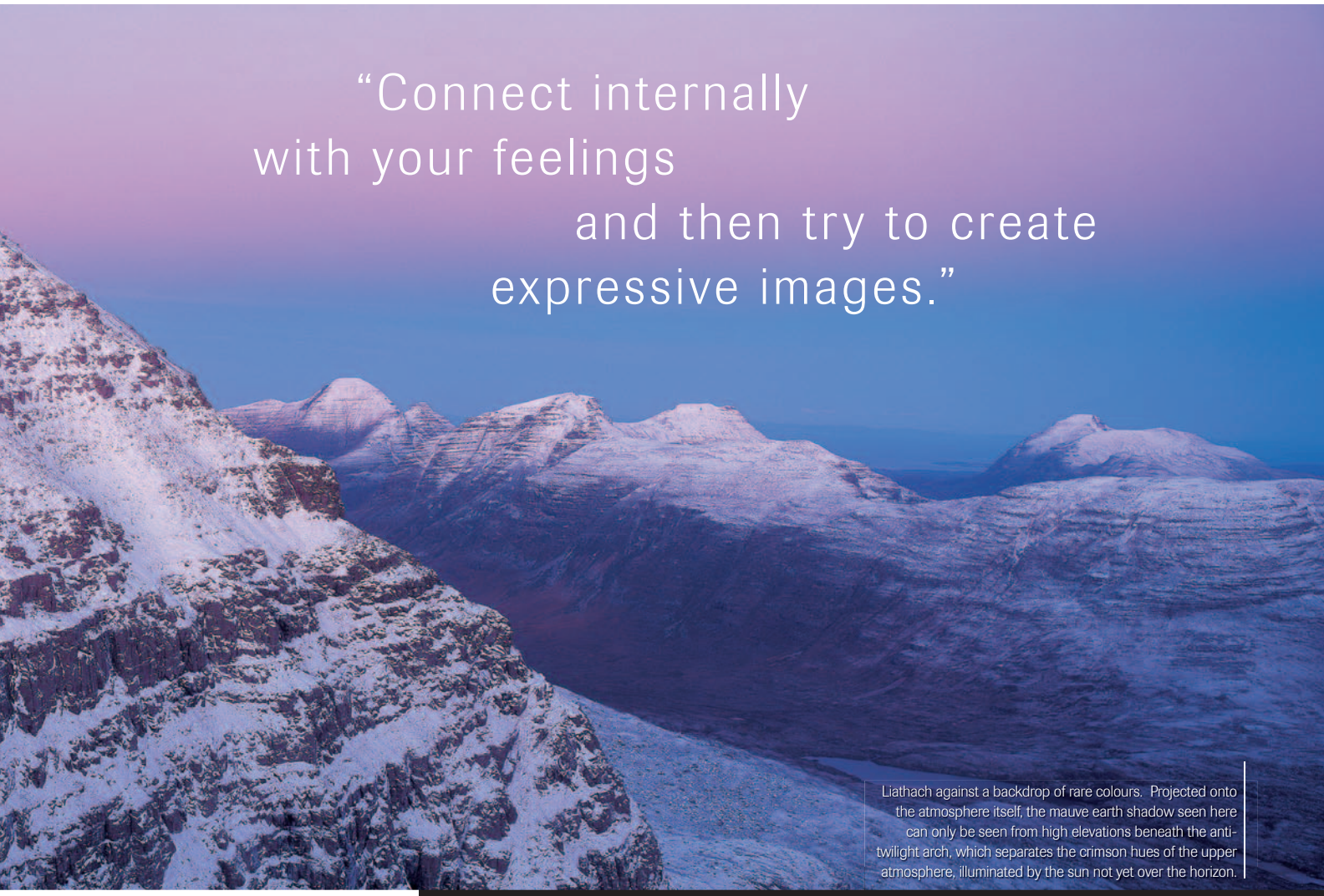
With the best intentions, people will often tell me about places where there is a "great picture" waiting for my camera. What they, and even my closest fiends, fail to grasp is that I never simply go out to photograph a particular place - what I am after is the light itself.

Location is certainly one aspect of an image over which you have control. And it is critical, but it's only the raw material, the starting point for a great image. The skill is in understanding the interplay of light and shadow on the landscape and understanding just when it will make a compelling photograph. "Easy,' you may say, 'it's at dusk and dawn when the sun is low, and the sky and the light is warmer." But when exactly? In November, March or June? Seasonal differences in the sun's position at sunrise and sunset will have a very significant effect on how the light affects the landscape.

In general terms, we know that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west, and that the hours of daylight during the summer months are greater than those during the winter. Although this might seem obvious, I've found that people's understanding of why this phenomenon occurs is all but non-existent. It's remarkable that something so fundamental to our everyday life is understood by so few - the subject appears to be surrounded with the same aura of mystery as that normally reserved for religious beliefs. However, of course, there is a simple, logical explanation - see our handy info box opposite.

Fully grasping the position of the sun at dusk and dawn is crucial to achieving successful landscape photographs. You'll also need to look at the geography of the landscape itself to decide if it will benefit from being shot at dusk or dawn. And note the variation of shadow length, cast by the sun at the zenith, during the year. Shooting at sunrise in mid-summer is always a short-lived affair as the sun climbs rapidly on an incline creating conditions not suited to landscape photography. But in mid-winter however when the sun follows such a low arc in the sky, it's a very different story.

But some of it will be out of your control. In Scotland, due to the



"Connect internally with your feelings and then try to create expressive images."

Liathach against a backdrop of rare colours. Projected onto the atmosphere itself, the mauve earth shadow seen here can only be seen from high elevations beneath the anti-twilight arch, which separates the crimson hues of the upper atmosphere, illuminated by the sun not yet over the horizon.

northerly latitude, the sun from mid-November through to mid-February is simply too low to illuminate many of the mountain ranges. An in some of the lochs such as Loch Torridon and Loch Maree, the sun never climbs high enough to illuminate their south sides, which remain in shadow all day. This doesn't mean that it's impossible to shoot good photographs during these months but it is likely that your expectation of how the landscape will look will be very different from the way it reveals itself during these winter months. Ultimately, it is experience that will guide you to a specific location at certain times of the year.

Last autumn, during a spell of fine weather, I travelled to Torridon in the Scottish Highlands, intent on photographing one or two of the images, which I have pre-visualised for some time. For as many years as I can remember, I have thought about photographing Liathach at dawn from its eastern ridge of Stuc a Choire Dhuibhb Bhig. The image I had visualised after my first ascent required the pyramidal peak to be covered in snow and be illuminated by

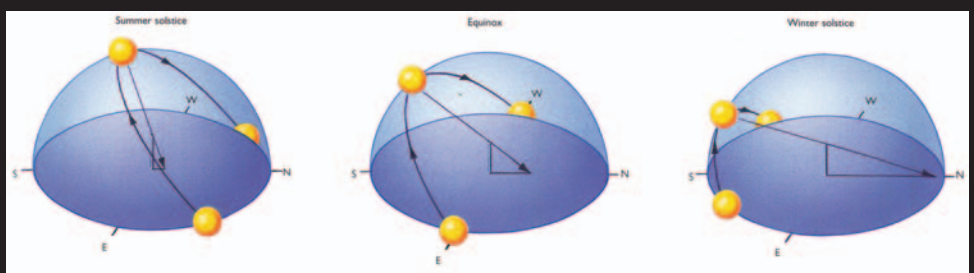
Celestial Circles

I find the variation in the sun's position throughout the celestial calendar constantly amazing. It also has a tremendous impact on my photography.

Seasonal changes occur because the earth's axis of rotation is tilted at 23.5 degrees to the plane of its orbit around the sun. And as the sun's position in relation to the earth appears to travel along the ecliptic (the imaginary line along which the sun orbits) it appears to be above the equator for one half of the year, producing the northern summer and below the equator for the other half (northern winter), so crossing the equator twice in a year. The **equinoxes** (from the Latin for "equal night") occur at the times when the sun's ecliptic is crossing the plane of the equator, and day and night are of equal length. In the northern hemisphere the vernal or spring equinox occurs in March as the sun is moving northwards along the ecliptic, with the autumnal equinox in September as the sun is moving southwards.

Midway between the equinoxes come the **solstices**. This is when the sun is at its furthest from the celestial equator - the projection of the earth's equator onto the sky. In the northern hemisphere, the winter solstice is the time when the sun reaches its southernmost distance from the celestial equator and is the day when the sun appears lowest in the sky at noon - the shortest day of the year. The summer solstice occurs around the 21st June and the winter solstice around 21st December with the precise times varying on a 400 year cycle.

Remember that while the equinoxes and solstices provide precise dates for the beginning of each season, they do not exactly correspond with the regular seasonal transformations of the landscape.



Path of the sun across the sky at different times of the year as viewed from Scotland

"I had to deliberately put myself in harm's way. It's ironic but I experienced a strange excitement, a heightening of the senses as I climbed up this wild mountain in darkness."

the pink light of dawn. I estimated that conditions would be optimal in late October or early November.

I left late in the afternoon, around 3.30 as the cloud began to dissipate. Liathach is a steep climb over exposed ground and I walked the last ninety minutes in the circular beam of my head torch. I distinctly remember my feelings of relief when I realised I was on the open ground just below the summit, having completed the exposed scramble to the high ground. Once on the ridge, I could see Torridon brightly illuminated by the full moon - in a word, it was awesome.

I quickly set about erecting my lightweight tent on the narrow summit ridge and securing the guys around boulders where there was four inches of snow. Notwithstanding the temperature, which I estimated to be around -20 with the effect of wind chill, the evening passed uneventfully, if not decidedly cool. As I unzipped the tent door the following morning - half expecting to be engulfed in cloud, conditions looked perfect. I was set up well before the sun rose and managed to shoot Liathach against a backdrop of rare colours. Projected onto the atmosphere itself, the mauve earth shadow can only be seen from high elevations beneath the anti-twilight arch, which separates the crimson hues of the upper atmosphere, illuminated by the sun not yet over the horizon. As the sun rose and illuminated the mountain, I made a series of images with differing intensities of pink light before it normalised in colour temperature.

The personal satisfaction of finally achieving an image, which had essentially existed in my mind's eye for years, cannot be understated. It's a strange combination of pre-visualisation, of planning, of preparedness, both mentally and in equipment terms and of overcoming many of our instinctive fears, which are essentially based on survival. In order to achieve what I wanted, I had to deliberately put myself in harm's way. It's ironic but I experienced a strange excitement, a heightening of the senses as I climbed up this wild mountain in darkness. By the time I had returned to the car the following day, I felt content that I'd successfully achieved the photographs I'd been after for so long.

If this all sounds a bit daunting when all you really want to do is go out and take photographs, there is another path and one which I am finding more appealing. It does not negate the approach already discussed, which is

Another view of Liathach as it changes through the seasons. Getting in sync with nature will dramatically improve your photography.

essential if you plan to make definitive statements about certain areas, but it is a quieter approach and one that I'd suggest to any photographer working outdoors. Simply immerse yourself in an area - you don't need to walk huge distances, just sit down, listen and observe and try to make some connection with the land. A friend of mine maintains that you don't get to know a mountain unless you have slept on it, a fact with which I concur. Connect internally with your feelings and then try to create expressive images, which visually summarise your feeling about the place.

In my early years I was drawn to the work of Peter Dombrovskis, a talented landscape photographer who lived and in Tasmania. Peter worked primarily with a large format camera and was influenced by the work of Ansel Adams, Brett Weston and Elliot Porter. On the 28th March 1996 while photographing the Western Arthur Range in Tasmania's remote southwest, the land he loved and which his work did so much to save, Peter died from a massive heart attack. But his work lives on, as does his legacy and I would commend his own approach to landscape photography, which he gave in an interview a year before his death:

"Finding things to photograph is more to do with one's state of mind rather than the particular environment in which you happen to be. My most productive days are when I move through the landscape with an attitude of acceptance - of leaving myself open to all possibilities rather than expecting to find anything in particular. At best, this intuitive, dream-like wandering may lead to what one may call a state of grace, a sense of spiritual connection with all around, from the wide landscape to the smallest detail".

- Peter Dombrovskis 1995 ■

Colin Prior is one of the world's leading conservation photographers, celebrated for his images of wild places. His work has appeared in books, calendars and exhibitions around the world. Over the last decade he has journeyed more than a million miles photographing both the animals and the landscapes of the world's last wild places.

His distinctive images reflect his own passionate quest to understand the complex relationship between mankind and the environment. In his most recent project, Colin has spent the last four years travelling to over thirty countries, documenting the unique habitats in some of the world's wild places, a project which will culminate in a book and exhibition in Autumn 2006. He is a founding member of International League of Conservation Photographers.

See www.colinprior.co.uk for more details.

Deadvlei, Namib-Naukluft National Park, Namibia

Competitions '06

Graeme Alderson reports back from the world of climbing competitions.

Climb '06: Naomi Buys (GBR) tussling with a plastic problem. All photos: Alex Messenger.

The British Climbing Team had a great start to the season at the North Face UIAA-ICC Bouldering World Cup, hosted once more at the Ordnance Survey Outdoor Show in Birmingham. Admittedly it couldn't quite live up to the highlight of 2005 - when Mark Croxall cranked to victory and won the first World Cup of the season in front of a screaming crowd, but then, what would?

The packed crowd of dedicated beanie wearers, hill walkers and the generally bemused public weren't disappointed though. As ever the garish coloured walls were a dramatic stage for the world's strongest beasts to bone down on, and there were some great performances from the Brits.

Climb '06: Audrey Seguy (USA).

Andy Earl had a fine start to his year, getting through to the final and placing a very respectable sixth overall. Gaz Parry, Ryan Pasquill and Kate Mills also all made it through into the semi-finals. But international competition veterans Jerome Meyer (FRA) and Olga Bibik (RUS) took the honours, and the first cups of the year.

The rest of the show went down a treat too. Although I must admit I was too busy getting stressed in front of the competition wall to trawl the retails stands, or check out the big-name lecturers. Plans are already afoot for Climb'07, with a greater emphasis on climbing related talks in the BMC's Mountain Theatre. Put the date in your diary now - 16 - 17th March 2007.

It's no rest for the Team either, they've a busy year ahead. The Bouldering Team have a very intense season that culminates in four events in five weekends, but for them it's all over in July. Andy Earl, Gaz Parry and Mark Croxall are attending all events as they aim for the top of the podium. The newer team members such as Ryan Pasquill, Kate Mills, Martin Smith, and Stew Watson will also support them when they can. The Leading Team have a ten-event schedule but sadly finances prevent attendance at all events. However look out for news from multiple British Champion Lucy Creamer. Lucy is aiming to attending as many as possible in what she says will be her last year in internationals. Good luck Lou.

The Junior Team are aiming for success in the European Championships and the World Youth Championships in Austria. Nat Berry and Beth Monks will attend most events with serious places as their aim. Other Junior Team members will attend various events but the focus is as ever on the Worlds.

Climb '06: Kate Mills (GBR).

And finally, after many years of working with, first the Junior Team, and latterly the Bouldering Team, Mike Lea is hanging up his managerial boots. Many thanks to his support, time and energy over the years. ■

Climb 06 DVDs

DVDs of the whole event are available from the BMC, with a Summit special offer price of £30 for the 5 DVD set. Just email hannah@thebmc.co.uk to order.

PROFILE: ANDY EARL

Andy Earl is three times British Bouldering Champion and currently ranked second in Europe. He's equally at home on the scary sandstone of his beloved Northumberland as he is on the World Cup circuit. Our intrepid reporter Graeme Alderson, NE correspondent tracked him down.

As the son of Northumberland legend John Earl were you destined to climb?
Yep. I first got dragged out at the tender age of four and I've been a climber ever since. It was a harsh upbringing, climbing with my dad and the likes of Bob and Tommy Smith, always being told how crap I was!

How long before you were treated as an equal?
I suppose I was about 16/17 before I started burning my dad off, a combination of him getting old (John is now the proud owner of a false hip) and me getting better. But I had to get considerably better before they started treating me as equal.

Aside from being locked into climbing by your genes, what else do you get out of it?
It's a weird blend of the sporting aspect, the travelling and the mix of people. Climbing seems to bring together a greater assortment of folk from different backgrounds than any other sport I know; we used to go out with a real mix of people from roofers to barristers.

Climb '06: Andy Earl in the final.

Which aspects do you enjoy the most?
Having been climbing for 25-plus years I obviously grew up with trad, and I still do a bit [*Editor's note: new E7's & E8's in Northumberland is more than "a bit"*] but my main focus is bouldering and competitions at the moment. I like euro sport climbing but have neutral views about big walling, mountain routes etc, mainly because I haven't really tried them yet.

Any major epics?
Steve Roberts and I were trying to get onto the Diamond on The Little Orme, it all went a bit pear shaped, we abbed in and had been told it would be an easy walk out. But the tide came in and we had to swim for it - my main memory is Steve's plaintive cries of, "don't leave me, I'm really scared," as I swam off. We thought we were going to die.

How do you see climbing progressing?
People are so much stronger these days due to the bouldering explosion, and once this really transfers to trad I think you'll see some massive leaps, like V15 above dodgy gear. Sport climbing is becoming more about fitness, with routes of 30-40m becoming the norm - few routes have really hard moves, just lots and lots and lots of hard moves. Strangely though the leading comps are becoming more bouldering power orientated as the routes aren't normally that long, only 15-20m.

Fave problem, route, and crag?
I couldn't narrow a best problem down to less than a 100 or so - there are so many good ones everywhere. Kaiser Bill at Bowden Doors is the best route in the world, and Kyloe-In-The-Woods would be my desert island crag, but Switzerland has to be my desert island country. Perhaps South Africa is better but that's the one place I've never been that I'd love to visit. That and Reunion Island in the Indian Ocean but that's another story.

One last question, who's your hero.
It's got to be my dad - after all he is my major sponsor.

Andy is also sponsored by Scarpa, E9, Rockworks, and Camp. Find out more at www.andrewearl.co.uk.

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ROAD TO RUIN

Easy access to the hills is good. But should it be at the expense of the environment? Guy Keating, BMC Access and Conservation Officer takes a look at the proposed Woodhead Pass bypass in the Peak District.

The impact currently caused by traffic on the Woodhead Pass (A628) is appalling. It's a basic trans-Pennine "A" road in the northern Peak District, yet it has become the freight "route of choice" between the eastern industrial centres of Barnsley, Rotherham, and Sheffield into Manchester - in effect a very slow two-lane motorway. A constant stream of 40-foot lorries and cars continually grind past peoples' doorsteps causing fatal accidents, congestion, and pollution.

Something needs to be done that's for sure, but currently the only solution on offer from the Highway's Agency is a 5.7km long bypass around the towns of Mottram and Tintwistle, for a cool price tag of £110 million. This would be a "motorway-style" road complete with concrete viaducts, roundabouts, lay-bys, lighting, signs and traffic lights, all slicing straight across the rolling countryside of Longdendale into the National Park.

What price development? With the Peak District in the background, a wooden marker on Longdendale's heather moorland shows the route of the proposed bypass. Photo: Guy Keating.

Access to the local countryside would be severely compromised. Local people would be cut off from the peaceful, green hills, and walkers using the Trans-Pennine trail and Pennine Way would have to cross a new, noisy road. Once tranquil haunts would be no more. Swallows Wood nature reserve would be crossed by an 84-foot high concrete viaduct, and the bypass would also destroy badger and bat habitats, heather moorland, and the 100 year-old Mottram showground. And of course, lets not forget the climbing - both Harry's and John Henry's Quarries would be blasted into the annals of history.

But, I'm sure you're all privately thinking, this is all very well, but if it saves a few minutes journey time, then perhaps it's worth it anyway. Well, sorry to be the bearer of bad news, but any quickening of journey time will be fleeting at the most. Hauliers and others will be the first to exploit this new smoother flowing section of road, and you'll be right back where you started - stuck in a queue. The Highways Agency estimate that on opening in 2010 there would be an almost immediate 84% increase in traffic, from 10,500 vehicles/day to 19,300 vehicles/day, increasing to a predicted monumental 23,300 vehicles/day by 2025. And at these levels, the pressure would really be on to develop the whole road into a fully-fledged six-lane motorway.

The BMC is objecting to the scheme on the grounds that it is ill-thought out, destroys climbing areas, makes a mockery of the status of a National Park, and most importantly, there is an alternative. The Friends of the Peak District have researched a proposal, entitled "Way To Go". This is a series of sustainable transport measures, supported by the Government, that suggests avoiding building a bypass altogether. Its central ethos is implementing a series of weight restrictions to divert freight traffic off the trans-Pennine "A" roads and back onto the M1, M62, and M60 motorway network. Then in the longer term, freight should be transferred to rail - the Longdendale rail line from Sheffield to Manchester could be brought back into service with container freight depots at each end. The proposal is fully endorsed by an independent transport professional at the Metropolitan Transport Research Unit.

Others are against the scheme too. The Peak National Park has rejected the proposal, a decision supported by the Council for National Parks (CNP). Ruth Chambers, CNP's Head of Policy said, "We fully support the decision by the National Park Authority to object to this proposal which will not only damage the National Park, but will create more problems than those it is seeking to solve. This resounding rejection by the statutory guardians of the Peak District should send the Highways Agency back to the drawing board to find a solution to the traffic congestion in the villages of Mottram, Tintwistle and Hollingworth that does not create equally bad, if not worse, problems elsewhere. "

This short-term, piecemeal proposal will not provide the required long-term solution. It's time that proper, integrated, sustainable alternatives for moving freight across the Pennines are investigated. The BMC would encourage you to have your say on this issue, so we've put an objection letter on the BMC website. Simply download it, sign it, and send it back to the BMC office. If enough are returned, then we'll take a big bag of objection letters to the public enquiry in October. ■

Download the objection letter
www.thebmc.co.uk/outdoor/access/a628_letter.pdf

Further Information
www.friendsofthepeak.org.uk - Friends of the Peak District
www.stopmottrambypass.org - Campaign Against the Mottram and Tintwistle Bypass

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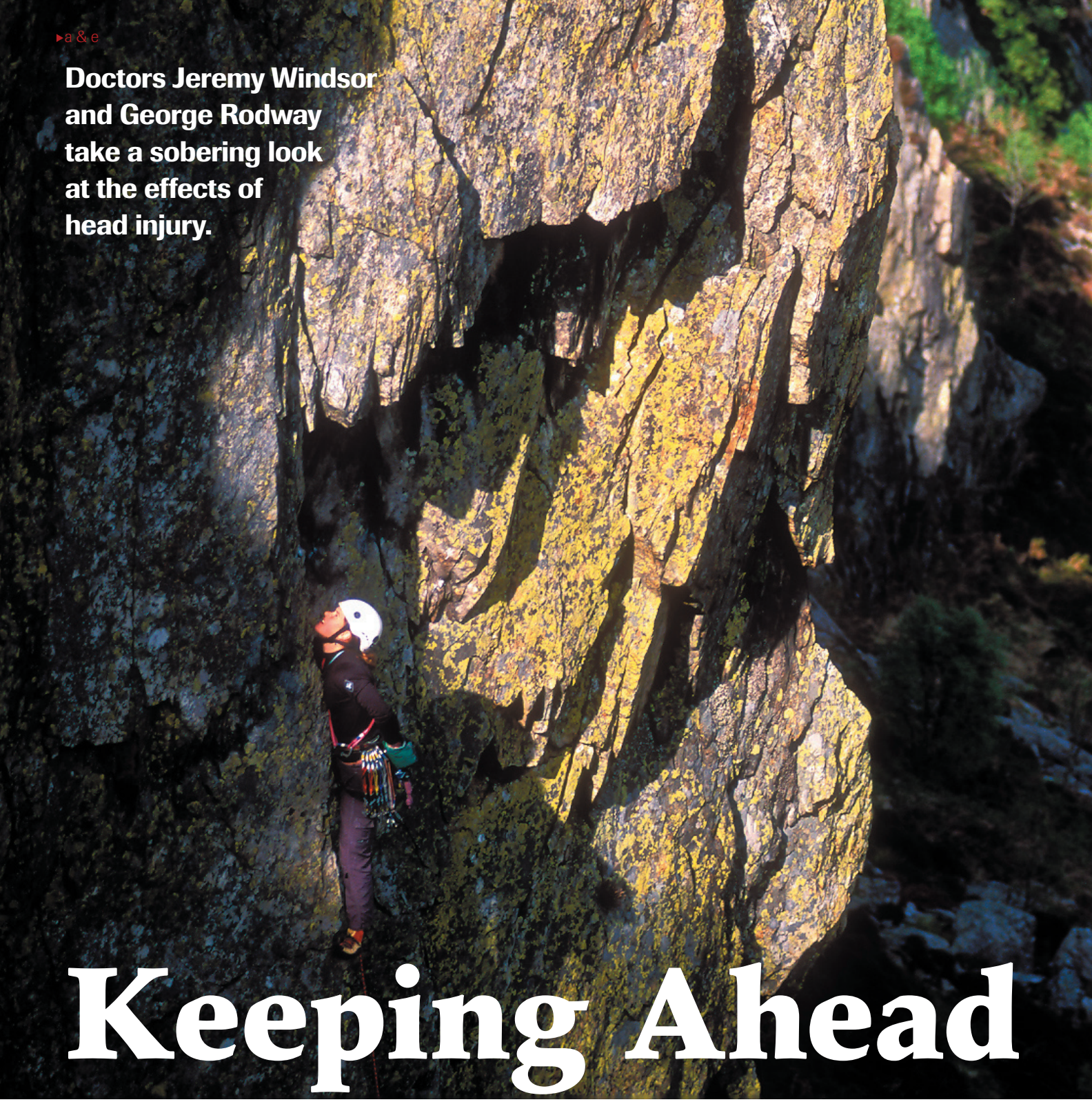
Doctors Jeremy Windsor and George Rodway take a sobering look at the effects of head injury.



Keeping Ahead

Audrey Seguy is keeping her head on Phoenix (E3), Crafnant, North Wales. Photo: Alex Messenger.

Karl had been climbing for almost ten years, first on the end of his father's rope and later with his mates from school and university. The summer holidays had given Karl and his dad a chance to spend a couple of days together in the Peak District. Following a day picking their way along Stanage, the pair headed towards Burbage North. Arriving early, with a fine mist still clinging to the rock, Karl geared up below Brooks' Layback, pulled on his beanie and stepped up to the start.

Two pieces of gear in, he began to layback the long right-facing feature. As he stepped above the last cam, Karl slipped and fell. With his foot caught in the rope, his head, neck and shoulders were first to make contact with the rock face. For a few long seconds Karl's body hung lifeless, but as his Dad lowered him to the ground he slowly began to stir. As he awoke it was clear that Karl had suffered a serious injury. Not only was the skin over his scalp swollen and matted with blood, but he was also agitated and confused, slurring his words and unable to make much sense. Quickly other climbers appeared and the rescue services were called. He was eventually transferred to a specialist neurosurgical unit and that evening underwent surgery to remove a blood clot from his brain.

During the fall Karl had suffered a fractured skull and damage to the blood vessels surrounding the outermost layers of his brain. The first CT scan, overleaf, shows a very obvious fracture of the skull's temporal bone, sustained in a fall similar to Karl's, whilst the second

"While cells in other parts of the body have the potential to regenerate, cells in the brain and spinal cord are usually lost forever."

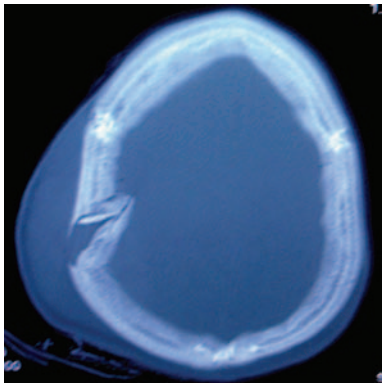
scan shows the damage that resulted to the brain. The dark collection in-between the skull and the pale brain tissue is blood, known in medical terminology as an extradural haemorrhage. As the haemorrhage continues, pressure starts to build and the soft brain tissue (nothing more resilient than jelly) is squashed. With little free space inside the skull, even a small amount of bleeding causes the pressure inside to grow, rapidly starving cells of their vital fuel supply. And unfortunately, while cells in other parts of the body have the potential to regenerate, cells in the brain and spinal cord are usually lost forever.

The way Karl behaved was typical of anyone who had just sustained a serious head injury. Immediately on impact the brain tends to "switch off" causing a brief loss of consciousness, before some sort of "normal service" is resumed. In those who sustain a serious brain injury this return can be limited, with the individual soon passing in and out of consciousness, slurring their speech and behaving erratically. However in many cases there is a period of normal behaviour. There are stories of jockeys remounting their horses and surfers searching for the next wave before eventually complaining of nausea, headaches and later, signs and symptoms similar to Karl's. Therefore it's vital that anyone who's lost consciousness following a head injury is watched closely for at least four hours in case serious damage has been done.

Once surgery has removed the blood clot the real work begins. A visit to any neurology ward is a sobering sight. There, young men and women can be found slowly coming to terms with their injuries and learning to live independently again. The range of injuries is enormous, varying from subtle changes to the senses to profound muscle weakness that leaves even the beefiest canoeist or mountain biker confined to a wheelchair. Do you remember the times when you've fallen asleep on one side and woken with a numb arm or a dead leg? What if that never went away? As a climber how would you cope with losing the sensation in your fingers or toes? Alternatively, what if you developed epilepsy as so many do after a head injury? Could you climb or belay not knowing when your next fit might come?

Away from the crags life can be just as hard. We both know teenagers who spend their lives in wheelchairs following sporting accidents, whilst others lucky enough to walk have been unable to control their bladder or bowels for long enough to visit the shops. Some who appear to have completely recovered are unable to recognise their family or even recall what happened only an hour ago.

After further operations Karl spent almost a year in hospital. At first he was wheelchair bound, too weak to stand alone or even feed himself. But thanks to his own determination and the help of those around him he was eventually able to walk again and lead an independent life. However his recovery was no fairytale story. Painful muscle cramps, pressure sores and numerous infections all caused setbacks. Whilst for years after the accident Karl was plagued with violent mood swings and bouts of depression that were far beyond his control. Despite all this, two years later Karl eventually returned to university and finished his degree.



Ouch. A very obvious fracture of the skull's temporal bone, sustained in a fall similar to Karl's. Photo: Windsor collection.

The damage to the brain as a result. The dark collection in between the skull and the pale brain tissue is blood - an extradural haemorrhage. Photo: Windsor collection.

"A visit to any neurology ward is a sobering sight. There, young men and women can be found slowly coming to terms with their injuries and learning to live independently again."

He never climbed again.

Now it's uncertain whether Karl's injuries could have been prevented by wearing a helmet, but really, what's the harm in placing a well-fitted layer of plastic between you and the rock? In mountaineering circles helmets are treasured objects, yet on the cliffs and crags of the UK they're often forgotten and left behind. I suspect this might be due to two reasons. First, people tend to believe that head injuries come from above. Therefore so long as no one else is on the route and the area doesn't have a reputation for loose rock the helmet can stay at home. Sadly, as Karl's example shows this isn't the case. Secondly I reckon there's a problem with vanity. In years gone by helmets were uncomfortable and cumbersome, worn only by those who had no choice, namely children and beginners. Therefore only those who wanted to look like "gumpies", as a US climbing magazine once put it, chose to wear them. Fortunately, much has now changed - helmets no longer have the style of a pencil eraser and are smaller, safer and lighter than ever before. A glance along the shelves of your local climbing shop will reveal an enormous range of sizes, shapes and styles that will fit most heads and tastes. Most weigh in at less than 500g. So perhaps now there's little excuse - And it might just stop you from losing your head. ■

Jeremy Windsor and George Rodway have both worked extensively in Emergency Medicine and undertaken climbing expeditions to the Andes, Greenland, Alaska, East Africa and the Himalaya. Some details in this article have been changed to maintain confidentiality.

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First Llanberis, then the World

When visiting Boulder, Colorado a few years ago a self-important climber informed me that he had climbed in each of the three greatest rock climbing areas in the world; Boulder Colorado, Yosemite and, "a little place in Wales you'll never have heard of - Llanberis." He seemed taken aback when I told him that you could see the top of Yr Wyddfa from my house.

Once again the Llanberis Mountain Film Festival was an outstanding long weekend of success amongst our snow-clad mountains. Bwrdd yr Iaith Cymraeg, the Welsh Language Board, sponsored talks in Welsh by authors Bethan Gwanas and Llion Iwan, broadcaster Dewi Pws and Everest assailist Caradog Jones. But why were they, and their audiences, exiled to the cellar of the Victoria Hotel? Why not integrate these events in the main venues? And why not consider using simultaneous translation so that non-Welsh speakers could enjoy these events too?

Out of the cellar, the wild goats of Eryri are in the headlines again. Apparently a series of mild winters and lower sheep stocking rates has led to an increase in numbers. I counted almost 50 on Rhinog Fach in January. The proposed culls on Y Gogarth in Llandudno and Parc Padarn will be received in two predicable and opposing ways. But in case the meat goes on sale (now that'd be sustainable land management) I recommend a recipe I obtained while visiting Macedonia. The meat from the top leg is grilled with goat's cheese in the centre and onions on the outside, and served with mushrooms. As well as recipes this bilingual independent republic also offers endless mountaineering opportunities - try flying cheaply to Thessaloniki in Greece.

Maybe more young Welsh speakers will be taking to the hills. S4C, the Welsh Language television channel, has broadcast a series of programmes for 9 -14 year olds entitled, "Stamina". Included was an episode on mountain sports, including BRYCS 2006. Talking of which, isn't it about time we grouped North Wales and South Wales together as one nation for these competitions?

Clive James
BMC Committee for Wales

Llanberis gyntaf, yna'r Byd

Pan oeddwn yn ymweld â Boulder, Colorado ychydig flynyddoedd yn ôl fe'm hysbyswyd gan ddringwr hunan-bwysig ei fod wedi dringo ym mhob un o'r tair ardal dringo creigiau gorau yn y byd; Boulder Colorado, Yosemite a "rhyw le bach yng Nghymru na fyddet ti erioed wedi clywed amdano – Llanberis." Dychmygwch ei syndod pan ddywedais wrtho fy mod yn gallu gweld copa'r Wyddfa o ffenest fy nh!

Unwaith eto roedd G yl Ffilmiau Mynydda Llanberis yn llwyddiant ysgubol. Roedd Bwrdd yr Iaith Gymraeg yn noddi sgyrsiau Cymraeg gan yr awduron Bethan Gwanas a Llion Iwan, y darlledwr Dewi Pws a choncwerwr Everest, Caradog Jones. Ond pam eu bod hwy, a'u cynulleidfaoedd, wedi eu halltudio i seler Gwesty Victoria? Pam na ellir cynnal y digwyddiadau hyn yn y prif leoliadau? A beth am ystyried defnyddio cyfieithu ar y pryd er mwyn galluogi'r di-Gymraeg i fwynhau'r sesiynau yma hefyd?

Y tu hwnt i'r seler, mae geifr gwyllt Eryri yn hawlio'r penawdau unwaith eto. Mae'n ymddangos bod y gaeafau tyner diwethaf a'r ffaith bod llai o ddefaid yn cael eu cadw wedi arwain at gynnydd mewn niferoedd. Fe gyfrais bron i 50 ar Rhinog Fach ym mis Ionawr. Mae'n sicr y bydd y newyddion o'r bwriad i ddidol a lladd geifr Y Gogarth yn Llandudno a Pharc Padarn yn cael ei dderbyn mewn dwy ffordd wahanol iawn. Ond rhag ofn bod y cig yn cael ei werthu (a dyna fyddai rheolaeth tir cynaliadwy) rwy'n argymell rysáit a gefais tra'n ymweld â Macedonia. Mae'r cig o ran ucha'r goes yn cael ei grilio gyda chaws gafr yn y canol a nionod ar y tu allan ac yn cael ei weini gyda madarch. Mae'r weriniaeth ddwyieithog annibynnol hon yn cynnig profiadau mynydda di-ben-draw, yn ogystal â rysetiau – mae'n bosib hedfan yn rhad i Thessaloniki yng Ngroeg.

Efallai y bydd mwy o siaradwyr Cymraeg ifanc yn heidio tua'r mynyddoedd. Mae S4C wedi darlledu cyfres o raglenni ar gyfer plant 9 – 14 oed o'r enw "Stamina". Roedd un bennod ar weithgareddau mynydd, gan gynnwys BRYCS 2006. A sôn am hynny, tybed a yw'n bryd i Ogledd a De Cymru ymuno â'i gilydd ar gyfer y cystadlaethau yma?

Clive James
Cyfarfod Rhanbarth Cymru y CMP

Expeditions 2005

Through funding from UK Sport and the Mount Everest Foundation, the BMC continues to provide support to expeditions climbing new routes and visiting unexplored mountainous regions. So what's planned for 2006?

uk sport
world class success

Alaska & Canada

Mt. Dickey

Paul Ramsden and Andy Kirkpatrick have just returned from Mt. Dickey.

Yukon

The first ascent of South Walsh in the Canadian St. Elias Range is the objective of this two-man team. It is the highest unclimbed peak in Canada.

Central Asia

AC Shakhdara

Alpine Club members should be the first mountaineers from outside the former Soviet Union or Eastern Block to explore the south side of Peak Karl Marx in Tajikistan.

Ak Shirak

A ski-mountaineering traverse of the partially unexplored Ak Shirak range in Kyrghyzstan.

Imperial College Noshaq

A rare attempt on the southern flanks of this high Hindu Kush peak on the Afghan-Tibet border. It is the highest peak in Afghanistan.

China & Tibet

Alps of Tibet

A very strong multi-national team is off to try the elegant Chuchepo in Eastern Nyachen Tanghla, Tibet.

Haizi Shan

Despite a number of attempts to date this isolated peak in Sichuan, China, still remains unclimbed.

Shahkangsham

A small team hopes to make the first official ascent of this high peak on the Central Tibetan Plateau and explore more of the surrounding 6,000m peaks.

Qonglai Shan

A three-man team hoping to make the first ascent of Pt. 5,609m to the south of Celestial Peak in Siguniang National Park, Chinese Sichuan.

Yadong County

Julie-Ann Clyma and Roger Payne hope to complete the North West Ridge of Chomolhari in Tibet, which they attempted in 2004.

Greenland

Cambridge Schweizerland

Cambridge students hope to make first ascents in the Schweizerland region of East Greenland, just north of Tasilak.

Brathay Exploration Group Greenland

A private expedition to unclimbed snowy peaks on the East Greenland icecap.

Camping on the Spenceley Glacier. South Georgia. Photo: Julian Freeman-Attwood

Himalaya

K7
Bob Brewer and Dai Lampard return for another crack at the huge South West Ridge of K7 in the Pakistan Karakoram.

Kedar Dome
Ian Parnell and Kevin Thaw try the first ascent of the East North East Buttress of Kedar Dome, Gangotri Himalaya, India.

Khumbu Double Trouble
John Bracey and Nick Bullock hope to try big new routes on the North Faces of Kwangde and Machermo, Khumbu Himal, Nepal.

Lobsang
John and Anne Arran hope to make the first ascent of the big rock wall that forms the South Face of Lobsang Spire, just off the Baltoro in the Pakistan.

Lobuje East
A Scottish team hopes to add a new route to the North East Face of Lobuje East, Khumbu Himalaya, Nepal.

Miyar Nala
A multi-national team hopes to make first ascents of tricky alpine peaks on the Jangpar Glacier, Miyar Valley, India.

North Sikkim
Julie-Ann Clyma and Roger Payne hope to make a rare mountaineering foray into North East Sikkim together with local climbers.

Savoia Kangri
Andrew Sharpe and Paul Schweizer plan to attempt this unclimbed 7,000-er just west of K2 in Pakistan's Karakoram.

Shining Wall
Kenton Cool and Ian Parnell attempt to repeat the legendary Kurtyka-Schauer Route on the West Face of Gasherbrum IV, Pakistan Karakoram.

Unclimbed Hispar
An attempt to make the first ascent of Hispar Sar and/or several other 6,000+m peaks on the southern wall of the Hispar Glacier, Pakistan Karakoram.

South America

Huantsan
Nick Bullock and Mat Hewker are attempting the unclimbed 1,400m East Face of Huantsan in the Cordillera Blanca, Peru.

Welsh South Tower of Paine
Stuart McAleese and Twid Turner head for the South East Face of Paine's South Tower, Chile, one of the biggest (and probably coldest) remaining unclimbed walls in the area.

Eastern Blanca Reconnaissance
A two-person team wants to explore the relatively remote area east of the Hualcan Group in the Cordillera Blanca, Peru, and hopefully make ascent of several small peaks.

Huayhuash Hikers
New routes on some of the smaller peaks in the southern section of the Cordillera Huayhaush, Peru.

Huaguruncho
Anthony Barton returns to the little-known Cordillera Huaguruncho, Peru, to climb virgin peaks and new routes.

Kings College Bolivia
A small group of students hope to make interesting multi-peak traverses in the Northern Apolobamba, Bolvia.

Cambridge Quimsa Cruz
Another group of university students want to explore the jungle side of the southern Cordillera Quimsa Cruz, Bolivia.

Cordillera Vilcanota
A two-man team attempting first ascents on snow/ice peaks of the Western Vilcanota, Peru. ■

Who's lead is it anyway? Alex Klenov and Miles Gibson contemplate pitch 13 of the 1000m Angel Falls free climb. Photo: Ben Heason.

BMC / MEF EXPEDITION FUNDING

BMC grants are only made possible through funding from UK Sport. To meet the criteria for consideration for a BMC award, teams must be attempting innovative ascents in remote mountain environments in 'good' style. Most expeditions will also be considered for the Mount Everest Foundation (MEF) award. The MEF's criteria is slightly different to that of the BMC's. Their main concern is the exploratory nature of the expedition rather than the technical difficulty.

HOW TO APPLY FOR BOTH BMC & MEF

Applications for BMC and MEF grants are made at the same time, and initial BMC screening takes place as part of the MEF process. To qualify for MEF consideration, application forms must be submitted before 31st August or 31st December in the year prior to the expedition.

HOW TO APPLY FOR BMC ONLY

The BMC understands that it is not always be possible to meet these deadlines and will accept direct applications up till November 1st or March 1st. Expeditions applying directly to the BMC in this way will not be eligible for MEF funding and should be aware that they can only be assessed on the information they provide on paper.

LAST MINUTE BMC ONLY

In addition, a small amount of funding may be available for a few last-minute trips that meet BMC criteria but cannot comply with the schedules above. If applying for BMC funding only, send your application forms direct to the BMC office.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information and application forms for BMC/MEF awards contact: Bill Ruthven, 1 Sarabeth Drive, Tunley, Bath, BA2 0EA, or visit www.mef.org.uk

The application deadline for 2006 expeditions is 31st December 2006.

BRYCS National Final

Awesome Walls, Liverpool, 1st August

Nearly 200 climbers who have qualified from the 30 regional rounds will compete in the British Regional Youth Climbing Series National Final at Awesome Walls this August. BRYCS is the nationwide climbing competition for 7-15 year olds and aims to be a relatively informal fun and exciting event, whilst introducing some of tomorrow's hopefuls to the atmosphere of competition climbing. So if your kids are thinking of entering next year, then why not come along to see what it's all about?

www.thebmc.co.uk

BMC Alpine Meet

Arolla, 5 - 19th August

In an exciting new initiative kick-started by member demand, we've organised a BMC alpine meet based in Arolla, in the Val d'Herens - a major climbing area of the Valais Alps. Come along to have fun, go mountaineering and make contact with fellow BMC members. And for those wanting formal instruction, a range of courses will be provided by British Mountain Guides. There will be a small registration fee for all those participating in the meet doing courses or reserving campsite spaces. Details and registration forms are available from the office or website. See you there!

www.thebmc.co.uk

RHM Summer Meet

Norway, 7 - 14th August

The Rendezvous Haute Montagne is an international women only mountaineering group that exists to foster relations and maintain and develop an international womens climbing network. This years RHM summer meet will be held at Romsdal Norway, for more details contact Marushka on 0176 8353749.

marushka_741@hotmail.com

Climbing & Mountain Medicine Symposium

Plas y Brenin, 30th September

This one-day symposium with lectures and discussion opportunities is open to all interested parties. The speakers are an international line up of experts - all chosen for their clear presentations in English - and topics include: sports climbing injuries and training, Everest accidents and frostbite, orthopaedic problems in mountaineers, hypothermia and crevasse rescue, occupational health problems of International Guides, the dangers of commercial charity fundraising trips to altitude, and analgesia for use in the hills. There will also be short presentations on the UK/UIAA/University of Leicester Diploma of Mountain Medicine and its advisory service to mountaineers, on the UK frostbite advice and treatment service, and the MAD advice service for diabetic climbers. It's sure to be of interest to all active mountaineers and climbers especially those involved in guiding and instruction in the UK and abroad, commercial and private expedition climbers and organisers, competitive sports climbers, and mountain rescue personnel. Cost is just £65.

dh@hillebrandt.org.uk

Student Safety and Good Practice Seminar

Plas y Brenin, 7 - 8th October

If you're involved in the organisation of student climbing, hill walking or mountaineering clubs then the BMC Student Seminar is for you. Supported by the Mountain Training Trust and Ultimate Outdoors, the seminar gives senior post holders of clubs the opportunity to improve their club practices and help ensure safer enjoyment of the mountains. The focus is on developing the skills needed to safely introduce novices to the sports of mountaineering and climbing, while also offering a chance to enhance personal skills. With increasing numbers of clubs coming under pressure from their Student Unions as to how they operate, this event becomes more valuable each year. The seminar is always very popular but a few last minute places are still available - email becky@thebmc.co.uk to book now.

www.thebmc.co.uk

Edinburgh Mountain Film Festival

Edinburgh, 20th October

An independent film festival, now firmly established as an annual event. The festival aims to inspire, enlighten and entertain, whether you're a climber, skier, snowboarder, kayaker, BASE jumper or explorer.

www.edinburghmountainff.com

Know Your Stuff! - BMC Technical and Training Conference

Plas y Brenin, 21st October

Dispel the common misconceptions of climbing gear! Whether you're a new or experienced climber, come along to this revamped conference delivered by an international mix of technical experts and professional trainers. With a mix of theoretical and practical sessions, this is essential stuff for anyone who takes their gear seriously. Plus, stay on for the evening lecture by Steve McClure. Contact dan@thebmc.co.uk for details.

www.thebmc.co.uk

BMC Huts Seminar

Plas y Brenin, 28th October

Involved in the running of your club hut? Then make a date for this year's Hut Seminar. Organised by the BMC Huts Group this is open to club hut secretaries/wardens and to secretaries of clubs with huts. It will focus on the legal and practical aspects related to running and maintaining huts, and is sure to answer many questions. The seminar is free, and accommodation for the night of the 28th is just £10. For more information or to book a place email martin@thebmc.co.uk.

www.thebmc.co.uk

Winter Essentials Lecture Series

Nationwide, 6 - 14th November

Already looking forward to the coming winter season? Then don't forget about the BMC Winter Essentials Lecture Series, supported by Lowe Alpine and Asolo. This is the ideal opportunity to sharpen your winter skills and pick up some tips from expert IFMGA Guides Twid Turner and Martin Moran. Venues to be finalised soon.

www.thebmc.co.uk

Kendal Mountain Festivals

Kendal, 17 - 19th November

It may only seem five minutes since last year's Kendal Festival, but planning is already well underway to make sure this year's is bigger and better. There's a name change too, because it's so much more than just films, this year the Festival is being re-named the Kendal Mountain Festivals to reflect the separate elements - the Film Festival, Book Festival, Arts Festival, Extreme Film School and the World Tour. Keep your eyes peeled or see the website for more details as they emerge. We'll also be there to launch the new BMC/MCofS good practice DVD, Alpine Essentials, the follow on from the highly successful Winter Essentials.

www.mountainfilm.co.uk

On The Ground

Our regular look at the world of BMC volunteers. This issue we turn the spotlight on Mark Alderson. Mark recently set up the official website of the British Climbing Team. A teacher at Dane Court Grammar School, Broadstairs, he's also a keen fan of introducing kids to climbing in the great outdoors. He's been climbing for 30 years and lives in Kent.

What do you currently do for the BMC?
Competitions "back room bod" most of the time. I organise the results for the British Bouldering Championships (BBC), the British Indoor Climbing Championships (BICC) and the British Regional Youth Climbing Series (BRYCS). I'm also developing britishclimbingteam.com and coordinate the Junior British Climbing Team in the south.

How did you start volunteering?
In 2000 I took eight pupils from my school to compete in the London and SE rounds of the BRYCS. They did brilliantly and the next year I found myself helping out with the scoring.

Is it hard introducing kids to climbing these days - surely there's lots of red tape?
The red tape has always been there. It's the numbers of enthusiastic novices that's the issue. Climbing is currently high profile and readily accessible to youngsters through courses and clubs at indoor walls. The problem comes with the next step; whether it's indoors or out, there isn't the capacity to cater for those wanting to learn more and progress.

What do you think of the British competition scene right now?
I am constantly impressed by the supportive and good-natured atmosphere at regional and national competitions - but on the other hand that same feel-good factor seems to dull the competitive edge. Many climbers, including a fair number of competitors, consider climbing competitions a sideshow to "real" climbing. And whilst I feel it's too drastic to sever the link with the BMC completely, I'd really like to see a more influential governing body for British competition climbing.

Should climbing be an Olympic Sport?
I think the current formats simply do not have enough spectator appeal and this alone will be enough to block Olympic status. It's one thing for a couple of thousand keen climbers to watch a difficulty event from beginning to end, but quite another to broadcast it into millions of homes around the world. Few climbers and even fewer competitors would be happy with the format and rule changes necessary to satisfy global media coverage.

Has climbing changed since you first started?
It's a lot more diverse and all the better for it. People talk about divisions, particularly between indoor and outdoor climbers, but I really don't see it that way. Climbing has become a generic term encompassing bouldering, trad, sport, competitions etc. I know plenty of climbers who specialise in one and a few who excel in most. Either way, individual choice and personal satisfaction are far more likely nowadays.

Teaching used to be the ideal career choice for a climber - is that still true?
It depends where you teach. East Kent is as flat as a pancake and a long, long way from any decent rock (or even climbing walls, come to that). The long holidays are great though. ■

Visit the new team website at ***britishclimbingteam.com*** *and Dane Court Grammar School's Outdoor Education website at* ***indoorsout.co.uk****.*

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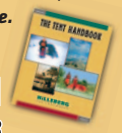

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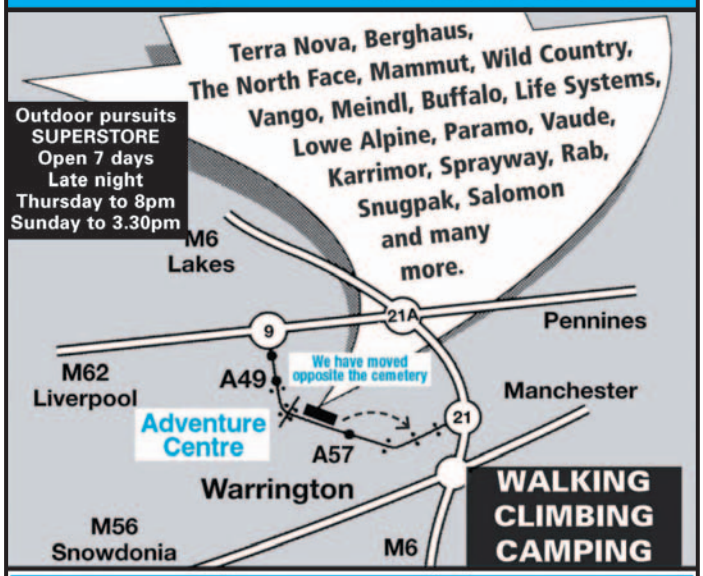

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Essential Skills: Altitude

By Ed Chard

Damien Gribbin on the Midi-Plan Traverse. Photo: Stuart Helford.

If you only remember one thing from this issue of Summit, make it this: Mountain Sickness can kill. But Mountain Sickness isn't just one illness, it's a long scale of symptoms from feeling a bit funny to unconsciousness and death. However the good news is that with a little preparation you can remain at the funnier end of the scale, and not suffer anything worse than a mild headache.

Before you go

Preparing for altitude shouldn't happen on the plane - give yourself a long lead-in and think clearly about your objectives. And don't be cocky now, stats show that the younger and fitter you are, the more susceptible you are to getting Acute Mountain Sickness (AMS), probably because younger people find it harder to slow down and take it easy. Walking at altitude is all about taking your time - a crime in this modern age. But this doesn't mean you need to start blobbing out before your trip, since a good standard of cardiovascular fitness is the basis of all good health. So before you go away aim for 30 minutes hard exercise three times a week to maintain cardio fitness. And if chips and ale are more important to you than the latest trainers, then you'll need to do a bit more.

Get drinking

As you acclimatise, your body needs more water to adjust its fluid levels, you also exhale more moisture as you breath dry mountain air. Add this to the fact that you'll be working harder due to the reduced levels of oxygen in the atmosphere and you start to see a real need. As a guide you should be drinking about four litres of fluid a day, the majority of this being water. Sadly the average adult in the UK drinks about two litres a day, the majority of this being tea, coffee and beer. The other way to see if you are drinking enough is to take note of the colour of your urine. If it's clear and copious that's good.

Other preparation

Other areas of preparation are rather more obvious. Think about your route, accommodation and escape plans to minimise

Expert Q&A

This issue the medical expert is Dr David Hillebrandt. Dave has over 35 years hill experience, is one of the BMC Honorary Medical Advisors, and Vice President of the UIAA Medical Committee. Over the years he has experienced cracking AMS headaches on Mt Kenya and in the Himalaya, so now tends to explore the mountains of Patagonia which start at sea level and only involve sea sickness on the approach.

Q. What's Diamox?

A. Diamox (Acetazolamide) is a mild diuretic drug primarily used in the UK for the treatment of Glaucoma. Good quality research has shown that it is effective in preventing AMS by increasing the amount of oxygen carried in the arterial blood via a complex series of actions altering the acidity of the blood and driving the body's natural breathing mechanism. It can be very useful to help people who have to go too high too quickly (e.g. rescue personnel). It is also used by some climbers and trekkers to minimise AMS but one has to consider the ethics of using drugs in sport, or in the case of some commercial companies, to increase their profits. It's no substitute for proper gradual acclimatisation, but if you must take it, international opinion seems to be that 125mg twice a day is the optimum balance between effectiveness and potential side effects.

Q. Do acclimatisation chambers work?

A. There is no evidence to show they help mountaineers. It's much better to spend your money on a longer trip to acclimatise sensibly and enjoy the culture and geography, which is impossible sitting in a miserable little chamber.

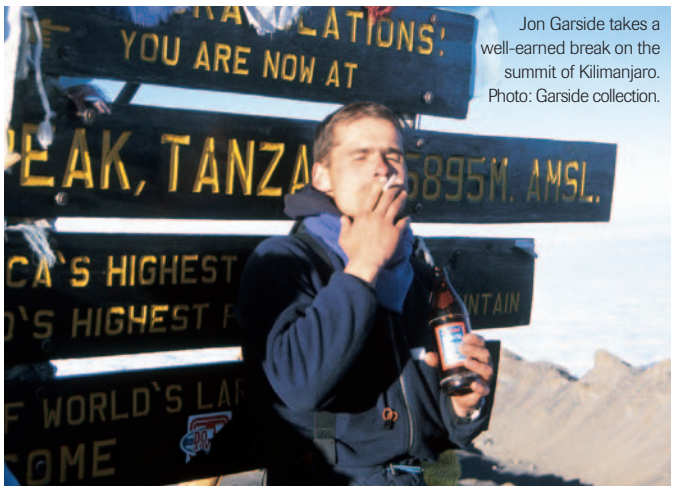
Q. How do I know my tour operator will use a recommended rate of ascent?

A. Don't be afraid to ask pertinent questions. You'll be spending a lot of hard-earned cash so expect answers. Look for a tour operator with a proven track record, and all reputable operators will be able to produce a chart of the proposed ascent profile. A company with a good reputation will not think it odd for you to ask their rate of success with clients, so ask about the experience and mountain medicine training of their leaders and local agents and guides. Ask who would accompany you (or one of your porters) down if either of you

your load. Food needs careful consideration. The average adult requires 2000-2500 calories a day to work effectively, but at altitude the body doesn't deal too well with fats and proteins. Your normal diet will have to change, a diet rich in carbohydrates is the way to go - the anti-Atkins if you will. As you ascend you'll also find that water boils at a lower temperature. At first this isn't a big deal, but food will take longer and more fuel to cook. And if you're planning to purify your water by boiling then that's more fuel gone - I prefer to use iodine to kill all the nasties and let me get on with my adventure.

Acclimatisation

Preparation will give you a better chance of enjoying walking at altitude, but the real key is proper acclimatisation. It's normal above 3000m for the reduced levels of oxygen to cause slight headaches, lethargy, sleeplessness and a lack of appetite. But after being at a similar altitude for a day or so the body adjusts to this new altitude and goes back to normal - it's acclimatised. Different people adjust at different rates so don't worry if you don't acclimatise in a day. But if any of the symptoms get worse you shouldn't go any higher - they'll only increase.



Jon Garside takes a well-earned break on the summit of Kilimanjaro. Photo: Garside collection.

Wait two or three days to see improvement, and remember, in all cases of altitude related illness going down 500-1000m can improve things or even cure you.

Yet if you decide that you're superhuman and rush the acclimatisation phase, then you have some great symptoms waiting for you. At altitude the fine tissues in your lungs and head that normally act as barriers start to get leaky. If you acclimatise slowly then this fluid, called oedema (edema for Americans) is managed by your body and carted off. If not, then it builds up. If the oedema builds up in the head, it's called cerebral oedema, if it's in the lungs its called pulmonary oedema. High Altitude Cerebral Oedema (HACE) and High Altitude Pulmonary Oedema (HAPE), are the killing end of AMS. The symptoms of HACE unsurprisingly are massive headaches, lack of balance and dizziness as the pressure builds up in your head. The symptoms of HAPE are an increasingly bad cough, breathlessness at rest and blood stained mucus as your lungs fill with fluids.

Conclusion

It's all about preparation. So start reading and clicking your mouse now, but don't forget to get active. Have a great time, walking at altitude can be safe and fun. But don't forget to take it slowly, and if in any doubt remember there is a simple cure - go down, go down now, and go down again! ■

MIC Ed Chard is a self-employed expedition leader. He has led expeditions to altitude for the last ten years mostly in the Greater Ranges. When at home Ed is available for rock climbing, winter climbing and technical advice. For more info visit www.edchard.co.uk

became ill? How much experience would this person have? Do they carry and know how to use appropriate drugs in their medical kit to buy time for descent, the only real treatment. Compare companies - as always, you get what you pay for.

Q. What's the difference between a headache and the start of something more serious?

A. There is no difference. The mild headache of AMS can progress to the cracking headache of HACE over a few hours, and then to death. Anybody with a headache associated with ascent should monitor themselves, but also have a companion monitor them, even if it means waking hourly during a cold night in a tent. If an increasing headache is associated with loss of coordination you have major problems and must descend immediately.

Q. At what height would I need to use oxygen?

A. Not until above about 8,850m if you have taken time to acclimatise and are one of those lucky, possibly partly genetically predetermined, people who acclimatise well. Having said that some people choose to use it at lower altitudes. It's a balance between cost, weight, supply problems, flow rates, altitude, continuous use, sleeping use, reliability of the system used and personal feelings. The only way to truly find out is to build up your experience over many trips over many years and then make a personal decision in discussion with the companions on your trip.

Find out more

UIAA Mountain Medicine Centre
Definitive information sheets on altitude and related conditions, all available free on the BMC website.
www.thebmc.co.uk/world/mm/mm0.htm

UIAA Diploma of Mountain Medicine
An increasing number of UK based mountaineering doctors now hold this diploma and are available for advice.
www.medex.org.uk

Mountain Medicine courses
Plas y Brenin and Glenmore Lodge both run specialised high altitude first aid courses. *www.pyb.co.uk / www.glenmorelodge.org.uk*

Pocket First Aid & Wilderness Medicine, by Dr Jim Duff
A new edition is due out this summer with an excellent updated section on altitude illness.

Altitude Illness: Prevention and Treatment, by S.Bezruchka
A pocket guide to the prevention and treatment of altitude sickness. Packed full of advice, yet small enough to stuff in a pocket. Ideal for trekkers and climbers. Available from the BMC online shop now.

Essential Skills: Moving Together

By Andy Townsend

The pair had climbed fast and now stood on a large ledge above Continuation Wall. The expanse of the Idwal Slabs stretched away below them, above some broken ground led across to the Grey Slab and the summit of Glyder Fach. It was late afternoon – if they were to complete another climb and reach the summit before darkness, they'd need to move quickly.

Descending from the Domes du Miage, Chamonix. Photo: Icicleuk.com collection.

I bet many of us can relate to this situation. Not late enough to call it a day, yet not quite as much time as we'd like to complete a long climb or scramble. There are many things you can do to speed up, but one area of rope work that can really reap dividends is the dark art of moving together. Most commonly associated with the Alps, this involves shortening the rope and both climbing partners travelling or climbing at once. When done efficiently by experienced climbers it can save considerable time.

How does it work?

There's not room here to describe in intricate detail the many ways for climbers to shorten a rope between them, but it generally involves taking chest coils and sometimes carrying a small amount of coiled rope too. The golden rule is to keep chest and hand coils neat and tidy. Let's look at three separate techniques that you might use depending on the terrain and ability of the climbers.

Easy ground

The first method is for crossing broken ground, often encountered on mountain scrambles and climbs that can be easily crossed. It is quicker to shorten the rope and move together than to untie, coil the rope, walk and then re-tie onto the rope again. Take chest coils so that there is 12-15m of rope between you, then take small tidy hand coils so that the final distance is 2-3m. Don't take too much rope in your hands, if you can't close your thumb and first finger then it's too much. The climbers now walk/scramble over the ground moving at a speed which keeps the rope up off the ground and does not tug at each other. Whilst crossing this type of easy scrambling ground slips and trips do and can happen, so it's vital that the climbers' hand coils are locked off to allow the non-slipping partner to hold the rope tight and prevent the slip becoming a serious fall.

Example use: crossing the terraces between pitches on the East Face of Tryfan.

Expert Q&A

This issue the climbing expert is Mike Turner. Mike (aka Twid) Turner is an IFMGA Guide and MIC, based in North Wales and guides all round the world. He can be contacted through twidturner@aol.com.

Q. Is it faster to move together or pitch?

A. For a confident and well-matched team, moving together on runners can be much faster than pitching when climbing over moderate terrain But if the climbers have to ponder over moves or lack confidence in the ability of the system to hold a fall, then don't mess around - just pitch up. Pitching can be speeded up with slick rope work and using obvious quick anchors to build belays.

Q. Is there any difference when moving over snow?

A. If a person slips on snow it can quickly turn into a fall, catapulting the other team member off. Reduce the risk by moving closer together and carrying hand coils. Snowy ridges can present a real dilemma. On badly corniced ridges the climbing team should consider the implication of their combined weight, perhaps enough to break a cornice, and move further apart. But at the same time it's difficult to find runners on a snowy ridge, and a slide from a partner 12 or more meters away would leave little option other than to jump off the other side of the ridge!

Q. What sort of rope should I use?

A. In an alpine environment we're looking to have the lightest rope available without compromising strength and durability. Modern single ropes vary from 8.9 - 10mm and are available in a variety of lengths. Choosing a thin versatile rope like the Mammut Revelation 9.2mm is an ideal compromise between weight, durability and handling. For most alpine ascents and general UK use a 50m rope is adequate - the advantages of 60m are lost due to the extra weight. For year-round and glacial use opt for a dry-treated rope.

Q. How do I learn to move together?

A. Ensure that both you and your partner have a solid foundation in all aspects of climbing - being quick and efficient at building belays and sorting gear is vital. Becoming competent and slick when moving together takes time and practice. It's

Starting the Cosmiques Arete, Aiguille du Midi, Chamonix. Photo: Icicleuk.com collection.

Moderate ground

This is for when easy scrambling terrain becomes more exposed and serious, but both climbers have trust in each other's ability and a fall is unlikely - or both hands are needed to make quick progress. You need to use a system that offers a greater level of protection than before. Drop the hand coils and climb simultaneously, placing runners as well as weaving the rope around natural spikes and blocks to give both partners an amount of assurance. As a general rule there should be at least three pieces of protection on the rope at any one time, and as the second takes a piece out so the leader puts one in. Both climbers should move at the speed of the rope since any slack increases the risk of shock loading and pulling off the other climber in the event of a fall.

Example use: above the initial difficulties on Cneifion Arete, Glyder Fawr.

Difficult ground

For sections of ground where the consequences of a slip or trip are very serious, and more care is needed. Depending on how long these tricky sections are you may need to extend the rope, but try not to have more than about 20-25m paid out between the climbers. Treat these sections as mini-climbs, taking proper belays, placing runners as required and belaying as normal. Using natural anchor points such as spikes can speed up the process. By keeping the pitch length short, communication will be easier, the rope will most likely run straighter and progressing in small manageable chunks can be very quick.

Example use: the Great Tower on Tower Ridge, Ben Nevis.

Summary

Your technique choice depends as much upon ability as terrain. Correctly matching you and your partners ability with the route and choosing an appropriate style of ascent is always the first thing to consider. It's advisable to continually assess the terrain and your ability. Never be worried about stopping to build up a belay and pitching - you can easily start to move together again when the ground eases. And remember - all these techniques require each climbing partner to make judgements on the move and should be practised in a safe learning environment before being used in the mountains for real. ■

Andy Townsend is an MIC and IML. Through his company Cirrus Outdoor he offers a range of climbing and mountaineering courses.
See www.cirrusoutdoor.com.

important to be good at building direct and indirect belays, as well as handling the rope and using a waist belay. The ability to make the judgement about which technique to use and when only comes with practice. Go scrambling and climbing wearing stiff mountain boots, carrying a rucksack and using a light rack. The UK mountains have some great rock scrambling terrain where you can perfect these skills - go visit the Ogwen Valley in North Wales, Glencoe, and the Cuillins in Skye. And don't forget, using the experience of a Mountain Instructor or Guide is a great way to pick up these skills quickly.

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Attention!

Colin Struthers reckons you have a bad attitude.

Let's talk about belaying. Not about particular techniques or new-fangled devices. Not about the rope jiggery-pokery that clutters up instruction manuals. No, let's talk about bad attitude and its inevitable consequences - crap belaying. And I know what I'm talking about, with my trashed ligaments and compressed spine.

Consider the sort of people that us climbers are. It's an oft-repeated maxim that climbing is an "inherently dangerous activity". And climbers, aware of this fact use the skills and knowledge they have acquired to manage the risks. Some of the satisfaction that we derive from our sport stems from the feeling of power and control that we get from climbing safely.

We are proud of our ability to survive. So whilst we accord respect to the strong, to the stylish or the bold amongst us, the quality that we revere most highly is that of competence. And we're all competent, aren't we? I mean, I can mock my friends for sloppy footwork, for lunging at holds, or cocking up their runner placements and I'll probably get a smile. But tell them they can't belay for toffee? I don't think so.

It's this pride, or rather misplaced pride, that's the root cause of bad attitude. And bad attitude manifests itself in many ways. For example, I like to know that my belayer has attached the belay device and rope correctly. I want to actually look at the thing before I leave the ground. Sometimes this means I have to ask them to turn round or move their arm so I can see. This feels awkward. Why? Because to do this implies that I think they are capable of making a basic error. And in fact I do - we can all suffer from a moment of inattention. But it's our bad attitudes that make this difficult. Mine for feeling awkward about checking, theirs for feeling put out that I want to. Of course, none of us actually express any of this. It's, "sure, have a look, it's always good to be safe," but the face often says different, "are you questioning my competence, or what?"

> "Discussing last night's football whilst protecting my life is not the kind of multi-tasking that I approve of."

Has Adrian Baxter got a bad attitude? Photo: Alex Messenger.

And the bad attitude persists after we've left the ground. On the two occasions that I've been dropped, my belayer was deep in conversation with other climbers at the point when I fell. Not surprising then, that I now want to feel that I have their full attention. However, a terse shout of, "hey shut up, and concentrate on what you're doing," often elicits a chorus of, "woo, get him, stressy or what?" But discussing last night's football whilst protecting my life is not the kind of multi-tasking that I approve of.

And how often do we hear leaders about to commit to the crux saying, "watch me here"? This rather begs the question - just what was the belayer doing before you got to the crux? Reading a book, chatting, even watching the world go by? Shouldn't we expect our belayer to be watching us - all the time? I do.

> "We are all still friends - rather than friends who are still."

There are many other times when I'd like to feel at ease explaining what I want from my belayer - be it smooth clipping on a sport route or inch-perfect rope management when making moves close to the ground. I want to be able to say, please stand at the foot of the route or scramble up here to a better belay position. I want to be able to ask them to back up a belay or to put in a piece for an upward pull. And I want to be able to do this without them being offended or me feeling like a wimp for asking. And in truth, that's what I do these days and sod anyone who doesn't like it. It's my life.

However I'm not convinced that this is how it generally works. Cast your mind back to the last belaying abomination you saw. I'll bet it wasn't that long ago either. Was the other climber happy about it? Did they actually say anything to the belayer? Did anyone else? Did you? Climbing culture, particularly the male aspect of it, rarely allows for this degree of directness. It's almost as if some of us are more scared about causing offence than injury. We're too touchy even though we shouldn't be. Our own lives are, after all, at stake.

Happily, there is a solution, and it lies in a change in attitude. Amongst the group of people I climb with some of us have started to say what we really think about each other's belaying. This has actually been amusing. We've introduced a system of penalty cards (not literally, we aren't that sad). A yellow card is awarded for generally crap belaying, red for seriously dangerous behaviour. When someone awards a card to their belayer the rest of us tut-tut disapprovingly or enter into a discussion about whether the card was merited. Interestingly, not only has this led to an improvement in belaying standards, but the sharing of ideas about what constitutes good practice has introduced us to different and sometimes better belaying techniques.

In truth, for us, this doesn't amount to a cultural step change - the "slag-your-mates-off-rotten" ethos that prevails in our group persists. It's too deeply ingrained and too much part of the pleasure of a day out to give up. What is different however, is that we've now incorporated belaying technique into the range of acceptable subjects for which a person may be ridiculed.

We've even gone so far as to accept that what a leader wants is what they will get and that belayers should, at least for the time that they are holding the rope, consider themselves as some kind of servant of the climber and take instructions from them with good grace. I like to think that as a consequence we are all that bit safer than we used to be. And hopefully, that we are all still friends - rather than friends who are still. ■

Colin Struthers is a BMC member who's been climbing for 20 years. He'd like to thank Sydlette and Porkus Pexillius for help in researching the effects of being dropped by a crap belayer. (Names changed to protect delicate identities).

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