

North West Area Newsletter

Frogsmouth rebolt gets the go ahead

Newsletter editor: Rick Ginns

Recent conditions have seen some of the North West's winter climbing experiencing the best conditions in years, with rarely climbed routes experiencing queues! If you can tear yourself away from these exceptional circumstances I hope you enjoy reading this latest edition of North West news...

The latest North West Area meeting was held in the Cheshire climbing hotspot of Frodsham. This was partly in an effort to engage Cheshire climbers, but also because top of the agenda was the proposal to rebolt the sandstone crag of Frogsmouth quarry. The driving force behind the proposed Frogsmouth revival is Goi Ashmore, a North West activist and new router who has recently moved back to the area from South Wales. The area meeting was unanimously in favour of rebolting Frogsmouth quarry, due in part to the unreliable fixed protection already in place. This proposal falls in line with the Area's bolting policy Goi explains below:

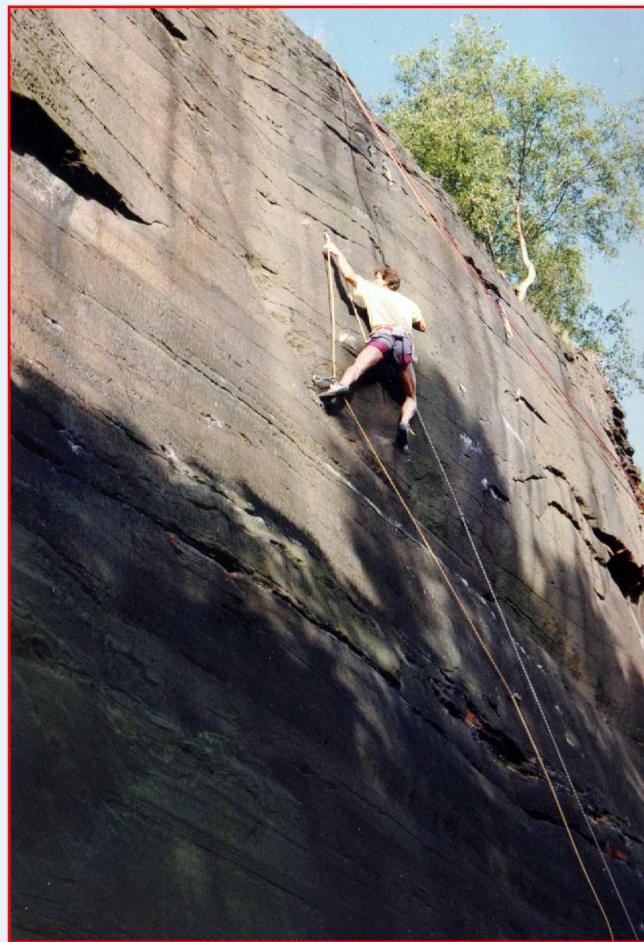
"Frogsmouth is a sandstone quarry on the north part of Runcorn Hill. It was for many years a bolting and pegging venue for aid climbers, but from the mid 80s onwards about 40 routes were freed or established using protection bolts.

If re-gearred, there would be 22 routes in the Fr6a-Fr6c+ range (of which 13 are Fr6a-6b) and 15 others mostly in the Fr7a range. The crag has never gained the popularity that its location would suggest:

- 15m from Liverpool
- 30m from Manchester
- 20m from Chester
- 2 hours by train from Euston....

This largely reflects the state of the protection:

- Most is 20+ years old.
- Traditional (thin) expansion bolts have been used - inappropriate for this rock type.
- Home made bar and hangers of unknown fixing.



If you would like to write an article on your local crag, or contribute any other article for the next newsletter, please get in touch on northwestareanews@googlemail.com. This newsletter relies on volunteers from the North West, so please get in touch!

If fully equipped, the crag would bring something extra to the area, to add to the main bouldering site of Pex and the traditional challenges of Helsby.

The rock at Frogsmouth is unusual. A very hard outer layer, containing the holds, covers a much softer inner layer. So:

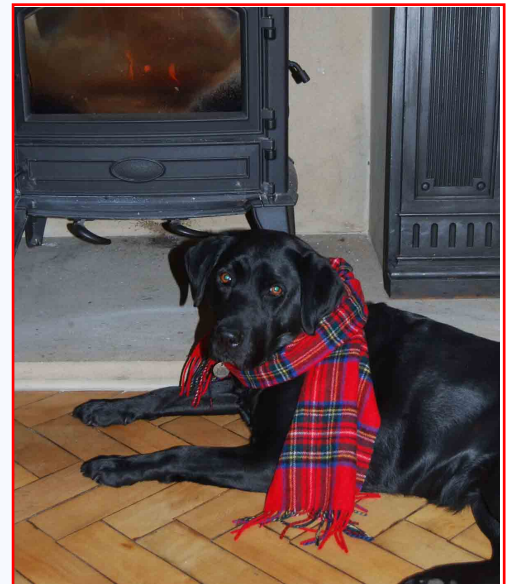


- Expansion bolts are less safe for the rock type at Frogsmouth – they put pressure on the brittle skin.
- Through bolts do not have the holding power. Tests carried out by the BMC Technical Officer, Dan Middleton in October 2009, showed failure of a 100mm x M10 stainless bolt at 5kN.
- Resin glued P 'bolts' have very substantial holding power. A 100mm x M6 P bolt showed no signs of pulling at 20kN

Goi presented his proposal at a well attended North West BMC meeting and it was unanimously agreed that the bolting programme should go ahead.: The quarry is in Cheshire. It is of a different rock type to the Lancashire quarries and can be treated differently. The crag should be sensibly bolted. Sensible means gearing the routes up reasonably, say using 5 bolts on a 15m route, rather than a strict 'like for like' policy. 8mm x 100mm resin fixed P bolts to be used throughout. Some 250 bolts would be needed to completely equip the crag. To set up a Cheshire Bolt Fund to keep costs down to the c. £770 quoted by Jim Titt's Bolt Products company. Bolts are DAV standard. All work will be done by volunteers as quickly as possible, probably in 2-3 tranches as funds reach the size needed. £270 of funds has already been promised by individuals. A Cheshire Bolt fund will need to be established.

The search for the Scarf owner

So who is this then? It's none other than Gnasher, our illustrious North West Area chair's dog. She is wearing a rather fetching tartan scarf that somebody left at the last area meeting in Frodsham. She is willing to return it in exchange for a suitably appetising dog chew. If this is your scarf, then please contact colin@newfoundations.com.



Local access issues

There are quite a few changes to the access arrangements that climbers should be aware of. Please adhere to these and other access arrangements so that we can continue to enjoy all to the North West crags. Could you also make other climbers aware of these arrangements and if in particular, if some climbers are jeopardising our access agreements, please don't just ignore it, but let them know that they may be putting hard won access arrangements at risk.

Central Qy

This quarry is designated as Open Access Land under CRoW, but is substantially fenced. If challenged when you visit this crag, please point out that it is Open Access Land. If the landowner still wishes you to leave, please do so, but report the incident to the BMC or to Les Ainsworth.

Stanworth We are currently in negotiations about access to Stanworth. Meanwhile, please could climbers avoid this quarry.

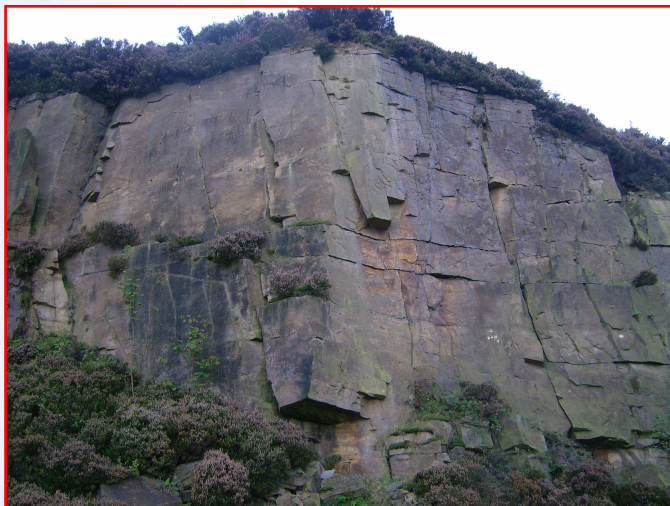
Trowbarrow Climbers are reminded that there is no camping at Trowbarrow. Also, no bolts should be placed, unless specifically agreed with the owners.

Warton Main Quarry Climbers were thanked for maintaining a voluntary ban during the bird nesting, which was successful. Although there are now several sport routes on the Terrace Wall, on which there are bolts placed with the owner's permission, please note that the owners do not wish any more bolts to be placed.

Witches: the owners decided that an annual review meeting was not needed this year, because things were running smoothly. Thanks to all climbers who have contributed to this smooth running.

Hoghton: There will be cleaning and tree removal in Feb/March, volunteers please contact Les Ainsworth.

Craig Y Longridge: It was agreed that belay bolts would be installed above the Pit directly below the poor rock at the top.



The impressive Central quarry

©Rick Ginns

Dates for the diary

The area meetings going into 2010 have been arranged, and the next one is in Feb. - as is always the case everyone is welcome to come, there are usually chips and butties, oh and good debates on local climbing issues! The next meeting will also be the AGM.

February 22nd 2010 - venue: The Belmont Bull, Belmont, Lancashire

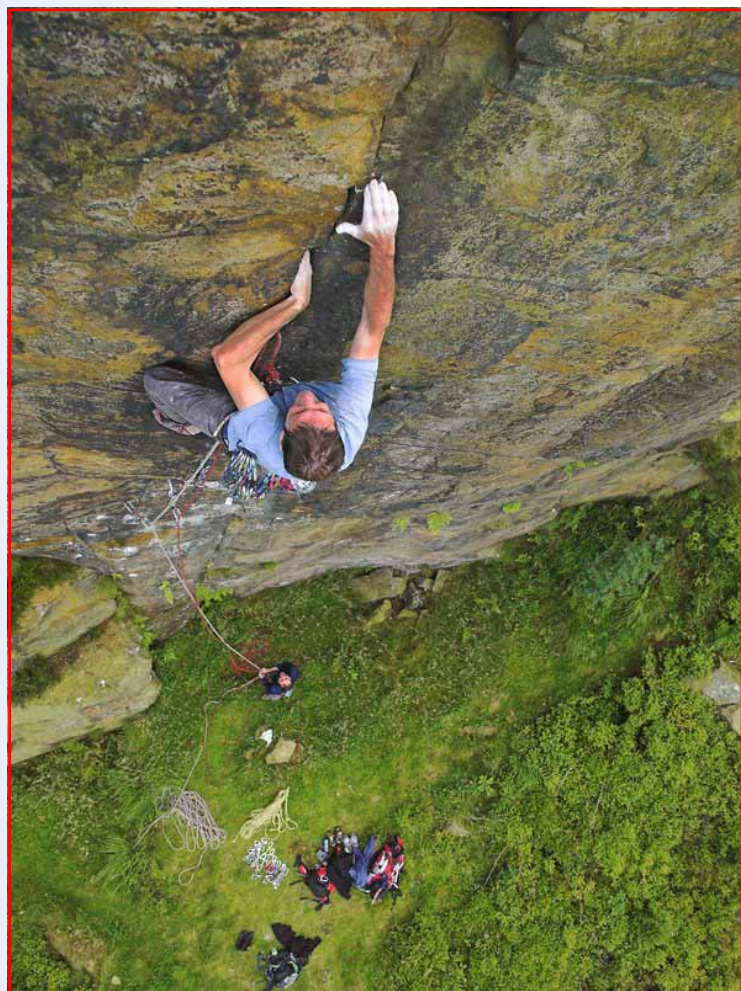
Please check details of where future meetings are to be held nearer the time via the BMC website - www.thebmc.co.uk

Wilton

Clean ups this summer have improved much of the climbing and new belay stakes will be installed shortly. It is particularly important that these stakes are used at Wilton 3 and that climbers do not belay to the fence posts.

At the Wilton Quarries where there is shooting, we generally have a good relationship with the shooting club members, but there has been at least one recorded problem. This is not acceptable, as the shooters have been very supportive of climbers and the BMC and the shooters have worked well together to establish arrangements that maximize the recreational use of the quarries. It is essential that we continue with these friendly relations between us, so that we can get the best out of these quarries for all concerned.

It is easy to differentiate between bona fide shooting club members and non-club members, because red flags should always be flying when the shooting clubs are using their ranges. If there is any shooting without these flags in place, it can be assumed that the shooters are not club members and the clubs have asked that climbers should take the car numbers of the shooters and report this to the BMC.



Geoff Mann on Master Spy Direct E4 6a. © N. Verney

The arrangements for access to Wilton 2, 3 and 4 are as follows:

Wilton 2 and 4: Climbers have priority on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

Wilton 3: Climbers have priority on Mondays, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.

On days when the shooters have priority, if there are no red flags flying, climbers can climb, but they should leave if shooters ask them to. Please try to avoid the temptation of assuming that the ranges are not being used until at least mid-afternoon.

On days when climbers have priority, if there are no climbers using the quarries, the shooters can shoot, provided that the red flags are flying, but they must stop shooting if climbers ask them to. Please allow them a reasonable time to clear up.

If, the shooters are using Wilton 2, but are not in Wilton 3, climbers can still use Wilton 3, provided that they do not climb the routes on Orange Wall (i.e. routes between Twin Cracks and Orange Corner inclusive). Climbers must then not pass the fence on the ridge between Wilton 2 and 3 and must not descend past it.

The normal access routes into the quarries are as follows:

Wilton 2 and 4: Enter via a stile at the left side of Wilton 4 when facing the quarry. When coming from Brownstones, this stile is immediately after the start of the bend on the Scout Road and is almost opposite the footpath along the top of Wilton 1. To reach Wilton 2, walk round to the ridge between Wilton 2 and Wilton 4, then descend steps into the quarry. This approach must not be used to reach Wilton 3 on shooting days.

Wilton 3: Follow the quarry track that leads diagonally up into the quarry from Scout Road, about 30 yards below the entrance to Wilton 2.

Bizarre Lancashire Crag

By Martin Kocsis

Number 3: Cow's Mouth Quarry

for years I'd driven past what appeared to be the top of an old quarry face poking out over huge spoil heaps above the M62, and hadn't done anything about it. Laziness was a major factor. One day, about eight years ago, I decided to have a proper look. Steve Hayes, drawn from a day with his fiancée by tales of unclimbed lines in a major and easily accessible quarry, drove his sputtering VW camper van across the northern moors to the layby. From there, we excitedly approached the rim of the quarry that I'd been staring at for the previous ten years. It hadn't looked like much from the road, and close up didn't it seem much better. So much for the 'Millstone of Saddleworth'.

Sometime last year, my failing memory played a trick on me, and I realised that it couldn't have been as bad as I remembered. Kate Cox, my next willing accomplice, has always lived in hope, and seemed ideal for just such a venture. "This better be worth it Kocsis, or I'll kick you up the arse!" she hinted, as we wound our way out of Greenfield and onto the moors above. In the end, it was worth it, and full details of 'Hownowbrowncow Quarry' will appear in a future edition.

The point is that we hadn't expected much, were rewarded and, filled with vigour, we drove further north to sample the potential delights of the fabulously named Cow's Mouth Quarry. You only appreciate this place when you climb on it, since the view from the nearby moorland track is reasonably uninspiring. We did three routes before darkness fell and then wisely retired to the nearby White House Inn. Three months later, I cunningly convinced a sceptical Tuesday Night...



Chris Rhodes on Flipper, S 4b

© C.Rhodes

Night Team to visit and, despite initial guffaws, no one left the crag before dark or before having done at least eight routes each, I dangled a famous Macclesfield-based publisher off the end of my rope on 'Z Crack', to hoots from the rest of the team. Others soon followed his example. Flying time was clocked up on this thuggish route, and we left the crag more than satisfied. The best time to visit is a warm summer evening after work, when the thought of queuing on Stanage or wherever is too much to bear. The pub serves a fine array of puddings.

In Praise of Lester Mill

By Les Ainsworth

I had been trying to get Dave to climb in the Alps for some years, and at last, towards the end of July this year, we arrived at Tre Cime. After a night in the car, we set off along the tourist rack and less than an hour later we had had our first look at the Cima Grande and were at the foot of the Piccolissima. Our first route was to be the Preuss Crack, a 10 pitch VS which follows a prominent chimney splitting most of the Piccolissima. After three trivial pitches we reached the famous Preuss Wall, which required three or four VS moves to reach and then pass a peg. This pitch ended just below the chimney. The next few pitches were classic chimney climbing, mostly easy VS climbing, or at least they would have been had I not managed to get my rucksack stuck at one point. Finally, the chimney widened into a gully and we were soon at the top and having a snack before the abseil descent.

We agreed that though the climbing was at the low end of VS, the position and the fine line made it very worthwhile. All the awkward bits had good pegs nearby and there were bolts on most stances. Just over the top we met some folk from Preston and shared ropes to speed up the abseils down the dreaded Dulfer Couloir, where helmets are a must.



Cima Grande

© Dave Cronshaw

The next day were intending to jump a few grades and go for the Comici Route on the Cima Grande (E2, 5c), so we awoke shortly after 5 am, knocked back a couple of slices of bread and jam washed down with cold coffee and left the hut before 6. By 6.15 we were at the foot of the route, the weather looked great and though we could see three parties on the climb, they were all at least 4 pitches up, so everything looked very promising. However, we were in for quite a surprise – there were at least

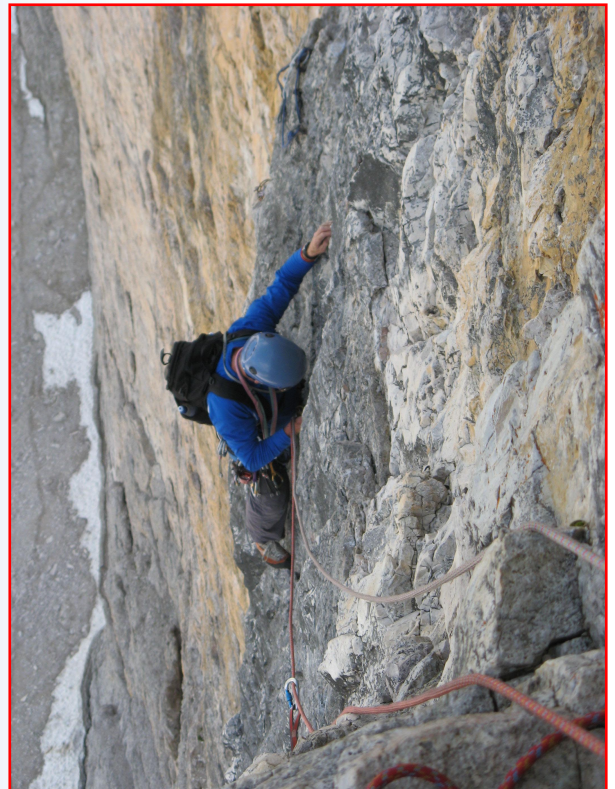


Queues on the Comici route © D. Cronshaw

the longest of the hard pitches at 40 metres. I managed the first bit alright, but then came a steep shallow groove that just did not want to let me up (even after grabbing a couple of pegs). At the very top of this there was a really long move on small holds, to swing right and reach a more hospitable last few metres. This left one Hard VS pitch to end the hardest climbing. For the last hard pitch, Dave decided to go up the left side of a short pillar, which looked to have some suspect rock on it, though it turned out to be quite solid, and soon he was at a large roof, which looked pretty daunting. There was a good Friend at the roof, but Dave then asked me to watch the rope. Not a good sign. However, after a few minutes hesitation at the edge of the roof, he seemed to find a hold, and had cracked it. For once, I found this to be a relatively easy pitch, but nonetheless, I was glad to pass the roof and reach rock that was definitely not overhanging. The first such rock for seven pitches (about 800 feet). It was now about 3pm and there were

6 other parties hidden on the first and second belay ledges, waiting their turn to tackle the first hard pitch. Eventually, after two parties in front had decided to give up, Dave started on the first crux pitch at 9.15. I found it a sustained 25 metres and though the hard moves were fairly low, it didn't really relent until the last few moves to the stance. It was a hanging stance, and the pegs looked like ones I had last seen in the sixties, but nevertheless, I was glad to be there and above the first crux pitch. The rock on the next pitch looked a bit worrying at the start, but it turned out to be better than expected. It led to another small hanging stance and again no bolts. In fact there was not one bolt on the whole route. The next two pitches eased off a little and led to a reasonable stance, but the climbing was still very steep.

The next pitch started alright, but it was slightly overhanging for most of the way and was again very steep. By the time that I reached the belay I was getting concerned about the next pitch, which was supposed to be the crux and was clearly very sustained. It was also



Steep climbing - Cima Grande © D. Cronshaw

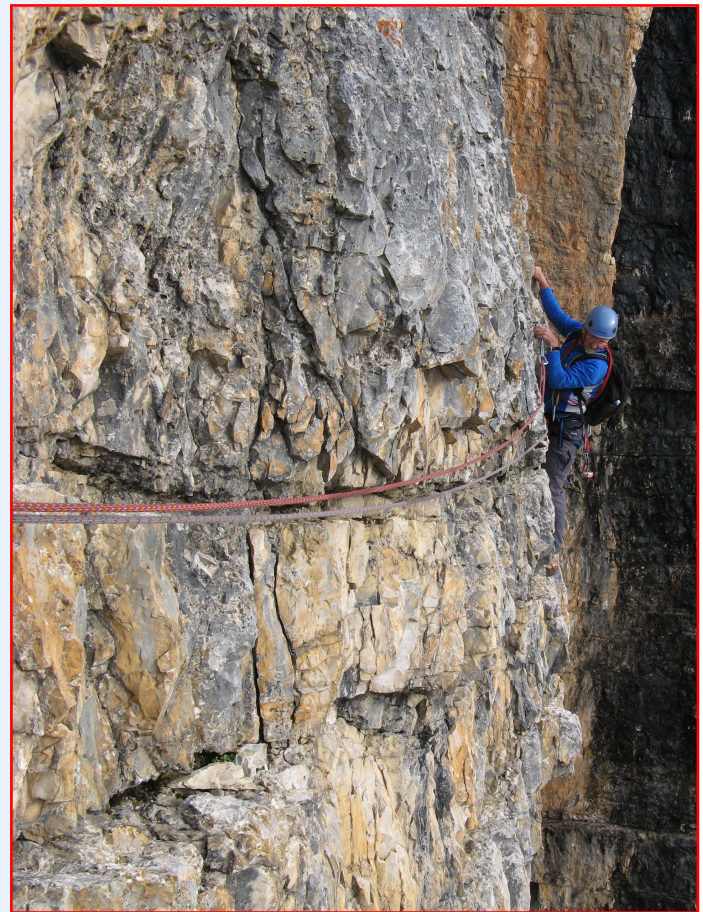


Committing climbing © D.Cronshaw

By the time that we had done the last two Grade III pitches to the top it was after 8pm. The abseils down would take a couple of hours at least and it would be dark soon after 9. As we walked round the Ringband ledge we found a small cave and decided to bivvy, but we had been too confident when we set out that we would either fail fairly low down or get up in plenty of time, so we were ill-prepared for it. The bivvy was pretty cold and every time that I got comfortable and started to warm up, I got cramp, so there was a steady cycle of either cramp or shivering throughout the night. Nevertheless, it was one of my best days ever on the crag. Next morning we got down, booked into a hotel in Misurina and then fell asleep for most of the afternoon.

For the rest of our time in the Dolomites we did lots more good climbing, but we were struck by the seriousness of it. We found that whilst harder moves were generally well protected, there were some necky run outs. It was common to find oneself 15 metres above the last runner and route finding was not always straightforward. A slight misinterpretation of the guide can easily find you 20 metres off route on a 1,000 foot crag, and often 15 or 20 metres above your last runner.

8 pitches left, but the hardest of these was Hard Severe and so everything was in the bag. Or was it. We traversed easily into a groove and chimney system, but the rock was wet. Also, whilst there had been ample protection on the seven hard pitches, pegs were now much rarer. Wet rock also feels a lot slipperier when you are 15 to 20 metres above your last decent runner. This all slowed us down surprisingly, but steadily we moved towards the final obstacle, a traverse along the lip of a massive roof. We eventually reached a wet chimney at the right side of this roof and got onto the lip quite easily. Dave split the pitch after 10 metres to avoid rope drag round the arête and it was a good job that he did. The whole pitch was supposed to be 30 metres, but even after splitting it, we ran out 40 metres and protection over the last half of this was non-existent. Quite a serious pitch for Hard Severe we both thought.

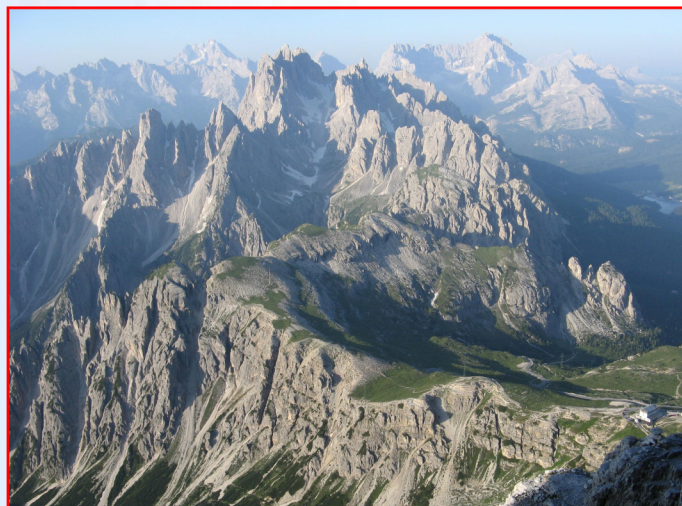


Unprotected Traverse!

© D.Cronshaw

This can feel like pretty serious stuff and can put you well above the guidebook time. This made me recall our recent debate about retrobolting Lester Mill. If such crags are bolted, how will climbers ever manage to move onto the bigger crags where the bolts just aren't there? So, by all means go to walls and Sport crags to improve your technique, but also use our smaller crags to learn the skills of Trad climbing and then take up the real rock climbing challenge and get onto the big crags.

FEEDBACK!



The Dolomites, aerial view

© D.Cronshaw

It's always good to receive feedback, so if you have anything you want to object to or you feel things could be better, please contact us at northwestareanews@googlemail.com!

This item refers specifically to Jack Scout Cove

“ Could I raise quick issue with this month's newsletter about the article by Karl Lunt on page 9? Having attended Lancaster Uni. and climbed all around the crags he is describing, I'm not sure he does them justice...but that's an aside, I do take some of his points about lack of traffic (even if I don't get on with his rhetoric). Anyway, that's not my reason for emailing... Karl says "And if lowering off the in-situ bolts seems like a soft option why not try going the full height of the crag and having a real adventure?" I believe this would be contrary to the access agreement and doing so would cause issues in future. The bolts were installed for good reason, as highlighted on the BMC RAD pages. *The crag is owned by the National Trust and is designated as a SSSI owing to its rare flora. There are three species of rare tree in the area including the Lancashire whitebeam. The cliff top heath and grassland is also of special interest. Climbers are asked to respect the following guidelines:*

- 1. There should be no vegetation removal (including gardening ivy).***
- 2. Please avoid using trees or bushes for runners.***
- 3. Use bolt abseil descent points where fitted.***

That's all...people should use their common sense and would hope that this wouldn't occur, but wanted to bring it to your attention nonetheless. Cheers,
Dan Matthewman

PS. very good work from the BMC of late, including valuable work to raise public profile. Recently had pleasure of climbing with Henry Folkard too, nice guy. Not all issues are black and white, but on balance, I'm very proud to be a member of the organisation. ”

New Hut for Lancashire club

By Richard Toon

Lancashire Mountaineering Club are planning a new hut in Snowdonia - and they're looking for help from like-minded individuals and clubs to make the project a reality.

Lancashire Mountaineering Club has recently acquired a piece of land in Snowdonia, about a mile outside Beddgelert. There is a derelict building on the site at the moment which the club has planning permission to develop into a hut. The Club has raised a significant proportion of the estimated costs but is looking for ways to raise the full amount needed to complete the project.

We have recently introduced a new category of club membership. Associate membership is aimed particularly at like-minded individuals who are already members of the BMC but are not in an affiliated club. Associate membership would last for five years, at a total fee which would be substantially less than our full membership over the same period. Associate members would get access to our existing huts in the Lakes and in Scotland, as well as to Beddgelert, once the project is completed. Associate members would be able to take a guest.

We're also interested in seeking the support of any existing established mountaineering club who might be interested in joining with us in this project. There are several ways that we envisage that a partnership could develop. For example, a club could "block book" one or more of our huts for a set period of weeks for several years in advance. Or there could be a joint membership arrangement.

If you would like more details about the LMC Associate membership or would like to discuss joint club partnership arrangements, please contact Richard Toon via r.toon@talk21.com

