



# Gower Power

## Stuart Llewellyn gets going at the Gower Climbing Festival

**T**he idea was simple: arrange a campsite for people to stay in, persuade a pub to let a mass of hungry, thirsty climbers into their establishment (not too difficult), and get people climbing on the Gower. How hard could it be?

The Gower peninsula is famously acknowledged as the first Area of Natural Outstanding Beauty in the United Kingdom. Any visitor will see why the area bagged this title back in 1956 – packed full of stunning beaches and welcoming villages, it's an outdoor mecca for surfing, paragliding, coastal path walking and, of course, copious amounts of climbing.

The idea of a Gower Climbing Festival had been talked about for nearly two years at our fledgling Area Meetings and BMC Volunteers' Officer, Martin Kocsis, was extremely keen. Fast forward 18

months and this little side project seemed to have taken over my life for weeks leading up to G-Day – the first weekend in September. The aim of the weekend was to encourage climbing on the Gower Peninsula, and to collect donations to the South Wales Bolt Fund (SWBF) and the RNLI.

Our festival base for each morning was Pitton Cross campsite on the south of Gower – home to the legendary BMC gazebo and the Evolv shoe tent. In the evenings the Worm's Head Hotel (future home of the 2010 BMC AGM) played host to the evening's entertainment. Friday night saw Martin 'Quizmaster' Kocsis on hand with a set of fiendish questions. Relaxing with a beer, I was quite relieved to see that the contestants didn't solely consist of people from within 20 miles of the Gower. An evening of beers and laughs was enjoyed by all, before the festival-goers headed



back to the campsite to await the glorious weather that I'd booked with the Met Office.

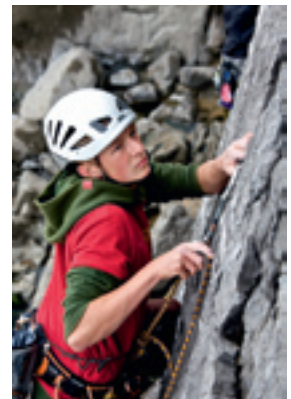
Saturday's weather wasn't brilliant, but it was at least dry (what a waste of money that Met office deposit was!). The morning saw the festival team in a full flurry of activity around the BMC gazebo. Sporting a rather eye-catching orange uniform they were busy registering participants, bribed by a £1 discount voucher for the pub and locally-sourced bacon and eggs rolls, served up by Martin 'head chef' Kocsis. These went down a treat: "Thanks for a really friendly reception with tasty butties, my trip from the Lakes was well worth it," said Jenny from Cumbria. Other team members were on hand to pass on local knowledge and selling our specially-produced, limited-edition Gower festival topos.

With bellies full, the masses hit the delights on offer: Three Cliffs, Fall Bay, King Wall, and Lewes Castle. Five teams also took to Gower's premier trad crag, Yellow Wall, which saw more action in one afternoon than it probably had all summer. As dusk fell, droves of climbers headed back to the bar, clutching their beer token, to refuel on bar meals and ale. An initial acoustic set from a local guitarist was followed by a raffle in

support of the SWBF (prizes included a bouldering mat, ropebags, guidebooks, and even a kite from the campsite's shop); all wrapped up by headline band White Dice.

Sunday morning was a repeat of Saturday – with slightly sorer heads and wobblier climbs – before the first-ever Gower Climbing Festival was declared a wrap. It was also a big hit – 75 people turned up from all over the UK – and Matt from Swansea declared it: "The best-ever Gower Climbing Festival... ever!". You can't say fairer than that – all that remains is to say a big thanks to everyone who made the journey to the peninsula to climb with us. We'll see you at the 2010 BMC AGM (April 16 – 18) or, if not, at the second-ever Gower Climbing Festival. Keep the first weekend in September free! ■

Stuart Llewellyn is the South Wales National Council Rep and organiser of the inaugural Gower Climbing Festival. He'd like to say a big thanks to helpers Donna Carless, Liz Collyer, Si Rawlinson, Si Robinson, Charles Romijn, Adam Shore, Jacky Tyrie and Matt Woodfield. Special thanks to Ian at Pitton Cross campsite, Adrian at the Worm's Head Hotel, and Dean and the boys



## About BMC South Wales

The BMC in South Wales is a relatively young wing feeding into BMC Cymru. Its quarterly meetings alternate between Swansea's Dynamic Rock and Cardiff's Boulders climbing centres. It organises crag restoration days using volunteers from SWAG (South Wales Action Group). Previous crags seeing attention from the group over the last two years are Llanbradach, Penallta, Trebanog and Mountain Ash. Others in the pipeline include Oxwich and Taffs Well. To get involved turn up to the next meeting on the 25th November at Dynamic Rock.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk>

New BMC community website to easily find out what's happening in your region.

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

View pictures from the 2009 event, visit in anticipation for 2010 festival.

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

Read about which sports crags have benefited from gear replacement.