

# The Professional **Mountaineer**

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Instructors

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British Association  
of International  
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### Our front cover

Mikaela Toczek climbs Scout Crack (S, 4a), Little Star Wall, Gower at 7 months pregnant.  
© Zeanne Thomas

### Woodland Carbon scheme



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# EDITORIAL



ABOVE The editor visiting Eagle Hunters in Mongolia. © Steve Long collection

**Before every flight, the aircraft safety briefing includes a short section on what to do if things go badly wrong. Despite the odds of a crash landing being miniscule, passengers are asked to concentrate while this advice is repeated.**

Mountains and crags are dynamic environments, and there is substantial evidence that erosion is accelerating. After the covid lockdowns I have noticed holds breaking more often; I suspect this is indicative of reduced traffic – which in turn suggests that collectively we probably all break the occasional handhold or foothold when scrambling or climbing. A headfirst fall on the “Sticky Mix” wall near Llandudno got me reflecting, because it was a route that is within my soloing capabilities in terms of the technical grade. Of course, my belayer was concentrating and the route was well protected, so my fall became just an exciting interlude.

Contrast my post-covid adventure with the popularity of the movie “Free

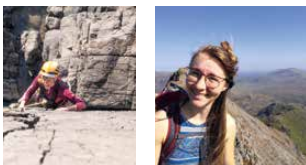
Solo”. The difficulties of the climb are emphasised but there is practically no mention of the possibility of holds breaking or rock being dislodged from above – as with the plane, the odds are tiny, but they still exist. In the Alps, these hazards have led authorities to close several *Voie normales* this summer.

Collectively, we travel over a lot of wild terrain. There will always be elements outside our control, and consequences can be tragic, as we have witnessed within our community. Personally, I am going to cut down on soloing – both unroped and with clients whose belaying skills are untested. Collectively, as leaders, we all need to consider including within our group briefing, like the airlines, more information about the ‘elephant in the room’: what to do if the leader *does* fall.

Within this magazine, we explore and illustrate some of the rewards and the challenges of our adventurous activities.

**Steve Long**  
Technical editor

## OUR COVER



### Zeanne Thomas

Zeanne is an Osteopath, climber, creative and occasional photographer. She runs her own Osteopathy clinic in Mumbles, Swansea and also creates engravings for climbing brushes through her Etsy store Woodzea Crafts.

## OUR AUTUMN ISSUE CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE



### Simon Verspeak

Simon is an experienced International Mountain Leader and Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor having led treks across the Alps, Himalayas and worldwide. He is based in Snowdonia and is a member of AMI, BAIML and MTA.



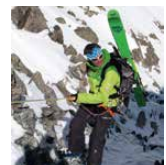
### Allan Hunn

Allan completed his International Mountain Leader Assessment in March 2022. He is also a Mindset & Life Coaching Practitioner. Allan is a member of BAIML and MTA.



### Sam Cartright

Sam is Director of the county food charity Buckinghamshire Food Partnership and a freelance nature conservation advisor. She is also a keen ultrarunner, a Mountain Leader trainee and is a member of MTA.



### Andy Townsend

Andy is the Head of Snowsports at Glenmore Lodge, Scotland's national outdoor training centre. He is an International Mountain Leader and a Ski Guide. Andy is a member of BMG and MTA.



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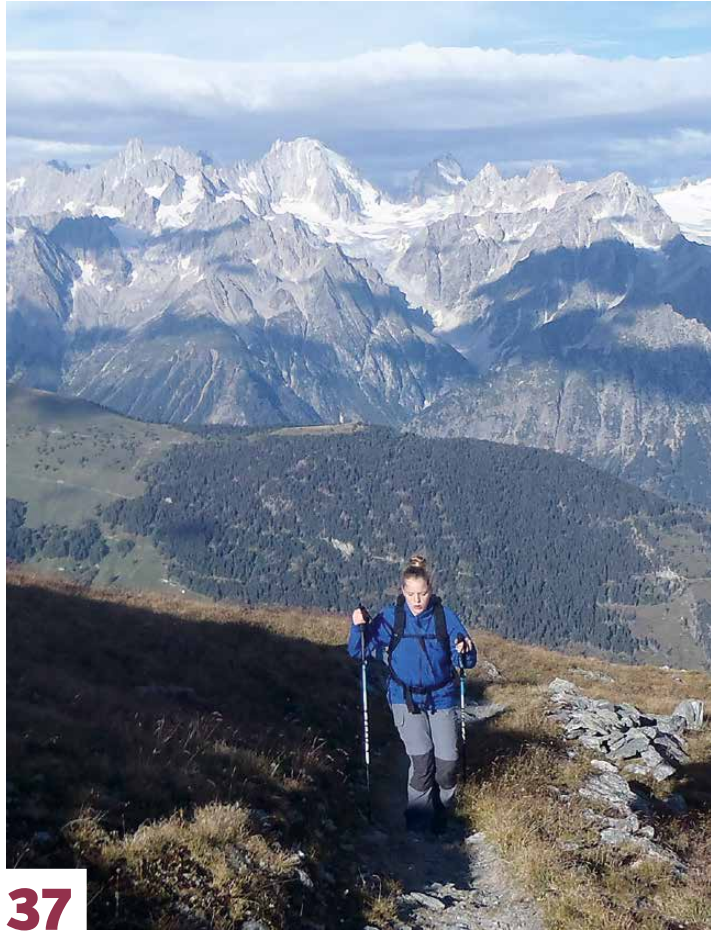
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**Feeling inspired?**  
If you would like to contribute to the next issue, please contact **Belinda Buckingham** at [belinda@mountain-training.org](mailto:belinda@mountain-training.org)

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# NEWS



## ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEERING INSTRUCTORS (AMI)

After voting in CPD as a prerequisite of membership several years ago, AMI made this a mandatory requirement on 1st July, 2022. CPD displays a clear commitment to self-development and ensures that members' knowledge and skills stay relevant and up-to-date. This ultimately creates a more professional association.

AMI are committed to ensuring that members who were unable to comply with CPD will be supported to regain full membership. To this end, they can re-join as a non-active member allowing them to attend CPD events or self-accredit CPD on CMS. Then they can upgrade to full membership as soon as they have acquired the necessary three CPD points.

We welcome Scott Kirkhope to the role of the new AMI Development Officer (DO). Scott will shadow the current DO from November this year, and will take on the role fully at the AGM on 22nd April, 2023.

AMI continues to develop its relationship with the National Centres and we recently provided all three with a presentation on what AMI offers, and how it supports its members, which will be delivered on MCI training courses.

AMI is a proud partner of the Women's Trad Festival and Irish Women's Rock Festival and provided instructors to both of these events.

It is with great sadness that I report the passing of two of our members, Rob Brown and Tom Furey (also a BMC Access Rep for Wales). Our thoughts go out to their family and friends.

**Rob Pugh** (Chairman)



© Alex Ekins

The AMI is the representative body for professionally qualified Mountaineering and Climbing Instructors in the UK and Ireland and is committed to promoting good practice in all mountaineering instruction. Full members hold the Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor's qualification or the higher qualification Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor.

T 01690 720123  
www.ami.org.uk



## BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDES (BMG)

A new positive initiative for the BMG and E.N.S.A [Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme] commenced with our aspirants taking part in a joint course with French counterparts in the Mont Blanc range. We have also accepted seven applicants to our training scheme for the next cycle.

While the fine weather at the start of the summer was welcome, the prolonged heatwave and record temperatures are a clear illustration of the climate change we have been witnessing for many years in the mountains. Guides are busy working with clients who have been keen to get back to alpine mountaineering after two covid restricted summers. Flexibility and conservative choices of itinerary are the order of the day as we see snow and ice melt and permafrost retreat in the high mountains.

The BMG experienced another difficult issue at the beginning of May when our underwriter reduced their offer of insurance cover. A period of uncertainty followed before we were able to secure cover and a return for many to resume their summer plans in the alps. Some guides redirected their work with clients to some of the remote and challenging parts of the UK. Photo provided by Mark Walker guiding on the mightily impressive sea cliffs of Shetland.

**Martin Doyle** (President)



© Mark Walker

The BMG is a member of the International Federation of Mountain Guides (IFMGA), currently comprising 24 nations worldwide, with growing membership, it is the professional organisation that trains and assesses Mountain Guides in all disciplines. A British Mountain Guide operates to the highest recognised level throughout the world, in all terrain and in diverse roles.

T 01690 720386  
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## BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN LEADERS (BAIML)

As you're reading this the summer season is in full swing – we hope you're all busy adventuring.

2022 has seen a new wave of training and assessment courses running that are giving those aspirants, whose journey has been delayed by Covid, a chance to move forward – congratulations to you all.

We appreciate that working in the EU has been a hugely complex issue for many members since the end of the Withdrawal Agreement – and it is likely to continue to present difficulties for a considerable time. This requires governmental cooperation to resolve – but the Association is working hard with UIMLA and MTUK&I to secure clarity regarding the recognition of the British IML award and working rights in several EU countries post Brexit. We're also representing our members' needs and ongoing problems to the UK's government at every opportunity. This is a complicated affair and takes time and we have allocated significant funds to gaining definitive legal advice where possible which we will share with members as soon as we can.

On a positive note, BAIML is working with MTA, AMI and BMG to improve cross-association recognition of CPD as there is such a wealth of knowledge and training opportunities which should be available to all members. Soon, we will also be able to publish a full programme of CPD around our AGM weekend which this year is to be held 25-27th November in Buxton.

Stay safe, Stay happy.

**Kelvyn James** [President]



The BAIML is the professional association for International Mountain Leaders (IMLs) in the UK. It represents the UK at UIMLA, the Union of International Mountain Leader Associations, which is the international governing body for IMLs. Full members hold the IML award and are committed to a dedicated CPD programme.

T **01690 720272**  
[www.baiml.org](http://www.baiml.org)



## MOUNTAIN TRAINING ASSOCIATION (MTA)

We have a great programme of workshops lined up for our Biennial Conference this autumn, taking place at the Field Studies Council's Blencathra Centre on Saturday 19th and Sunday 20th November: Including the opportunity to develop your leadership, and teaching and learning skills in line with Mountain Training's updates to the walking qualifications syllabus. We will also be running some workshops specifically on the Teaching and Learning aspect of the walking qualifications later this autumn.

Nominations are now open for our first ever "Volunteer Awards" for members who have gone above and beyond, shown initiative and drive, and made a difference. Categories and criteria can be found on the MTA website and the awards cover areas such as the environment, youth engagement, well-being, as well as equity, diversity, and inclusion. If you have a fellow member in mind, send us your nomination.

We are looking to expand our regional groups and are recruiting for a regional coordinator to build a community of members in the Somerset and Dorset area; if you are interested or would like more details about this volunteer role, drop us a line.

Our 2022 mentoring programme is underway with an additional 22 new mentors trained and a total of 30 mentors starting to support trainee members through their consolidation phase as they work toward assessments. Developing the mentoring programme to make it more accessible to trainee members throughout the year will be a key part of our development plan.

**Belinda Buckingham** [Development Officer]



The MTA is a membership organisation providing support and development opportunities for all candidates of Mountain Training. Promoting good practice and continuing personal development opportunities for walking, climbing and mountaineering leaders and coaches. Full members hold one or more of the Mountain Training qualifications.

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# PYRENEES

## – World War II escape and evasion route

**Researching and retracing the second World War (WWII) escape and evasion routes gives a fascinating and rewarding perspective from which to appreciate both the mountains and the incredible bravery of inspirational people.**

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ALLAN HUNN



**Allan Hunn** completed his International Mountain Leader (IML) Assessment in March 2022. Allan researches WWII escape and evasion routes all over the world, he aims to publish a Pyrenees Escape & Evasion Walkers Guidebook. Allan is also a Mindset & Life Coaching Practitioner. Allan can be contacted at [allan.hunn@btopenworld.com](mailto:allan.hunn@btopenworld.com)

During WWII a myriad of escape lines were set up in the various theatres of operations to enable Allied escapers and evaders to return home and continue the fight against Axis forces. The Pyrenees are particularly notable for escape and evasion routes, not only for Allied personnel but also for Jewish refugees. A huge number of cols between France, Andorra and Spain were used as crossing points in all seasons. Walk across just about any col on the Pyrenees borders and you will be walking in the footsteps of courageous people seeking safety from oppression.

I discovered the passion for researching and retracing WWII escape and evasion routes whilst preparing for my International Mountain Leader (IML) assessment. The Pyrenees, in a sense, were the most convenient area in which to build the necessary IML experience due to industry work links with Toulouse. Many of

the trips involved staying in the foothills of the Ariège region of the Pyrenees at Lesparrou Retreats, a great springboard to the high Ariège. Lesparrou Retreats is owned by Louise Chandler and Dave Norris, and I am extremely appreciative of their support in my IML journey.

For this journey I chose the evasion route of 12 evaders, seven American airmen and five Free French. They were guided by Emile Delpy and various assistants.

Their journey was a mixture of success and tragedy in exceptionally difficult conditions. Of the 12 evaders, three were to lose their lives just after crossing the Port d'Arinsal into Andorra on the night of 24/25 October 1943 in winter conditions.

Time did not allow us to complete the full evasion route of three days, but it did allow for the most significant part from Etang Soulcem to Arinsal. Unbeknown to us at the time, our





MAIN PHOTO Looking back into France on the ascent to Port d'Arinsal. 1. Estanys de Montmantell in Andorra, where the airmen most likely collapsed of exhaustion. 2. Remembrance poppy placed at Port d'Arinsal. 3. Cabane du Rat, apart from the doors and window bars the Cabane blends in extremely well with the environment.



journey was almost exactly 72 years later than the escapers and evaders but in much more benign conditions.

For this journey, four of us shared a hire car from Toulouse Airport and overnights at Lesparrou Retreats which is about a 1hr 30mins drive. Early the next morning we set off from Lesparrou for the Etang Soulcem via Tarascon and Vicdessos which takes approximately 1 hour. Our intention was to cross from Etang Soulcem to Arinsal in Andorra via Port d'Arinsal and then reverse the journey the next day.

The hire car was deposited at the car park at the southern end of Etang Soulcem, where we picked up the evaders route. From the car park follow the GRT63 south parallel with the Ruisseau de Soulcem.

After 3.3km at an unnamed Cabane the GRT63 turns south easterly and starts to gain height. After ascending approximately 200m the GRT63 will continuously cross a dirt track sized for vehicles. The dirt track was intended to be a road leading to a tunnel planned at Port de Rat which was ultimately abandoned.

Continue following the GRT63 until Orri de Rat d'en haut (the GRT63 continues east over Port de Rat, which is another

evasion route). At Orri de Rat d'en haut, there will be a path T-Junction. Follow the path that heads directly south (Navigation note: My paper copy of IGN21480TR, printed 2013, does not show the path T-Junction nor a path to Port d'Arinsal, whereas digital mapping shows both). The path is well defined on the ground.

After approximately 150m there will be a pond, look west to see the Cabane de Rat which blends very well into the terrain. At this point the path will be on the left side of the valley looking up towards Port d'Arinsal, keep heading south. The terrain will start to become rocky, and the path will then lead to the right side of the valley, where it will gradually steepen until eventually reaching the Port d'Arinsal.

On reaching the Port d'Arinsal take a break and look over the Estanys de Montmantell, it is in this area that three American evaders collapsed and died: 2nd Lieutenant Harold Bailey, Technical Sergeant William Plaskett and Sergeant 'Bud' Owens. Feeling very humble our little group stood for two minutes silence and placed a poppy at Port d'Arinsal in memory of the men.



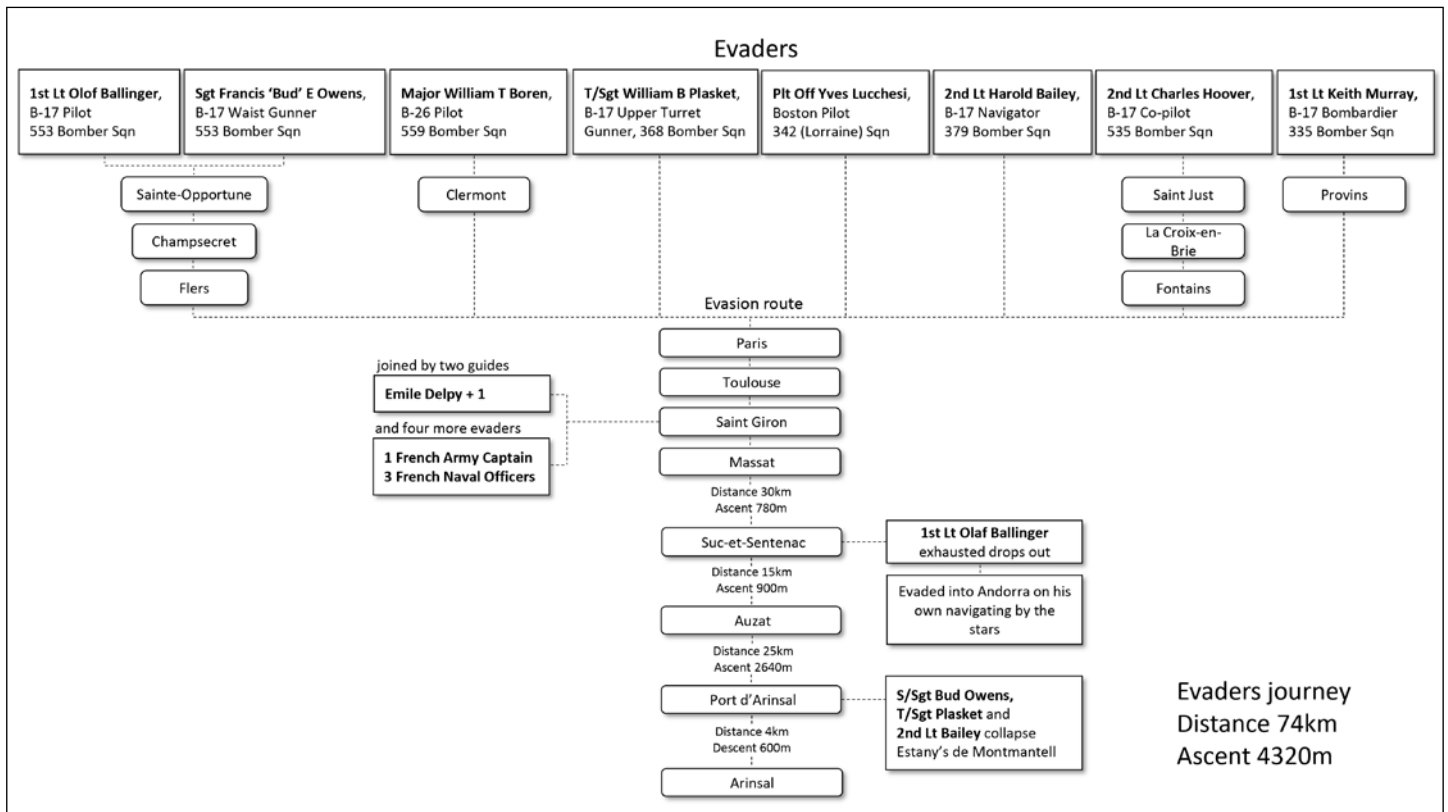


FIGURE 1. Evaders starting point and evasion route.



ABOVE AND BELOW Maps of evasion route.

© OpenStreetMap contributors



*2nd Lt Harold Bailey had become ill from taking an unintended excess of Benzedrine tablets from his survival kit. Benzedrine was included in survival kits for use in emergencies to ensure mental alertness and fatigue avoidance. At the point of collapse Sgt Bud Owens and Technical Sgt William Plasket had been supporting 2nd Lieutenant Harold Bailey for an estimated 8 hours in atrocious conditions. As nothing more than an estimate, Bud and William may well have been supporting Harold from the Etang Soulcem area, possibly over 8km and 1200m ascent!*

***“Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”.***

Emile Delpy, the chief guide, was unable to rouse the collapsed airmen, sadly he then led the surviving members of the group on to Arinsal.

From the Port d’Arinsal follow the footpath that turns westerly and descend to the Estans de Montmantell, the ground is quite steep. From the lower slopes of the Estans de Montmantell follow the footpath that maintains a parallel course with the River Montmantell to Refugi del Pla de l’Estany. After reaching the Refugi de Pla de l’Estany, continue descending southerly, eventually the route heads into forest and Arinsal where plenty of accommodation can be found.

*After reaching Arinsal, the surviving evaders made their way to Andorra City and caught a bus to the Spanish frontier, they were then escorted by the Special Operations Executive (SOE) in cars and buses to Barcelona. On 28 October 1943 they arrived in Barcelona and were hosted by the British Consulate, eventually being repatriated to Britain via Gibraltar.*

**Evader Statistics:**

- Ascent 4320m.
- Distance: 74km.
- Time: 3 days.
- Conditions: Winter.

**Our statistics:**

- Ascent: 1200m.
- Distance: 15km.
- Time: 8hrs.
- Conditions: Summer.

**Maps:**

- IGN 21480TR Vicdessos 1:25,000
- Mapa excursionista, 21 Pirineus, Andorra 1:50,000 ■

Note: There are many internet and printed resources that tell the story of Sergeant Bud Owens and his comrades, many of these including Official US records record the death of three airmen at Port de Rat. An email exchange between Mr Warren B Carah and Allan Hunn revealed that research by a Mr Claude Benet discovered that three bodies were recovered from an area just below the Port d’Arinsal, Andorra.



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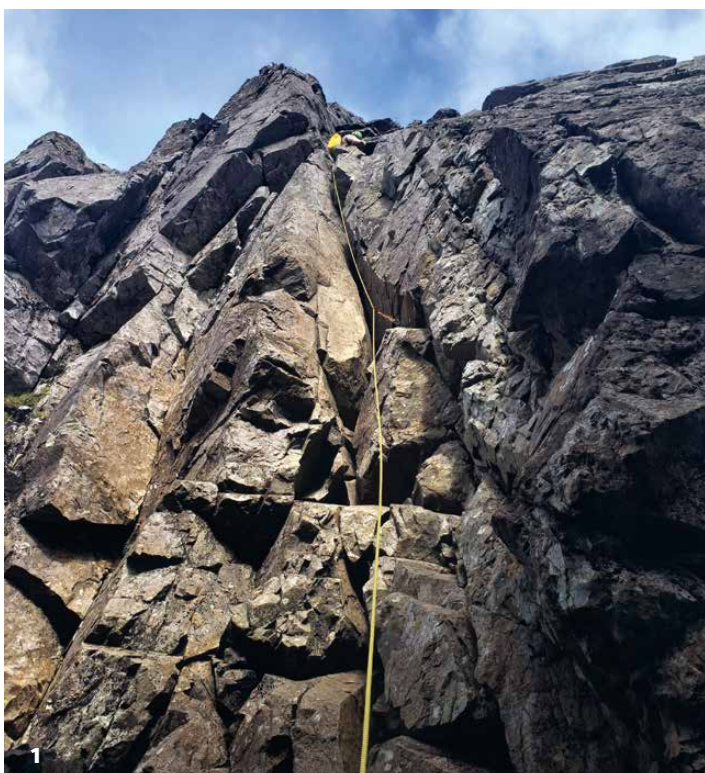
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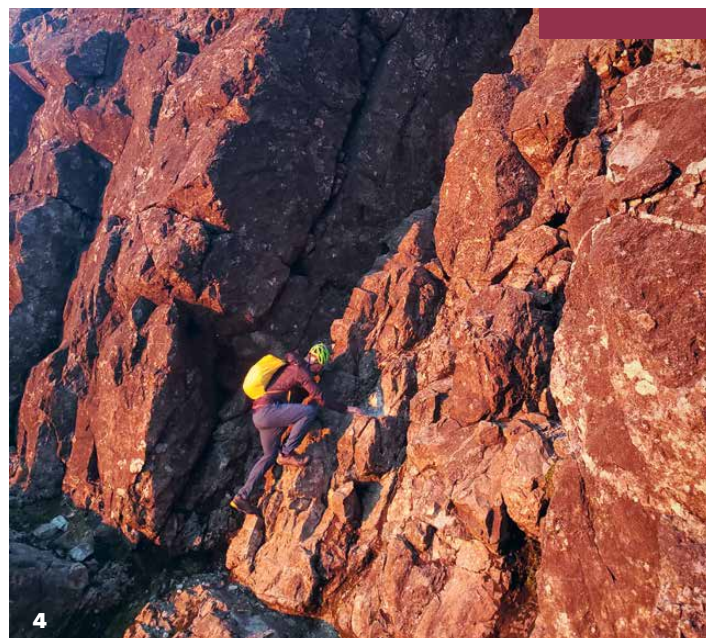
# THE Cuillin Ridge TRAVERSE

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY STUART BURNS AND JACOB WILSON

This is an account of a trip to Skye in June 2022 with the South Wales Mountaineering Club. We spent the week climbing around Skye in preparation for a one-day traverse of the Cuillin Ridge. The Ridge traverse is an alpine-style route unlike anything else in the UK with over 4000m [13,000 feet] of ascent and descent along a 12km ridge with an additional 13km approach/walk off.







MAIN PHOTO Nearing the end of the Cuillin Ridge. 1. Stuart Leading the Gap. 2. Stuart abseiling into the slightly moist gully at Kilt Rock. 3. Heading toward Clach Glas. 4. Stuart starting the final climb up Sgurr nan Gillean.

We planned to move mostly unroped on the Cuillin ridge, so after some classic climbs we prepared by climbing the Clach Glas – Bla Bheinn traverse. These peaks are outliers in the Black Cuillin, and good preparation for the main ridge traverse. The clouds cleared from the tops as we approached, and the ridge looked stunning. We opted to solo this route, given that we both had a few grades in hand to allow for safe and efficient movement. This showed us that we could move fast over technical terrain and were confident with route-finding and decision-making. The route started with some easy scrambling then straight into a tricky slab downclimb! The day was a success, despite the wet rock on the shaded, leeward side of the ridge, including the crux chimney climb on Bla Bheinn, which is committing when soaked.

This fantastic route is well worth doing in its own right, and provided an excellent test of our fitness and new partnership. Having just met a few days before, it was important to understand and trust each other when taking on a challenge as big as the Cuillin traverse. By now we had learned each other's strengths and levels of confidence, which helped to form a trusting relationship; it confirmed our decision to move mostly unroped on the ridge, and that we would need dry conditions to attempt to complete it in one day.

### Preparation

Finally, the elusive weather window arrived: a high pressure giving three days of dry weather and light winds. There was no choice now, we had to go for it. We took a day to plan and rest: packing and unpacking our bags, eating and drinking lots, reading and rereading guide books and advice on what gear to take. Mike Lates from Skye guides has a great PDF with lots of info and top tips. For a good chance at the one-day push we opted for lightweight 25l packs.

Choosing the right gear was a big part of our success. We settled on one 50m half rope, 6 nuts (sizes 3-8), DMM Dragon cams sizes 2-4, 2 alpine draws, 1 long alpine draw, 2x120cm slings on snap gates, 1x240cm sling, and a Petzl knife. We didn't use the slings, or knife and didn't use all the nuts. We each took a prusik and guide plate with two karabiners, and a head torch (used on the walk out).

We opted for approach shoes, as these climb better than boots and are much lighter and comfier. The weight savings definitely added up over the length of the ridge! For clothing, we kept it light: climbing trousers; a synthetic base layer t-shirt; thin zip up hoodie; lightweight insulated jacket and a thin wind proof. We used all our layers through the course of the day.

We both took a mix of foods, proteins, fats, sugar and carbs, because for big mountain days there is a need to maintain proper energy levels throughout. Boiled eggs, nuts, and energy bars all proved good choices. How much water to take and where to find it on the ridge was also a big discussion. We entered the grid reference of a few springs into our GPS phone app as potential fill-up points. We started the day with about half a litre – enough to get us to Loch Coir' a' Ghrunnda where we drank lots and filled up our 2 litre water bladders from the loch. The descents to two water spots *en route* were longer than we anticipated, so we continued instead. It hadn't rained for a few days, so the seeps of water referenced in the guides were not as abundant as described. We did not fill up until just below Am Bàstier, very near the end of the route. In hindsight, Jake would have willingly paid the weight penalty and carried 3l. Using a platypus hose made drinking on the go easier, but also harder to ration; be mindful of how much you're drinking if you use one.

### The Climb

After an early night we left the car at Glen Brittle campsite at 04:20. We walked in via Loch Cori' a' Ghrunnda and reached the saddle between Caisteal Gardh-chorie and Sgurr nan Eag just after 07:00. This is one of three suggested approaches which involves joining the ridge part way along and walking out to the start of the ridge and then doubling back to continue on. It made for a slightly demoralising beginning but avoided the scree slog up. We arrived at the 'start' of the ridge at Gars-Bheinn at 08:10.

The route-finding is tricky. There are so many options, and to get the ridge done in a day, making the right decision each turn is essential. There are a few sections where you could get in trouble, so care is needed to choose a safe route. We were lucky, even when we veered a bit off route, as the climbing stayed below V Diff. We took a few wrong turns, then Stuart adopted the direct



## DESTINATIONS



5. Abseiling Grey Panther at Kilt Rock. 6. Starting up Bla Bheinn.

approach – if unsure of the way, just go straight up and over. This made for some great movement, though not always the right way. Jake was brilliant at keeping us on route. Stuart would start up some wall and Jake would take a few steps round a corner and point out the route!

The infamous TD Gap (Severe) has a thrutchy off-width style move, a real one-move wonder! Don't faff around, just accept that it won't be pretty and go for it, it's easy after a bit of squirming! Kings Chimney (V Diff) is a lovely, well-protected climb. We soloed the Inaccessible Pinnacle (Mod) to save time. We opted to climb with our packs on for efficiency and this was another advantage of going lightweight.

The rock quality was good and the Gabro has so much friction that everything is a hold! On the other hand, it felt like needles on the skin by the end of the day. After the In Pinn, there were a few places where the rock was a bit loose but avoiding these was simple enough. Climbing on solid rock for hours can lull you into a false sense of security, and it took a hold breaking to remind us to test every hand and foot hold before committing.

As we neared the end, we bypassed the Bàsteir Tooth, as we were knackered and it looked daunting. For next time maybe. The final climb up to Sgurr Nan Gillean in the setting sun was a highlight. The entire face smouldered red. The final pitches were a combination of chimney and arête climbing, steep and exposed, and provided a spectacular finish! We reached the summit of Sgurr Nan Gillean at 22:24. 14 hours and 14 minutes for the traverse.

The scramble down the East ridge as the sun set was fun but difficult after a long day. The path meanders and is hard to follow by torchlight. We walked off the wrong way for too long, but eventually turned North to meet the Coire Riabhach path and the Sligachan where the van awaited us. We reached it at 02:00. It felt fantastic to fall into a car seat and finally rest. It had taken us 21 hours and 40 minutes from car full circle back to the car again.

### Reflection

What an experience! We must have been in a strange flow state for most of it. Endless scrambling, the down climbing as hard as the climbing. Moving constantly over technical terrain for 14 hours leads to some special moments. The beautiful combination of three limbs pressing on the rock to allow the other to reach up or down. Over and over again. Not thinking, just moving. Not seeing, just sensing the path. Each step measured and precise, with no room for error. Time seemed to dilate, each time we checked many hours had passed in what felt like a few minutes!

With hindsight the best way to prepare is to climb many long grade 3 scrambles before your attempt and down-climb each route. Being confident to climb quickly down could make or break a single-day attempt. And being used to big exposure is also very helpful! There was more abseiling (and more misleading ab stations) on the ridge than we had anticipated. We took a 50m rope and having the versatility of a longer rope gave us the option to abseil rather than backtrack when we were off route. It also saved us from having to ascend the rope when an intermediate abseil anchor was missed. The route-finding was difficult, and like any route, it's the little clues that show the way: slightly lighter rock where people and ropes have been. Some polish and crampon scratches helped. However, the wrong way can sometimes be equally worn, with people following it and then back-tracking when they come to a dead end. We took the lightweight Cicerone guidebook, with great photo topographies and simple descriptions it came in very handy! We would definitely recommend it over other mini guides.

Looking back, the push and pull between our styles worked extremely well at each decision point. A reconnaissance of sections prior to the traverse could have improved our completion time, but we are glad we went for the on-sight. There will always be something special about climbing a route for the first time: overcoming the challenges, forging new partnerships, the triumphs and missteps, the sense of discovery as you peer over the next peak, climbing through the clouds, losing yourself in the purity of movement, for all of that there's no finer route in the UK than the Cuillin Ridge. ■



**Stuart Burns** is a multi-activity instructor working as Senior Instructor at Gower Activity Centres. He is one of organisers of the BMC Gower Climbing Festival @gowerclimbingfestival and BMC Access Rep for Gower. He recently completed his MCI training at Plas y Brenin.



**Jacob Wilson** discovered climbing after he left the suburbs of Chicago at thirty-years old to move to Alaska. There he learned to splitboard and climb ice by headlamp in Eklutna Canyon. After moving to Idaho for his MFA, he developed a passion for rock climbing and developing new crags. Currently he resides in Cardiff, Wales where he is working on adding a PhD and surfing to his resume.

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WORDS AND PHOTOS BY SIMON VERSPEAK

# SLING PROGRESSIONS –

## from Mountain Leader to International Mountain Leader

An oft asked question [mainly by climbers] on Mountain Leader training courses is, can I use a sling? My easy answer is within the scope of the scheme we use the rope only.

Certainly, if you've never used a sling before it could complicate things. Moving on from training courses though I will often discuss with candidates how they can simplify their working. For example, if you are working on steep grassy hills, is carrying a long sling more useful (and lighter) than carrying 30 metres of rope when the likely use is confidence roping only? My preferred solution here is often to carry 3-4m of rope. However, on mountainous terrain in the likes of Snowdonia or the Scottish Highlands the rocky nature of the ground means we are more likely to carry the longer rope. And so, knowing how to use a sling and a karabiner to create an anchor and be able to Italian hitch belay a client will significantly speed the building and operation of a simple rope work systems. Within the context of the

IML scheme anchors are often different to those encountered on UK and Irish mountains. Trees can be present high on trails and many paths in the high alpine are equipped with fixed metal gear, typically ladders, cables or chains and bolts. Therefore, candidates are trained to use slings and karabiners, to utilise the ease that clipping a metal anchor presents.

For most people a sling and karabiner is likely to be used in one of three different ways;

- 1 Creating a belay by threading it or looping it over a boulder, a tree or through bolts.
- 2 Creating a master point to then use a karabiner to belay using an Italian (or Munter) hitch.
- 3 Attaching self to belay.

ABOVE Providing a top rope on a fixed line. 1. Sling equalised by a big fat knot. 2. Sling equalised with an overhand knot.







3. Self attachment to anchor. 4. Climbing Alpine ironmongery.

We can split these skills into creating a belay, belaying and self-attachment.

**Creating a belay**

Thread anchors can be easily used by looping a sling through or round and then clipping both ends together with a karabiner, to link to a knot on the rope end. If there are two bolts, you might need three karabiners; two to clip in and one to use for belaying. This can either be equalised by a Big Fat Knot (photo 1) or as an overhand where both loops are clipped (photo 2).

**Belaying**

Typically, we would use a HMS<sup>1</sup> karabiner with an Italian hitch. This system is reversible as the knot flips allowing both taking in or lowering without retying. It relies on friction (sometimes also known as a friction hitch) and is really efficient to belay a client up a vertical section like a steep ladder. You create a half hitch in a bight and with a second the opposing way you fold together and clip into the wide end of the

1 HMS stands for "Halbmastwurf sicherung", which loosely translates from the German as "Munter hitch belay carabiner."

karabiner. If tied correctly, the hitch should flip around the karabiner when you pull the rope to and fro.

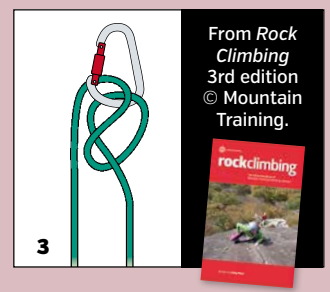
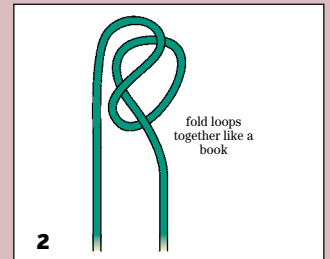
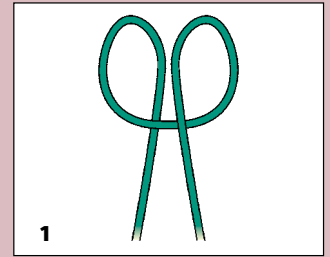
Belaying requires practise in order to keep a tight rope and maintain efficiency to keep up with the rate of ascent of the climber. Critically the dead rope must not be released while we take in; pull up with one hand, pull down with the other and then swap hands around, walking the hands back down the dead rope.

**Self-attachment**

Climbers may be familiar with using a lanyard for abseiling or attaching to an anchor temporarily. This system can be adapted to traverse chains or cables. If you step into a sling, cinch it tight and tie an overhand knot you create a simple lanyard (photo 3). With two slings and two karabiners (a sling round each person and each sling with a karabiner) we can safeguard a single client on a horizontal traverse.

Practising creating belays with a sling and using an Italian hitch will greatly help your application of these skills on International Mountain Leader training. Use of the rope, whilst still unplanned, is more likely given the real-world nature of alpine terrain. ■

**How to tie an Italian hitch**



**Simon Verspeak** is an experienced IML and WMCI having led treks across the Alps, Himalayas and worldwide. He is based in Snowdonia where he has trained and assessed lots of Mountain Leaders and provided training for steep ground to aspirant and full IML's. Thanks to contributions from discussions with Alex Kay, IML and WMCI trainee.



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# When nothing else matters



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# Ain't SCRAMBLING *brilliant...*

WORDS BY ANDY TOWNSEND

ABOVE Scrambling on Skye. © Nadir Khan

**If you've got your Mountain Leader qualification and are looking to get into the mountains by more interesting lines, this article should give you some inspiration.**

Autumn is a great time of year to go scrambling. The days are shortening but still long enough for adventure, and the ever-changing autumnal hues of the mountains give a great colour-scape to your photos. Scrambling also offers great days out in the hills when it is too wet or cold to go climbing, and it is also great preparation for the winter ahead. It keeps us fit and reduces the skill fade of our summer climbing skills, so you won't be fumbling your nuts and gear placements when the snow and ice finally arrives.

Scrambling terrain is also a great learning environment for developing a dynamic approach to risk assessment and decision-making, arguably the most relevant skills for climbers and mountaineers. There is no shortcut for this apprenticeship, and time spent scrambling will have far reaching benefits, from improving your leadership on the hills, improving your footwork, and developing efficient movement skills that transfer to the bigger mountains of the Alps.

When you compare rock climbing to scrambling, at the macro level climbing is simpler and requires fewer complex decisions. Climbs generally follow defined lines or features in the rock and will have a detailed description and photo diagram in a guidebook, there may even be move by move beta on-line.

Hand holds may be chalked and gear placements easy to spot from below. To be successful, a climber has to link their body movements and gear placements together. Once at the stance the climber simply has to identify enough anchors to build an appropriate, equalised belay, and usually carries a sizeable rack of equipment. Climbing can also often be straightforward, the main challenge being to identify and complete the movement sequence dictated by the rock. You will be able to individualise the sequence of moves to suit your biomechanical bias, but you will have time to ponder and plan either on the ground or hanging on rope. You will also have opportunities to pause and rest on route, rests are not just a time to regain blood flow to your arms but also to your brain. The flow of a day's climbing is generally quite relaxed, with plenty of time in the day to climb multiple pitches and drink tea at the café.

Scrambles on the other hand don't benefit from such detailed descriptions and although they will generally follow large geographical features such as gullies or ridges the amount of variation for route choice is colossal – you will never ascend (or descend) it the same way twice! Scrambles will be made up of easy sections which are more like walking, moderate sections and harder sections which will require you to throw some climbing shapes, place runners and grab the finishing jug with a palatable sense of relief. They will also have every type of terrain and grade between, and a successful flowing scramble will require you to constantly blend techniques and styles – for some this will lead to a 'scramble' of your grey matter.

Even before departure, you will have to make numerous decisions in the planning stages. Choosing footwear can be





complicated: boots, especially stiff alpine style ones are great for small edges and jamming into cracks, but sticky approach shoes are better at smearing. Footwear choice can be best determined by the rock type and weather. Grippy, rough granite of the Cairngorms or Skye favours the approach shoe, which maximises the ability to smear on the rounded and sloping edges. Over in Glencoe, stiff boots give greater security and look after your feet on small edges. Some scrambles definitely require a compromise between the two types of footwear, perhaps wearing one of each is a good but weird-looking solution!

When using a rope on a scramble, belays and rope techniques exponentially increase the number of options, direct or indirect, braced stances, single or multiple anchors. Even when nature presents you with the best natural anchors possible there is no straightforward decision; throw the rope around the rock or go for an Italian hitch on a karabiner? Both are valid techniques but will require a careful analysis of the situation, and an uncanny ability to see the future. If the ascent of that pitch is guaranteed and the rope is purely to prevent an unexpected slip becoming a fall, then rope direct to rock is simple and quick. However, if the rope is offering protection and success not guaranteed, then the Italian hitch wins out as it will give you options to lower or hoist the fallen scrambler to safety without damaging or compromising the rope as it runs loaded against the abrasive edge of the anchor.

All your scrambling decisions need to become instinctive and rapid, because scrambling needs to flow at a pace sufficient to complete the ascent and descent to reach the café before it closes. Climbing happens in a complex environment but requires less brain power as the decisions are simpler and more straightforward. While scrambling requires more brain power, the number of decisions are more complex and frequent, but will at least be in a more straightforward/simpler environment.

The UK and Ireland have a huge wealth of scrambling terrain on which we can spend much time and gain practice, while enjoying some great adventures. The variety and types of scrambles available are very diverse, and techniques, equipment choice and approaches will need to be adapted to compensate for different rock types, conditions, and grades of routes. Here is a brief tick list of scrambling delights for this coming Autumn.

### Grade 1's

- **Grib Goch and the Snowdon Horseshoe – via the North Ridge, Snowdon**

So much grade 1 ground, this will satisfy the hungriest scrambler. Adding an ascent of the North ridge is a more aesthetic way to start the horseshoe (especially if you can find the elusive Foxes path from Pen y Pass). Finish the day in the Pen y Gwryd hotel with a relaxing drink just like Everest climbers of old, Charles Evans and John Hunt, and many others.

- **Jack's Rake, Pavey Ark**

A mouth-watering line that splits the climbing faces of Pavey Ark, once started, it's hard to get lost! Combine this with the numerous scrambles on the crags around Stickle Ghyll and you will have a full day out, plus you can top and tail the day at the Sticklebarn Tavern.

- **Ledge Route, Ben Nevis**

Any scramble on the North face of the Ben (as Ben Nevis is familiarly known) will be memorable and Ledge route delivers spectacular views of Tower ridge, as well as being an interesting and fun route to the summit. Combine with a traverse of the Carn Mor Dearg arete and you will maximise your scrambling mileage.

- **North Ridge, Errigal**

The north face of Errigal comprises two steep ridges separated by a wide loose and shattered gully. The primary ridge runs directly north and provides an excellent scramble on a reasonably well-defined path with lots of great views and exposure in a very mountainous setting.

### Grade 2's

- **Idwal Staircase and Continuation, Cwm Idwal**

The Ogwen valley is a scrambler's paradise. Running parallel to the Idwal slabs, the dramatic gully of the Staircase follows a must-do line. Usually wet and fun the staircase gives access to the upper walls of Idwal and an almost infinite choice of lines and routes. Once the rim of Cwm Cneifion is reached further scrambling delights can be added for anyone still hungry for more.



1. Topping out on Cneifion Arete on an introduction to Grade 3 scrambling on a MTA workshop. © Paul Poole 2. Jack's Rake, Pavey Ark. © by Guy Jarvis

• **Cam Crag Ridge – Glaramara, Borrowdale**

The perfect training ground for scramblers. Lots of fun rocky sections lead up this ridge, making a very pleasant way to ascend Glaramara, and very accessible from Stonethwaite. No specific route exists through the numerous craglets so the grade can be made more or less spicy, according to taste.

• **Traverse of Liathach, Torridon**

Torridon is beautiful, Liathach is a magnificent mountain and the rough Torridonian sandstone is delightful to scramble on. All in all, this is one of the finest ridge traverses in the UK. Some logistical planning is required to avoid the walk of shame (stride of pride?) back up the glen to collect your car. On the plus side you also bag two Munros.

**Grade 3's**

• **Clogwyn y Person Arête, Snowdon**

An inspiring line, with a succession of technical sections all neatly divided with pleasant ledges – pure scrambling fun. If this isn't enough to satisfy, then reverse Crib Goch and the North ridge, to give a circular route back to Llanberis pass and a visit to the infamous Pete's Eats café in Llanberis itself.

• **Giant's Crawls – Dow Crag**

Not strictly a scramble, Giant's Crawl is a graded Difficult rock climb. It is, however, the most striking line of Dow and worth seeking out on a dry day. Plus, it is surrounded by lots of scrambling terrain and routes and is easily accessed via the Walna Scar road.

• **Tower Ridge, Ben Nevis**

Again, not strictly a scramble, but it should be every aspiring scrambler's list. The difficulties are not sustained and are interspersed with some very enjoyable and easy scrambling which competent parties will be able to romp up. The exposure of the Eastern traverse and the down climb into Tower gap will be imprinted on your memory for ever. Like many scrambles, this classic journey also provides a wonderful mountaineering route in winter – opening yet more opportunities for personal challenge!

• **Tower Ridge, Errigal**

On the north face of Errigal, the secondary ridge runs about five degrees to the west of the primary one, and is called Tower Ridge, it is a much steeper and much more exposed affair than the North Ridge. With most people requiring the use of a rope and a small selection of climbing gear for a safe ascent, as this ridge is a very steep but excellent grade 3 scramble.

With so much great scrambling terrain in the UK and Ireland you will have an almost inexhaustible learning environment that will help improve your skills and knowledge. ■



**Andy Townsend** is the Head of Snowsports at Glenmore Lodge, Scotland's national outdoor training centre. Andy is also an International Mountain and Ski Guide and a member of the British Association of Mountain Guides (BMG). Based in Scotland with his skiing obsessed family. Winters are mostly spent on skis exploring new descents at home and abroad, summers are spent rock climbing and dreaming of skiing.

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Image: International School of Mountaineering  
Image: Rob Johnson/Montane





# HAUNTED HILLS AND SKY DANCING BIRDS: *Part 1*

WORDS BY IAN TONGE  
PHOTOS FROM THE RSPB

**About fifteen years ago I was asked by a writer friend to accompany him on a walk across Bleaklow, a vast stretch of high moorland and blanket bog in the Dark Peak. He was in the process of writing an article on ghosts and legends of the Peak District in which Bleaklow would feature significantly and as part of his research he wanted to experience its character and atmosphere first hand. He explained that this area has more than its fair share of legends and stories of the paranormal, including sightings of ghostly Roman legions and spectral black dogs crossing its wild and remote landscape.**



**Ian Tonge** is a qualified Mountain Leader and a member of MTA. He has enjoyed outdoor activities for over 30 years, including canoeing, rock climbing, winter climbing and mountain hiking. Ian coordinates a hillwalking group and regularly organises and leads hikes in the UK's hills and mountains. He works for the RSPB as a volunteer and seasonal employee, monitoring and protecting endangered upland raptors. Ian runs an accredited CPD course: Wildlife and Habitats of the UK's Mountains and Uplands, which can be found on the MTA website.

On an unusually still and grey October afternoon, we set off from Snake Pass to hike across Bleaklow. Initially we followed the Pennine Way northwards, before leaving it to walk eastwards, where we would wait for dusk on a rocky outcrop that sits above a series of cloughs. Late in the afternoon as the temperature plummeted, a heavy mist formed, blanketing the moor, giving it an eerie and desolate atmosphere. On such a day, it is easy to understand how the area gained its reputation for spooky goings on.

Soon after the fog settled on the hill, we had our first ghostly encounter, not the paranormal kind though; a striking pale bird appeared out of the mist below us darting and hovering low over a rush lined gully as it hunted its prey. Silvery grey with black wing tips, it was unmistakable; I instantly recognised it as a male hen harrier. We sat silently watching, captivated, until it disappeared back into the mist.

Just before dark, we spotted another moorland hunter, a short-eared owl made an appearance very close to our position. We watched intently as it silently quartered a large patch of moor grass and bilberry in search of voles, before it too disappeared into the mist. As we trudged back in darkness,

across heather, peat hags and bogs, we were both elated over our brief encounter with these icons of the wild northern moorland. This had been my first sighting of a hen harrier.

While my author friend was disappointed that we hadn't bumped into any ghostly centurions, he had been inspired by the landscape and the enigmatic birds we had encountered. Years later, he went on to write a short novel, inspired by our day on Bleaklow, in which he gives hen harriers a mention.

Five years ago, when I heard the RSPB were recruiting volunteers to work with their Bowland raptor team I jumped at the chance. I had found the perfect way to combine my love of wildlife with my passion for hillwalking. The added attraction was that the primary focus of the team's work was the monitoring and protection of the hen harrier, a small breeding population of which was hanging on precariously in the area.

Located in the heart of Lancashire, Bowland, designated an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is a vast area of high moorland, spectacular hills, crags, forests, streams and rivers. Picture postcard villages lie scattered among its valleys. In addition to the four raptor species our team works with, it is also home to





MAIN PHOTO Barn owl in flight.

1. Peregrine falcon and chicks.  
2. Male hen harrier. 3. Short eared owl.



other endangered bird species, such as the marsh harrier, ring ouzel and curlew.

The RSPB's dedicated Bowland raptor team consists of one permanent staff member, around two dozen volunteers and three seasonal employees. Its role is the conservation and protection of four vulnerable and endangered species: hen harrier, peregrine, merlin and short-eared owl.

Threats to raptors can come in various guises, including disturbance by hikers and climbers, uncontrolled dogs, overzealous photographers, egg collectors, intentional persecution, habitat loss and degeneration, and prey species population fluctuations.

I work year-round as part of this specialist team, both as a volunteer and during the breeding season as an RSPB employee. The work is rewarding and enjoyable; I get to spend long days in some fantastic countryside while having the satisfaction of contributing to the RSPB's excellent work in conserving important and iconic species and their habitat.

At the start of the breeding season our first task is to locate nests; this entails searching a huge area of hills, high moorland and crags to pinpoint likely sites by observing the birds' behaviour. Once locations have been identified it is then the team's responsibility to monitor, record and report activity at the nests as well as to protect the site. Through working alongside experienced colleagues and from many hours of observation, I learned to interpret bird behaviour to understand the progress of each nest, through its various stages: nest building, egg laying, incubation, hatching, brooding and fledging. The habits of each species vary significantly, for example, while harriers start to incubate when the second egg is laid, peregrines only begin incubation with the last or penultimate egg, hence peregrine chicks have a smaller size difference than most raptor species.

Outside the breeding season, which runs from April to the end of July, the team observes how the birds disperse through the area and further afield. Later in the year we undertake hen harrier roost watches, which entail monitoring numbers and locations of roosting birds as well as protecting them from disturbance.

Because of my hillwalking experience, happily, I am usually allocated the more remote sites to observe. A typical day involves spending eight hours or more on the hills and high moorland, usually moving between two or three different locations.

My RSPB days differ significantly from a typical hillwalking day during which, almost constant walking and scrambling is broken only by short stops. In contrast, bird monitoring usually consists of a long walk-in to observation points, where I will remain for hours. Watching a nest or roost site intently for long spells can be quite an intense experience. A few seconds distraction can result in missing a prey drop into a nest, an airborne food pass between parent birds or a bird swiftly dropping into a roost site where it will remain concealed until morning.

Spending long hours monitoring raptors also brings a different set of challenges to my more regular hillwalking activities:

In summer it is often impossible to shelter from the sun and while it is tempting to wear shorts and little else, the need for camouflage and tick protection precludes that option. Some days, midges and horseflies can reach plague proportions. One particularly wet summer, I set up a tarp shelter but quickly took it down when I discovered that midges also appreciate the opportunity to shelter from downpours, especially when free meals are on offer inside. Sitting with rain dripping down my face is preferable by far, to being eaten alive beneath a tarpaulin.

In winter, sitting motionless for hours at a roost watch requires more warm layers than I would normally carry for a day's hiking. It can get extremely chilly sitting on a hilltop as the sun goes down. Navigating my way off the hill in darkness also makes for an interesting way to end the day. Sunset in winter is a great time to be on the hill though, watching short-eared owls and barn owls hunting in the fading light has a certain magic about it.

Weather conditions can pose a challenge to our work in any season. Hill fog and rain impedes visibility and buffeting from high winds can make it almost impossible to keep binoculars and scopes steadily trained on targets. Despite the unpredictable weather and the biting insects, monitoring and supporting raptors is an incredibly rewarding activity, which builds an even greater appreciation of our wild areas.

In the second instalment of this article, I will share with you some of the knowledge I have gained about the fascinating upland wildlife I encounter. ■



# MAKING *sustainable* FOOD CHOICES FOR OUR ADVENTURES



WORDS AND PHOTOS BY SAM CARTRIGHT

## We can't talk about sustainability in our profession without looking at our food.

We all need to eat food. For many of us, food is simply the fuel for our endurance activities. For others, it can be the anchor for our adventures: it's how we connect with each other, share an experience, and embrace our outdoor culture.

Food is nourishment, it isn't an optional bit of kit. What we eat will sooner or later impact our performance, our health, and our enjoyment of life. And from an ethical perspective, our collective food choices for adventuring have consequences for society and the environment well beyond our grocery baskets.

## The food system is deeply unsustainable right now

*"The food system we have today is both a miracle and a disaster"* (UK National Food Strategy, 2021).

The food system is hugely complex. Any decisions that we make as individual consumers to choose sustainable food challenges a model that is now highly industrialised, complicated, and generally anathema to a healthy society and environment<sup>1</sup>.

Half of household food purchases in the UK<sup>1</sup> are ultra-processed (meaning food that is mainly composed of processed sugars, oils, and starches)<sup>2</sup>. A whopping 80% of the processed food sold in the UK is deemed unhealthy<sup>3</sup> and is rich in calories, yet nutrient-poor. What's more, healthier foods generally cost more per calorie<sup>4</sup>.

The result is that the bulk of the calories people in Britain consume are highly processed, lacking the nutrients and minerals that the

body needs. To make matters worse, 'whole food' (meaning minimally processed or fresh food), is now lower in nutrients than the exact same foods were 50 years ago<sup>5</sup> even though agricultural yields are the greatest they have ever been.

We're familiar with the health impacts: unprecedented rates of childhood and adult obesity (up to a quarter of children, and 3 in 10 adults in the UK are clinically obese<sup>6</sup>), an epidemic of chronic metabolic diseases (like heart disease, diabetes, stroke), tooth decay, and the escalating hospitalisations (and cost to the NHS) for obesity-related conditions (around a million people hospitalised for this each year<sup>6</sup>), to name just a few.

Then there's the environmental impacts: declining biodiversity across the countryside (farmland bird populations in Britain have declined by two-thirds since 1970<sup>7</sup> and butterflies by three-quarters over a similar period<sup>8</sup>, not to mention deforestation in the tropics to make way for beef and palm oil); the huge carbon footprint of food production (about a third of global emissions are attributable to food production<sup>9</sup> and agriculture alone contributes 10% of the UK's carbon emissions<sup>10</sup>); and polluted freshwaters and seas (the UK has some of the most polluted waters in Europe). Society's eating habits are destroying our environment, and our food system is destroying society.

## Why should we care about the food system as mountaineers?

Why should professional mountaineers care about this? Because we are *all* food consumers. We make food choices many times each day, and to borrow a phrase, "You either have to be



MAIN PHOTO An evening ascent and dinner on Crib Goch. 1. Junk food. 2. Cost of trail bars at supermarket. 3. Junk food.



part of the solution, or you're going to be part of the problem"<sup>11</sup>.

There are also a lot of us (over 9,300 active MT qualification holders and many more members in training), and we have a huge reach (supporting over 1.5 million participants in outdoor activity each year in England alone<sup>12</sup>). This gives us a huge platform and an opportunity to engage our clients and demonstrate positive values on this issue to a captive audience.

So, against this backdrop, what is sustainable food? Sustainability, as a premise, means retaining ecological balance at the same time as the quality of life of our society. Applied to food, this means the growth, production, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that do not degrade the environment, are safe and healthy to eat, and support sustainable livelihoods for the people who depend on those activities. Sustainability encompasses every aspect of the food system, not just buying organic or shopping at a farmers' market. That's probably why there is no agreed legal definition of sustainable food – it's about all the elements of the system.

### So what can we do?

Be good food citizens. Consciously consider what you eat and where it comes from. Who grew it? When was it grown? How many stops has it made before it reaches your plate? How much food waste was generated before it got to you? Let the answers guide your next meal.

If you can, purchase food where you know its whole journey – support the shortest, simplest and most transparent supply chains. Talk to your clients about the food or fibre-producing landscapes you are walking through. Talk to the farmers. Read Bel Myers' excellent recent series of articles in previous issues of this magazine on regenerative farming.

Wherever possible choose the least-processed, minimally packaged products, or make your own with fresh ingredients. Try to know the story of the food you are eating. We often must prioritise the convenience, weight, durability, affordability, and – of course – taste and calorific value of food eaten on the hill, but if there is a less processed, more 'local' (meaning shorter supply chain) option out there, consider choosing it.

You don't need to be vegan or vegetarian but consider reducing your personal meat consumption. Talk to outdoor venues about their food procurement. This doesn't need to be a shift to serving exclusively regeneratively-farmed meals but is about identifying and taking the opportunity to serve up a local or small-producer food product, with a known journey. Plan your group trips with stops that support local food retailers or cafes.

Learn about and signpost others to the organisations working for system-wide change, like Sustain, the Soil Association, Food Matters, and Food for Life, to name a few. And find out who is working for change locally, whether they are crisis food providers, local ethical food businesses, cooperatives, charities, or social enterprises. Use your platform to raise awareness of the problems in the food system and these simple actions to support change.

### Changing things is difficult, but not impossible

Every calorie consumed can be a choice to help transform our food system. Waiting for public policy and regulatory drivers to do the work will take a while yet, so it's largely down to us all to drive this change collectively.

As outdoor professionals, sustainability is now part of our everyday vernacular in relation to our gear, travel choices and the leave-no-trace ethic of our adventures. Food should be part

of that scope, and understanding the footprint of food on our adventures is something we ought to factor into our industry's impact reporting.

### Three things we can each do

- Be more conscious of each meal eaten and the journey it has taken.
- Become more informed – understand labels; learn what is available locally and who is working for change.
- Communicate and demonstrate – talk to others about sustainable food; demonstrate good food choices when leading others. ■

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i Editor's note: Although *The Professional Mountaineer* readership and association members span UK and Ireland, this article focuses on the UK.



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WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MIKAELA TOCZEK AND SAMANTHA EVANS



# PREGNANCY, motherhood\* and outdoor careers

**Becoming a mother – from the very start of pregnancy – is a lifelong, life-changing, and potentially hugely rewarding experience. When your career is adventure based, it becomes a monumental balancing act. Why shouldn't women be able to have both a family and an outdoor career? Mountain Training statistics show that although there are positive upward trends in some areas, the percentage of women passing qualifications still sits mainly below 45% in every award. Allin and West, [2013] analysed the 2012 members list of the British Mountain Guides to reveal under 4% were women. Beames [2019] explains the statistics reveal the more technical outdoors work, such as guiding, is still male dominated.**

## Research and visibility

Mikaela Toczek and Samantha Evans are recently qualified International Mountain Leaders (IML), whose journeys coincided with pregnancy and early motherhood. On discovering they were pregnant, almost a year apart, they both embarked on the same search, looking for experiences from other mothers working in the industry.

Limited research and literature explores the challenges and impact pregnancy and motherhood has for women in adventurous careers, although professional athletes and leisure sports are more highly researched. In the US, Anja Whittington (2018) found that 38% of the women who participated in her study 'Outdoor Careers and Motherhood' left the outdoor industry due to having children. The reasons given were 'changing roles to accommodate family, time away, nursing, lack of childcare, and lack of financial resources'.

As part of the up-coming *Women in Mountain Training Conference*, Mikaela aims to contribute to the discussion on pregnancy and motherhood for the UK, with her workshop '*Mountains and Parenthood: Having a Family and an Adventurous Career*'. Participants in the session will reflect on

the diverse issues that pregnant women and mothers face as outdoor professionals and consider some of the methods we may use to promote visibility and inclusivity for individuals, employers and course providers.

Samantha Evans is researching this topic within her MSc in Outdoor Education, through The University of Edinburgh. The inspiration came from the start of her pregnancy, where for the first time, Samantha experienced gender inequality and was treated differently, as though she had suddenly de-skilled and become incompetent overnight merely by becoming pregnant. Samantha felt judged. Expected by some to take time out through pregnancy due to the assumption of 'perceived' risks, she was initially heavily criticised for continuing. Although this led to loss of identity of self in trimester one, the positive outcome was the motivation for her auto ethnographic research project. Instead of succumbing to societal pressures and traditional expectations, she found solace in researching other competitive sports women and outdoor professionals' inspiring pathways. Allowing her to carve, and document, a new, slightly unorthodox, but safe journey through pregnancy and giving her determination as a new mother to keep her outdoor career.

## Experience and Change

There is a huge disparity in medical advice for pregnant women, who can be discouraged from conducting anything that may be deemed as 'risky' including later in motherhood. For example, Alison Hargreaves' accident (where she died whilst climbing K2) was contentious being met with negative press, and she was branded as a 'bad mother' (Frohlick, 2006) yet male parental counterparts do not receive this same scrutiny and have even been commended for their heroism and bravery in similarly consequential situations (Allin & West, 2013). Perceived risk and actual risk are highly dependent on individual circumstances and those with limited experience of adventurous activities often perceive the risk to be considerably higher than those from within the industry.





MAIN PHOTO Snowshoeing QMD for IML to Mangart Saddle, Slovenia, 7 months pregnant. 1. Final MTB over 6 months. 2. Mikaela rigging herself for guidebook photos two weeks before due date. 3. Brecon Beacons autumn adventures. 4. TT Dec whilst pregnant.

### Samantha's Journey

Samantha, as mentioned above, is a recently qualified IML. She worked teaching outdoors until 7 months into her pregnancy and continued personal sports of road cycling and mountain biking until around 6 months, skiing (alpine and touring) until 8 months, and was cross country skiing, snowshoeing and training for her winter IML assessment until the day before the birth of her baby. Her work and sports continuation were in consultation with her medical team, assisted by her experience and knowledge of her body as a former professional athlete along with consideration of her skillset/ability to moderate risk. With time, when people saw her competence unchanged, adequate safeguarding in place, and her happiness, they started to trust and believe in her inspirational journey. The professional outdoor community, including her employers and peers, were incredibly supportive, including continuing her employment and the encouragement of an active but safe pregnancy.

Throwing herself into early motherhood whilst recovering from a caesarean (physical recovery discussed next issue), Samantha has completed her Winter IML assessment 6 weeks postpartum (the period directly after childbirth) and Summer IML assessment 5 months postpartum; both were undertaken whilst breastfeeding, including night feeds and breast-pumping on the mountain.

### Mikaela's Journey

Mikaela continued working as a freelance Mountain Leader and Rock Climbing Instructor throughout her pregnancy, listening to her body and lowering risks accordingly and in discussion with her midwife. She was hiking, snowshoeing in the Julian Alps, climbing on a top-rope at low grades and taking photographs for the new Gower Rock and South Wales Rock guidebooks up until 38 weeks pregnant. Mikaela completed her summer IML assessment at 12 weeks pregnant and completed her IML Winter Assessment alongside breastfeeding and bed-sharing with her 23 month old.

These achievements were hard won against a backdrop of complex issues, both during her pregnancy and early motherhood, compounded by the first Covid lockdown. As a result, Mikaela's return to work as a freelance outdoor instructor has not been straightforward, but it was made easier through supportive colleagues, family and her determination to build an outdoor life for herself and her baby. These experiences have transformed Mikaela's perspective of pregnancy and motherhood and the support that is needed for other women with adventurous careers.

### Moving Forwards

For this series, Mikaela and Samantha will explore some of the issues that pregnancy and motherhood bring to women working in adventurous careers. When society sees pregnant women and mothers succeeding in a diverse range of careers, it helps change the narrative, showing more options for individual choice and adjusting expectations more widely. We are not medical professionals but hope by sharing some of the practical ways we overcame the issues we faced, over the next two instalments, we can encourage a space for all outdoor professionals to reflect, learn and discuss. ■

Future Themes: Mental and physical health (including recovery from childbirth), Culture and Society, Logistics (Organisation, time and planning), Legal, Pay and Conditions.

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\*Editor's note: It is important to acknowledge that there are a range of people who have the capacity for pregnancy, such as trans men, and those who are non-binary, gender queer or fluid (to name just a few), but this article focuses specifically on the issues affecting pregnant women and relating to motherhood whilst working in the outdoors.



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WORDS BY ANDREW KINGDOM

# From map to mapping legend – *A history of Ordnance Survey*

**Speak to any hiker from the UK or Ireland about maps and more than likely the name of one of our most famous organisations will be mentioned, Ordnance Survey (OS). Be it a paper map or on their phone, OS remains the best friend to everybody heading into the outdoors.**

Despite its prominence in our map culture, the history of OS mapping only goes back a short distance in time. Before the renaissance, mapping was not used as we think of it today, but maps were instead a symbol of social status, obtainable to only those who were wealthy and with influence. While maps were used in a military context, these were often very unreliable or of an unusable scale by today's standards.

## The great map begins

By the end of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, the Royalist forces had encountered severe issues from the lack of effective mapping. The best mapping available was at a staggering scale of 1 inch to 13.5 miles (or 1: 855,360!) proving to be woefully inadequate for the Army's needs. In order to help with the crushing of future rebellions it was decided that Scotland needed to be mapped. The Board of Ordnance Survey tasked William Roy, a young surveyor, with the mapping of the entirety of Scotland, work which would later be more commonly known as the Great Map.

Initially, Roy was entirely on his own but as the project developed, more labour was made available to help complete this monumental task. The methodology involved taking a bearing using surveying compasses to key landmarks with lengths of chains up to 50 feet long used to measure distances before being sketched. This painstakingly slow process took 7 long years but his maps at 1:36,000 scale provided the accuracy required and has since become the basis of our mapping today.

## Moving inwards

As a result of his excellent work, Roy would soon realise the need for mapping of the whole of the country. After joining the army and achieving the rank of General, he would regularly push

for this nation to be mapped. However, it would take the threat of invasion from Emperor Napoleon before this idea was taken seriously. This threat led to the mapping of the whole of the South Coast, leading to the creation of Ordnance Survey in 1791 to achieve such a goal.

As the work continued, the need to map the rest of the country became apparent so, with the use of the famous theodolite, accurate mapping was a real possibility. OS would also quickly realise there was money to be made and sold their first map in 1801. This was the map of Kent sold for £3 & 3 Shillings equating to approximately 3 weeks' wages for a basic labourer at the time; this map would now cost £138.83 in today's money! To map the whole country would prove to be a 70-year long project and while sadly Roy would not live to see his dream achieved, the achievement would echo through the decades to come.

## Call to defend

At its heart, OS remained a military organisation, so when Britain entered the World Wars, OS would stand up to serve. In The Great War, OS would literally enter the trenches to survey and create detailed maps at a rapid pace. In 1918 alone Ordnance Survey reported they were sending on average 25900 maps globally per day! OS would not only produce maps but also lead the development of Aerial Surveillance. This allowed for the creation of very accurate mapping to be available to the Armed Forces, a task they still assist with today. By the end of the war they would have produced a total of 20 million maps for the British Armed Forces, however this was achieved with the loss of 37 OS workers' lives.

World War II would see Ordnance Survey, once again, answer the country's call. Their task this time made much more arduous with the bombing and destruction of OS Headquarters during





MAIN PHOTO OS remapping using trip points. © Crown copyright 2022 Ordnance Survey, Media 051/22. 1. 1801 map of Kent. © Crown copyright 2022 Ordnance Survey, Media 051/22.

the November 1940 Blitz. This resulted in the organisation being scattered throughout the country so they could continue to operate despite the Blitz. They would only come back together in Southampton in 1969.

Despite these problems during WWII, including the loss of 56 lives, OS would continue to prove their value to the Armed Forces. For D-Day and the Normandy Campaign, it would go on to produce 342 million maps for the Armed Forces, of which 120 million were used for D-Day and the Normandy campaign alone!

### Dawn of the modern OS

Perhaps one of the most recognised parts of Ordnance Survey would go on to be created during the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, The British National Grid. By the 1930s, the original work of mapping the nation was beginning to show its age with many of the maps heavily out of date. The decision was made for the country to be remapped, however many of the original points used to measure were either lost or damaged.

To help overcome this, it would lead to one of the most iconic sights on the ground for any hiker, the Triangulation Pillar, commonly known as the trig point. Using 6500 of these points, what would become known as the great triangulation, the country would be completely remapped with a new coordinate system, still in use today. This would also lead to the creation of the iconic 1:25,000 scale. Due to the use of satellites in modern mapping, these trig points are now no longer used for their intended purpose. They have remained though as clear features on the ground which can be used for navigation and are done by many a hiker today.

### Today and the future

As the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century approached, OS would finally change into the organisation we know it as today. In 1983, OS finally moved away from its military links and became a fully civilian organisation. This change of ownership did not blunt its ability to evolve; for example, the OS enabled the UK to be the first country in the world to digitise its maps, with 230,000 maps uploaded. It remains one of OS most used products and there are 20,000 updates daily. In 2022, OS is still a highly respected institution both in the UK and abroad, so much so they are now assisting in the mapping of Australia! From an organisation that originally began with men using compasses, chains and pencils to an organisation with 600,000 people using their products a week, that's quite a legacy! ■

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# MANAGING

## *heat related illnesses*

# OUT ON THE HILL

WORDS BY DANIEL GRACE

**Whether as a result of global warming or a freak weather event, there's no doubt that 2022 has had a hot summer. Temperatures have soared, breaking previous records, leading to a spate of wildfires, and sadly causing several fatalities; but how does this affect outdoor professionals working in the UK and Ireland or overseas in hot environments?**

The likelihood of developing a heat related illness (HRI) whilst out on a trek depends on three key factors: the environment, the individual, and their workload. Some of these variables may be fixed, however as the professional planning and leading the trek, you may be able to modify some of these factors (*Figure 2*).

The environment obviously plays a significant role in determining heat stress and this is determined by the ambient air temperature, humidity, sun intensity and wind speed. If you are organising a trek, you may be able to alter some of these factors with sensible route planning. For example, aiming to hike up to a higher elevation to take advantage of cooler temperatures and potentially higher windspeeds might be preferable, or alternatively you might want to ensure that where you stop for lunch is in the shade rather than intense sunlight. Having local knowledge of the environment, geology and local wind and weather patterns will naturally help with this, and if you are overseas, consulting with in-country experts can be valuable.

Individual factors such as poor sleep, missing meals, getting sunburnt, drinking alcohol, and taking certain medications can also increase the risk of HRI, and as the trek leader it is important to advise participants of this, however the factor that you have the most influence over is the group's workload, specifically their walking speed. Travelling at a speed that is appropriate for the slowest group member, planning for regular rest stops (ideally in the shade), ensuring appropriate pack weights pre-departure, whilst also confirming that everyone has enough water is vitally important. Similarly, knowing where water can be refilled, and if necessary, having appropriate purification strategies in place, should be a key part of your pre-trek risk assessment.

One of the most effective preventative strategies is to stay well hydrated and advising people that they should "drink to thirst" and aim to pass urine that is champagne coloured, is a useful piece of advice that is easy to remember. Despite a lot of marketing and endorsements, the jury is out on the true benefits of sports drinks, and a 2012 review in the British Medical Journal concluded that water is the best replacement fluid. Squash or similar can be added for flavouring, but it is wise

to avoid caffeine as this is a diuretic which will make you pee more often and in turn become more dehydrated (*Figure 3*).

Typical early symptoms of HRI can include muscle cramps, nausea and dizziness. Individuals often stop eating and drinking because of the nausea, and if you can encourage them to take sips of water, have something to eat and rest in the shade for a short time, this will pay huge dividends. It can also be helpful to give them a sachet of oral rehydration solution (ORS), such as dioralyte to help replenish the salt that they will have lost through sweating.

Putting them in the shade can help reduce the external ambient temperature, and placing them on an insulating barrier, such as a foam mat, can decrease heat conduction from the ground, which is something that is often forgotten about. Undressing the casualty down to their underwear can also help to optimise heat loss by increasing the amount of airflow around the body, however it is necessary to respect their dignity whilst doing this. It is important to be able to differentiate between heat exhaustion, which you can potentially manage in the field, and heatstroke, which is a medical emergency requiring urgent evacuation. Importantly a lot of the time when people say they have heat stroke, they tend to be erroneously referring to symptoms of heat exhaustion. One objective way to distinguish this is by checking an individual's temperature, but realistically you are unlikely to be carrying a thermometer, so instead a useful surrogate measure is to check for any signs of "brain dysfunction," such as confusion, disorientation, slurred speech, drowsiness or in a worst-case scenario a loss of consciousness (*Figure 1*).

One of the most effective ways to cool someone down is to immerse them in cold water, which has 24 times the thermal conductivity of air and can be hugely beneficial. It is important to carry out an appropriate risk assessment, and check for strong currents or other water-based hazards. Similarly, if the casualty is drowsy, cannot swim or is otherwise at risk of drowning, this option is not suitable. Alternative techniques include wetting a towel or other items of clothing and wrapping these around the individual's head and body. Spraying or dousing the casualty with water and fanning can also be effective strategies to help



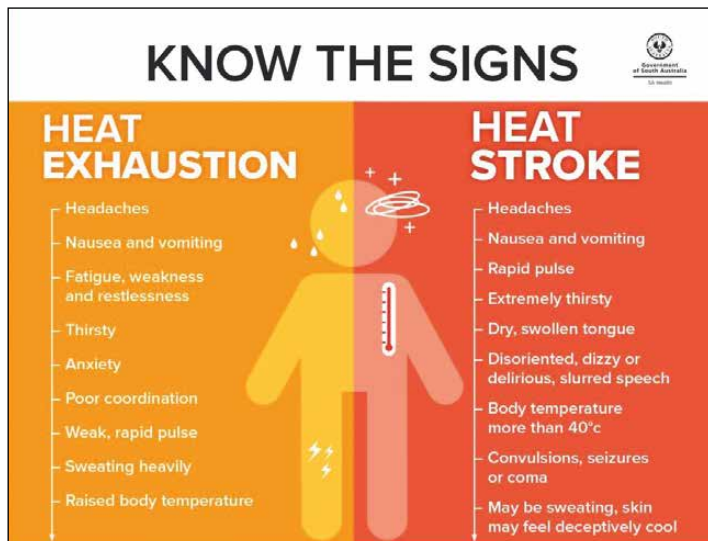


FIGURE 1

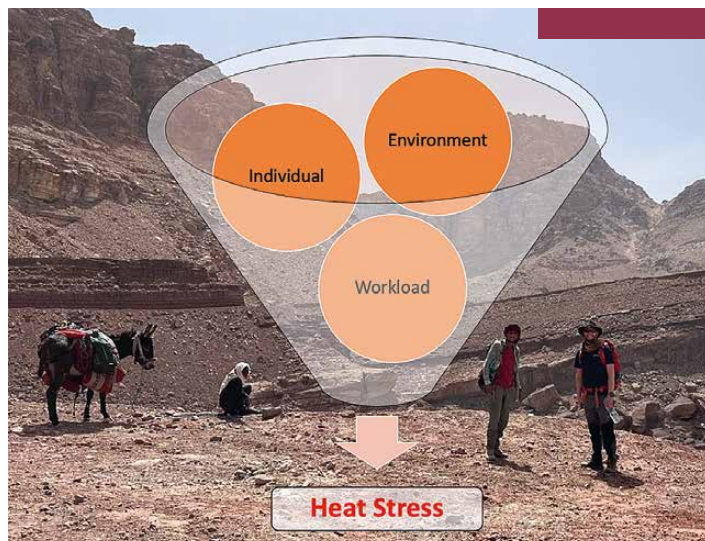


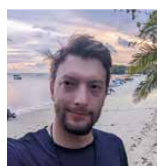
FIGURE 2

with cooling. Importantly, if one participant is suffering with a HRI, this suggests that the rest of the group are also at risk. It may therefore be sensible to alter your route, have an extended break, or set up camp, depending on the type of trek you are working on.

This has been a very brief overview of heat related illnesses for the outdoor professional. If you are interested in finding out more the *Oxford Handbook of Expedition and Wilderness Medicine* is a useful resource that you can fit inside your daysack as a useful reference guide, and it covers a whole range of important topics. <https://global.oup.com/academic/product/oxford-handbook-of-expedition-and-wilderness-medicine-9780199688418?cc=gb&lang=en> ISBN: 9780199688418

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**Daniel Grace** is based in the Brecon Beacons where he works as a portfolio GP. He has worked on multiple endurance events and treks, ranging from the tea plantations of Kenya and the deserts of Jordan to the wilderness of the Canadian Yukon. He has recently returned from the South Pacific where he has been working to support a major US TV show.

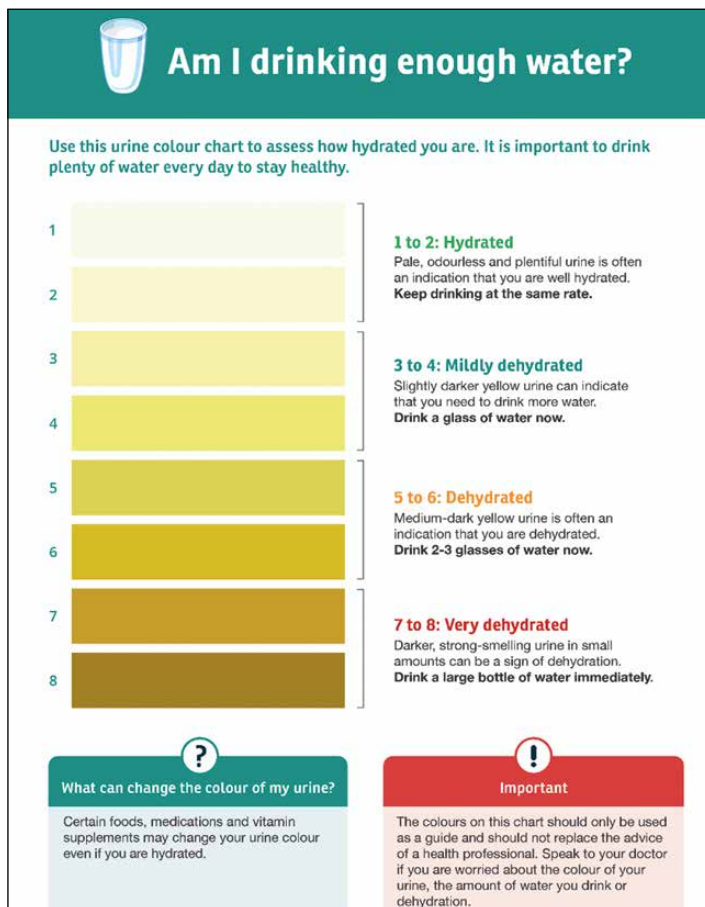


FIGURE 3

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# KVIKK LUNSJ ANYONE?

## SOME MOUNTAIN SAFETY PROMPTS, NORWEGIAN STYLE

WORDS BY JOHN OWEN

Unless you're a regular to Norway, you've probably never heard of the confectionary brand Freia. In my family's opinion, they make some of the finest milk chocolate going, but they also make a chocolate-covered wafer bar that comes in fingers – I'm sure you're familiar with a similar type of product available in the UK and Ireland from a large multinational manufacturer. Freia's bar is called Kvikk Lunsj and is the sort of bar eaten at the end of a lunch stop. This winter I was munching on just such a bar when I noticed writing on the inside of the plastic wrapper. Sadly, and despite virtually annual visits for the last 30+ years, my Norwegian isn't up to much. Personally, I blame the Norwegians themselves for this state of affairs. After all, even their Eurovision song entry was in English and on their main evening TV news they have reports in English without supporting subtitles. Not much hope for me then when they speak my language as well as me, if not better.

I deferred to my Norwegian friend, Bjørn Sonsterud (an accomplished mountaineer and skier), to ask what the writing was about and was told that it was the mountain safety code for mountain travel in Norway, produced by Den Norske Turistforening (DNT), the Norwegian Touring Association. I should point out here that mountain journeys in Norway are spoken of by the locals as being tours rather than journeys or just trips, so for this advice to originate from the DNT is the equivalent of such advice coming from, say, the BMC. A common parting shot amongst hill-goers heading out in Norway is 'god tur', meaning, more or less, a have a good trip. Bjørn also told me that a translation for these 'rules' is available on the visitnorway.com website<sup>1</sup>. There is both a shortened version, as printed on the inside of the wrapper, as well as an expanded set available there. Here is the direct translation of the writing I originally spotted:

- Plan your trip and inform others about the route you have selected.
- Adapt the planned routes according to ability and conditions.
- Pay attention to the weather and the avalanche warnings.
- Be prepared for bad weather and frost, even on short trips.
- Bring the necessary equipment so you can help yourself and others.
- Choose safe routes. Recognize avalanche terrain and unsafe ice.
- Use a map and compass. Always know where you are.
- Don't be ashamed to turn around.
- Conserve your energy and seek shelter if necessary.

These clearly reflect the culture of touring that exists in Norway, but all of this finds echoes in UK mountain safety literature, such as in the Scottish Avalanche Information Service's brochure *Be Avalanche Aware*<sup>2</sup>. What really spiked my interest was when Bjørn said that he thought the advice had changed insofar as there used to be a specific line advocating digging-in early

should the weather on a tour suddenly become adverse. Clearly advice of this sort bears reviewing and updating, both in the light of climate change and also available technologies.

My own mountain safety journey started when I had a 1968 copy of the then CCPR's booklet 'Safety on Mountains'<sup>3</sup> thrust into my hands. This was prior to a backpacking tour of the Brecon Beacons as a young school student, DofE style. This black and white booklet was produced by staff at Plas y Brenin in order to educate people starting out on their own mountain walking careers. In many ways it expands upon the DNT's safety points much as the extended version on the visitnorway.com website does today. A successor to the CCPR's booklet came in 1974<sup>4</sup>, now published by the BMC, although the contents had barely changed from its predecessor. The latest version<sup>5</sup> (2010 and reprinted in 2018) is an altogether different beast and, in so many ways, reflects the current way in which we use our outdoor environment as well as the new standard expected from current instructional books which this publication has now become. The section on sanitation, for example, reminds us of the pressures our rural spaces are now under. It really is a distillation of common-sense points for safe and sustainable visits to our mountains, supported as it is by excellent graphics and reflecting the need for a greater care for our mountain environment.

But returning to our chocolate wrapper, I just wondered what we would put on the inside as an *aide memoire* for safe mountain journeys? What would be our top topics? As mountaineering professionals, I don't think any of us would quibble with the advice to know how to use a map and compass, but what else would earn a mention in the limited space available? For what it's worth, I really like the Norwegian emphasis on carrying kit to help yourself *and others*. Stressing the interdependence of mountaineers is important I feel. Similarly, I think having the strength of character to turn back in good time is worth emphasising. What would you choose? Personally, and speaking as an ancient reactionary, I'd specifically ban all cotton hoodies from being allowed on the hill, but that's what comes of dealing with too many teenagers of late. God tur! ■

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**John Owen** is a past President of BAEML, the forerunner of BAIML. He is also a WML, and a BASI Nordic ski instructor. In winter he is often to be found in Norway skiing, and in summer in the mountains of the Massif Centrale. When at home in Scotland he trains with Tayside MRT and teaches bespoke First Aid courses.



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# Stories, metaphors and mental health

## – working with clients in the outdoors

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY JOHNATHAN KATTENBERG

**For most of us, we love to listen to a great tale. Children enjoy a good bedtime story and advertisers know how to use the power of the narrative. A creative tale can help the imagination run wild with infinite possibilities and outcomes, inspired by hidden meanings and metaphors. It is the use of stories and metaphors I am going to look at herein, because when it comes to mindset, the use of such is suggested as a therapeutic tool to access and change tacit/unconscious levels of cognitive representation<sup>i</sup>.**

It is interesting to see how clients can easily relate to the use of metaphor and stories when walking, especially if we involve the history of the area, details of the route we are on and the surrounding habitat. In this we can acknowledge how our minds instinctively seek wisdom, guidance and understanding, from within as an internal locus of control, or without from other sources as external. This locus of control can influence a client's ability to change<sup>ii</sup>.

To provide a recent example of mindset therapy in the outdoors, I will outline how I worked around the Watkin Path, behind Snowdon (Yr Wyddfa), in North Wales, and applied history, stories and metaphors that could relate to circumstances of a client's or group of clients' mental wellbeing; a practice demonstrated by George Burns in his book, *101 Healing Stories*. I will give examples on how metaphor can be used in the process of mental healing<sup>iii</sup>.

Let's break down the therapeutic process regarding the Watkin Path and how this can signify a way forward.

### **The history**

It is believed the Watkin Path originated with Sir Edward Watkin back in 1892, a Liberal Member of Parliament and railway entrepreneur. Sir Watkin retired and moved to a chalet near Cwm Llan where he was eager to build a path from the quarry to Snowdon's summit, enabling visitors to reach the famous peak. The path was the first designated footpath in Britain and





MAIN PHOTO Therapeutically working with a group on a significant point at Gladstone Rock. 1. Therapeutically working with waterfalls, pools of water and pebbles at the bottom of a swirling pool. 2. Working with flowing water. 3. Strategy planning the route before going out on a therapeutic session. 4. Approaching the Watkin Path and how an ascent can form part of the journey to addressing mindset wellbeing.



was officially opened in 1892 by Prime Minister Gladstone (more on him later).

A prominent figure in himself, Sir Watkin, and his path, provides the opportunity for metaphor to show us something of ourselves. Firstly, recognise that at times our minds can be set in old thoughts, actions and feelings, deeply rooted within neural pathways. Set in their way. Yet, here we have Sir Watkin creating a new path to achieve success, a way to reach the summit of Snowdon, via what can only be described as a challenging route and leading the way for others to follow! Setting the example for others, where, from their own path and journey in life, they can pursue the light of new opportunities for a way forward through dark challenging times. A new path can be a new neural pathway to new ways of being or new thoughts, perceptions or beliefs, and, if constructed properly, can stand the test of time. Furthermore, a prominent figure leading the way can provide inspiration to others to take on new paths or directions in life.

### Application of skills

Although there are many opportunities for utilising nature or the path as a metaphor, ascending the initial section of the Watkin Path you approach a disused incline on a steep bank to your left, here you come to the Cwm Llan waterfalls, with its flow of water through the stones offering so many opportunities it's hard to pass it up. The plunging swirling pools collect water which

overflows and rushes into the pool below: stones are trapped at the bottom and only surface waters can pass. This can be seen as representing dealing with coping strategies which avoid going too deep to remove or change what is lying at the bottom of your mind, the root cause of an issue or problem. Still there, these issues rest in the depths of your mind, reminding you every so often of their presence – sometimes at the most inconvenient time!

If we take the concept of flowing water further, just like water flowing through the stones and boulders, these root issues will ultimately find a way through at some point if not addressed properly. So, if a new route can be created with firm strong foundations and boundaries, the 'water' can then be seen to change its role and instead of representing re-emerging issues can be seen to help wash away negative aspects and attitudes within the mind (as the original issue or challenge is reframed).

Deep-rooted, hidden or buried experiences can creep up through the mind at any given point, especially when we are mentally tired and our defences are weakened, these can manifest as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), phobias, unwanted habits and much more, with which many people are trying to find ways to cope. For some people, working with metaphor with regard to traumatic experiences can help bring peace and a way of finding a new route to a more positive way of thinking and being, provided that the underlying issue is dealt



with and resolved. If the underlying issues is not addressed and dealt with the metaphor can become another surface level coping strategy. When working with PTSD this process requires significant experience, but if done effectively and with a specialist, clients can work to overcome aspects of PTSD and other mental health issues whilst being in the outdoors.

Back to the path and as you go by the final waterfall, you have two options: Turn left and ascend the hill or approach a bridge. Each option offering multiple options for the use of metaphor.

If you ascend there is a winding path onto a disused incline track. From here you can turn left to make your way directly up the slight re-entrant where there are a couple of old structures and a cave with tunnels that lead in and out<sup>1</sup>. Here there is a literal dark tunnel with light at the end. This can be used to signify emerging from darkness or being unsure and unsteady of you footing as you step into and through the darkness of the tunnel to reach the visible assured path in the light at the end.

Instead of turning left, the other option is to proceed to the bridge just in front of you, providing a safe way to cross over the stream. Bridges provide a myriad of metaphorical opportunities: a way over challenging times (as sung about by Paul Simon and Art Garfunkel in *Bridge over Troubled Water*); safe passage over danger; somewhere to shelter under; and a point from which to watch the water flow below safely untouched above and beyond any risk or fear of being swept away. A bridge is a great site for reflection and a potential metaphor for opportunities, connections, and more.

Continuing on this route you very soon approach an old derelict building on the right-hand side which the military once used for target practice.

As you discover the numerous bullet holes, it can be like a dot-to-dot of any experiences, thoughts, actions, feelings, perceptions, beliefs, habits and much more. How the programming of our mind connects our past to everything we are, in the here and now. The holes themselves symbolising the marks of past trauma on the self. Following prior work with your client to help them understand their mental state and issues, this offers a perfect place for a counsellor to bring a visual representation of a transformation process to the mind where the client can visualise new route maps, joining the dots of the holes in different ways and relate them to new neural pathways or thoughts, actions and feelings.

As you proceed ahead you are greeted by the prominent mounted plaque on the famous Gladstone rock. On this, the Prime Minister, William Gladstone, delivered a speech on Justice for Wales, and sung some 'Cymric hymns'. The plaque fitted to the front of the boulder commemorates what was sure to have been a memorable occasion, where, in 1892, the Prime Minister gave his celebrated speech to a crowd of over 2000 people about human rights and how he would bring about change.

It was likely a profound moment for those citizens who had suffered from poverty, poor working conditions and, through common mining accidents in the slate quarries of Wales, the incapacitation or loss of loved ones and the resulting hardship. A wise (and articulate) leader could provide answers and solace to those assembled. Naturally, many would look to Gladstone for wisdom and leadership representing an example of that

1 Naturally you would have a risk assessment and use common sense if you know this area, and if you didn't, you'd certainly be carrying out a risk assessment!

external locus of control when they may have lacked internal leadership, courage or the answers they are looking for within.

Here, with an explanation to your clients prior to the walk of the significance of the rock, it can come to represent a site where a wise person once stood to pass on their wisdom to those assembled. As such, you and your clients can see the rock as an approach to a wise person who may offer them some insight, or to wisdom itself, using that perceived wisdom as a way of opening up the potential for them to address their own situation and their levels of understanding.

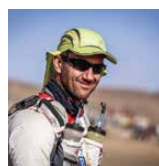
As we descend the path, the metaphorical opportunities at this point are still vast. The client is now returning with some answers and new ideas, the pathway is downhill which can be easier than the ascent and can allow their minds to be clear of mist or fog from the effect of being outdoors, enabling them to recognise how far they have come and gain some clarity of their situation. If it is literally misty or raining with poor visibility, this is an even greater opportunity, because you can guide them safely, yet allow them to navigate their own route (with a little coaching support, of course), which provides insight into their ability to steer through challenging times even when initially they can't see a way forward through the mist or fog.

This article outlines the beginning of a mountain walk, one that is achievable by many regardless of the weather, and as you can see this initial section alone offers so much opportunity to work metaphorically with a client around mental performance and mental therapy, transcending mental health first aid. And this walk is only just the beginning, with so many more opportunities as you ascend the Watkin Path. Regardless of where you are with a client, understanding how to apply the outdoors and carefully researched routes clearly, offers so many opportunities around mindset therapy and performance.

It is important to remember that mental wellbeing isn't about just therapy, it's also key to mental performance. It is something I truly enjoy not only empowering private clients with, but also training others to help even more amazing people. For some, the outdoors presents itself as a means of escapism. For others, it offers itself towards mental performance for long-lasting results. For myself, it is a respectful and professional playground of immense opportunity to work with and empower a client to a more enjoyable and fulfilling way of life. ■

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**Jonathan Kattenberg** is a Mountain Leader and seen by his clients as a mindset trouble-shooter. He holds a postgrad in Clinical Hypnotherapy, is an author and he specialises in offering therapy to clients in the outdoors. Founder of Life Wealth Coaching and Walking With My Bear he offers association members a

discount for Navigate your future, a course designed to give leaders a level of training beyond Mental Health First Aid, enhancing their ability to work with clients around mental wellbeing and life journey planning.





WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PETER LOVATT

# TAKING TEENAGERS TO THE ALPS

ABOVE Looking back to the Britannia Hut (top right) after crossing the Hohlaub and Allalin glaciers.

This article is based on the last two years of travelling in the mountains with my daughter (aged 11 to 13 during that time). The aim is to provide a few tips for anyone thinking of doing something similar with a teenager. We went to Switzerland, mainly due to relaxed Covid restrictions, used public transport throughout, and there was always just the two of us – clearly taking a group would lead to other issues that are not covered here.

## Why take a teenager to the mountains of continental Europe?

Inspiring views of the big peaks; generally drier weather (and fewer insects) than in the UK summer; exciting travel to reach the mountains; adventurous aspects including steeper ground, and perhaps starting and finishing in different valleys; the possibility of using mechanical uplift and/or staying in huts; the chance to try new foods, and to give them the opportunity to laugh at your efforts to speak another language.

A well-planned trip could help a child to build resilience, and improve their knowledge of European culture, languages, flora and fauna. It will also start equipping them with the skills to plan their own trips in the future.

Clearly there will be challenges that we don't have to consider in the UK, so preparation is important. I've considered these below in terms of indoor and outdoor preparation.

## PREPARATION – INDOOR

Start by doing your research – this kept me occupied during lockdown periods and wet November weekends. My aim was to arrive with five or six options, and then choose from these once in the Alps. I found it helpful to have a range of objectives with varying levels of challenge and commitment. It's also worth

having some ideas up your sleeve for non-mountain activities (e.g. swimming pools) for the odd rest day or when the weather isn't what you hoped.

I used a mixture of information sources including guidebooks (often second-hand), websites, and talking to people, together with the Swisstopo mapping app. Be prepared to translate from German or French, using a suitable app if, like me, you need one. For each of your possible objectives you will need to consider the likely hazards specific to that route. Equipment choices will also need to be made, such as, in some cases, via ferrata kit, helmets and harnesses, and on other routes, a rope will be appropriate.

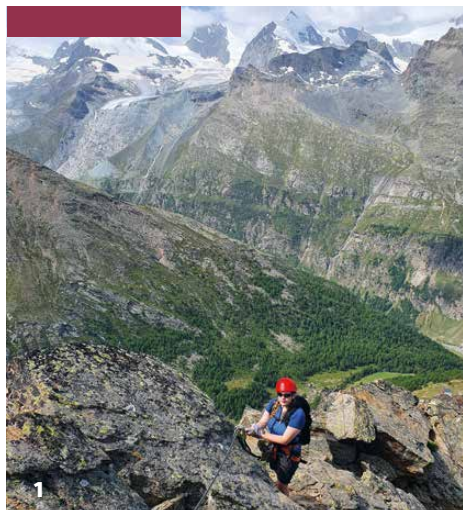
## PREPARATION – OUTDOOR

Fitness and skills training are key – for both of you. Clearly you will be entirely responsible for the child's safety. If you are at all unsure about your ability to look after them on steep ground or at higher altitudes, enlist help from a member of IFMGA (International Federation of Mountain Guides Associations) or UIMLA (Union of International Mountain Leader Associations); I have had training from several Guides and found them really encouraging and helpful.

Our preparation involved climbing England's 10 highest mountains over the course of a year or so. This gave me the chance to learn which situations my daughter might find challenging – for example, she is indifferent to wind and rain, but doesn't enjoy climbing steep hills when it's really warm. At the same time, she learned when I'm most likely to be grumpy! These UK hill days gave us opportunities to work on movement over steep ground, to pace ourselves through the day and



## GUIDANCE



1. A perfect introduction to via ferrata on the Almagellerhorn, in a wild and beautiful location, but with easy access via chairlifts from Saas Almagell.

2. The ascent of Mont Rogneux involves a height gain of 1738m, all on foot – so an overnight stop at the Cabane du Col de Mille.



to sort out what worked in terms of food and kit. Buying my daughter some new kit helped to motivate her – while trying it out in the UK, she could imagine being in the Alps.

### PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Once we had completed some UK hill days, I was able to refer to my research and choose some routes that seemed like a good match for us as a team. I then presented this to my daughter with photos to help her get a mental picture of what she was signing up for. I tried to refer to UK peaks that she already knew, for example “this ridge in the Alps will be a bit like Striding Edge, but 3 times longer”, or “the height gain to this hut is the same as the ascent of Skiddaw”.

### ONCE YOU ARRIVE

Be patient! You may have been to the Alps many times before, but a young person will likely need a little time to recover from the travel, and to adjust to the dry air, the sun, the food, the languages and, of course, to the sheer scale of the mountains. We wanted to go to above 3000m, so my daughter was involved from the start in planning our acclimatisation. An altimeter watch (bought with MTA discount) helped with this and proved to be good motivation when plodding uphill. Most young people will be well able to use a smartphone to check the weather through the day (we used the meteoblue app) and to follow the route (using the Swisstopo app in Switzerland), both of which help to keep them interested.

Be prepared to carry much of the weight yourself, at least to begin with. Build up the physical challenge gradually, in terms of steep ground and height gain. There are masses of easy walks on well-marked trails all over the Alps that make for perfect warm-up days; my daughter is now used to having lots of stops on these walks while I try to learn the names of the Alpine flowers.

### Here are a few highlights from our bigger mountain days

- Pointe de Drone 2950m from Col du Grand St-Bernard. We stayed at the Hospice, which is great value and has a unique atmosphere. The route to Pointe de Drone is featured in the new guidebook *Die Klettersteige der Schweiz* and has a grade of K1-2/T3. The via ferrata grades in this book, giving an indication of the difficulty, go from K1 to K6. This route includes

a number of steep sections equipped with chains and cables which can be protected effectively using a rope (*photo 3*). The second part of the grade is the SAC (Swiss Alpine Club) hiking scale which goes from T1 to T6; T2 and T3 trails such as this route typically have white-red-white markings.

- The ascent of Mont Rogneux 3084m, with an overnight at the Cabane du Col de Mille (*photos 2 & 4*). The route to the summit has white-blue-white paint markers indicating an ‘alpine trail’ and corresponding roughly to SAC hiking grade T4 or T5. It seemed sensible to protect some steep rough sections on the descent using a rope.
- Almagellerhorn via ferrata (not in the guidebook noted above). This route is accessed using two chairlifts from Saas Almagell followed by a walk of an hour or so. The via ferrata is given a grade of K2-3, which proved to be a good step-up from the Pointe du Drone route. We hired via ferrata sets in Saas Grund. It was very warm, so we left the actual summit (3327m) for another visit (*photo 1*).
- The famous glacier hike from Saas Fee to Mattmark, using the 7am cable car to Felskinn, passing the Britannia Hut and following the wand markers over the dry Hohlaubgletscher and Allalingsgletscher, before descending to the Mattmark Dam (and a bus to Saas Fee). Apparently, this was the best day so far! (*main article photo*).

I tried to avoid overloading my daughter with information – it worked best when I just allowed her to take it all in and ask questions when she wanted to know more. At the start I nagged her about eating and drinking enough, and about sun protection, but all that quickly became second nature. As with leading any group, there were times, such as crossing an exposed section, when I needed to be sure that she was fully focussed on where her feet were going.

At the same time, I was trying to assess my own capabilities constantly, especially where the terrain turned out to be different to what I was expecting. We turned back from a few routes where we started to feel uncomfortable – unfinished business gives us a good reason to go back!





3. Climbing the ladders to Grande Chenalette, en route to Pointe de Drone, high above the Grand St Bernard Pass. 4. Annabelle aged 12 at the summit of Mont Rognieux, before starting a long descent in the rain.



## PRACTICALITIES

Switzerland isn't cheap. Here are a few ideas to keep the costs down as far as possible:

Book travel as early as possible. Book trains and post-buses in advance if you can, using the SBB app – just like in the UK, some services are cheaper than others. There are sometimes special offers for under 16's travel. Be prepared to sleep on the floor of friends' apartments, and camping is another option, if you can manage to get camping gear out to the Alps. In the Saas Valley the Saastalcard gives you free access to most of the uplift while you're staying in the valley and similar schemes operate in other areas – check the tourist information website. Keep hut use to a minimum and check the prices before booking – they vary widely; reciprocal rights cards can give you a small saving in some of the huts, but not any that we used. Plan your menus and spend time in supermarkets getting to know what food is best value, usually the local food. Finding light-coloured clothing for teenagers was surprisingly hard – we had most success in Decathlon, where we also found Cat 4 sunglasses in kids' sizes (essential).

Finally make sure your travel insurance covers what you plan to do – we have an annual family travel policy that covers us for hiking up to 2500m, which is fine for some trips; we used BMC insurance for higher altitudes and graded via ferrata routes. ■

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**Peter Lovatt** works freelance as a Mountain Leader and is enjoying spending more time in the Alps as an Aspirant IML. As a Chartered Geologist he provides MTA workshops entitled 'Getting to Grips with Geology'.



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# BOOK REVIEW



## CLIMB SMARTER – MENTAL SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES FOR CLIMBING

by Dr Rebecca Williams

Reviewed by Belinda Buckingham

As a clinical psychologist and climbing coach, it is clear that Rebecca has put an enormous amount of her knowledge and expertise into this book. She has shared

some of her own experiences as well as insights gained whilst working with clients. Her depth of understanding and passion for this subject is evident throughout.

Evidence-based and well researched, Rebecca has taken out the technical jargon and written a clear and simple to understand guide for mental skills training that explores the many factors that can affect our mental state when it comes to climbing.

Carefully structured and well laid out, it could be used as a workbook with ample exercises to help you develop your own mental skills training. It also provides explanations around common fears and anxiety, and provides you with tools and knowledge to help others you might be coaching. Whether you have experience in this area or not, I would highly recommend reading this book.

The book is split into three sections: getting started on a mental skills training plan, getting you to explore your values, goals, habits, and behaviours; fixing problems in your climbing by learning to understand the common fears, anxieties, and worries; and finally finessing your mental skills. Each section has a summary rounding up the key points from that section and introducing the next.

There are many case studies shared throughout the book which I found helpful as some related to a few of my own mental struggles.

If you haven't done much in the way of self-reflection and mental skills training, understanding your own mental challenges and perhaps what's underpinning them, I would recommend you spend time going through the exercises in section one as it lays the groundwork for the rest of the book.

Rebecca shares some great insights into habits and behaviours, whilst also recognising and explaining why habits aren't easy to change and newly formed training plans aren't easy to stick to, which is quite refreshing.

I was particularly drawn to chapter 4 and 5, an introduction to anxiety and worries in climbing and the basic management of them. There were some great exercises that really got me to recognise and understand how my own anxieties show up whilst climbing and what my underlying worries really were, be prepared to be brutally honest about yourself though to get the best out of it!

Whilst there are a few chapters around the fear of falling, including things to consider when planning a falling practice and exercises to help you build up to a positive falling practice. This book makes it clear and explains why falling practice isn't suitable for everyone, shouldn't be the go-to practice and can just as easily make the fear of falling a whole lot worse. It also explains how the fear of falling is multifaceted and can be about the fear of losing control and/or trust issues with gear and belayer.

In Chapter 9, the social side of climbing, Rebecca shares some common unhelpful thinking errors/cognitive distortions and provides a couple of exercises to help you recognise which ones you tend to make and how to challenge them.

This all leads nicely into section 3 which covers confidence, focusing, imagery and visualisation, and there are plenty of suggestions for how you can start to incorporate these practices into your own training regime.

For anyone with a mindful or meditation practice, or with some experience of using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy or Acceptance and Commitment Therapy, you are likely to have a head start in understanding the benefits of these practices which some of the exercises are based around.

Whilst this book is written specifically for climbing, you could just as easily take the information and use it to help you with any life situation or goal you may have. The wealth of knowledge and expertise that is so clearly presented in this book, when applied, has the potential to make lifelong changes in your climbing and any other area of your life.

I would definitely recommend *Climb Smarter* to all climbers, coaches and anyone looking to understand and improve their mental skills in climbing and life in general. ■

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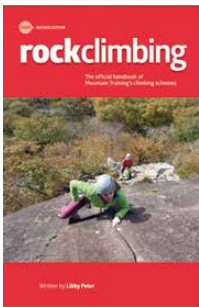
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# BOOK REVIEW



## ROCK CLIMBING

By Libby Peter

Reviewed by Beyond the Edge staff team

Reviewing the latest edition of Libby Peter's seminal classic 'Rock Climbing' whilst Women's Trad Festival is ongoing in the Peak District seems appropriate. The last edition in 2011 did not feature as prominently the wide diversity of climbers and climbing

activities that make up our wonderful sport.

In the intervening years, climbing has exploded in popularity. The Olympics, in particular, encouraging new generations to hit the boulders, walls and crags.

Packed full of new photos, high quality, easily understood diagrams and arranged in a logical order to reflect the indoors to outdoors transition, this book, like its predecessors, will become the bible for novices and instructors alike.

Covering all the techniques from beginner to Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor and many areas of the Coaching qualifications in one book is a tall order. Understandably in doing so, some areas are covered in less detail than some may want.

Indoor climbing has gone from four to twenty-six pages which is a much needed expansion, with good instructor sections on group management and use of auto belays. In particular, the explanation of belaying and belay devices will help novices and those working towards qualifications stay safe in this critical area.

Warm-ups and injury prevention is explained well and in considerably more detail than previously, but coaches may

want more. Fortunately, as for other areas, a useful further reading section signposts the next steps for those that do need or want more.

In the outdoors' section, much has been reworked and in particular bouldering amplified to give a simple flow and highlight common areas of doubt/poor practice. We liked the formalising of the traffic light system for crag top safety, similar to that seen in water rescue to emphasise instructor safety.

A new chapter "Inspiring Others" emphasises the importance of being a good instructor/coach/leader rather than just a good climber which is a concept missed by some on the journey through the climbing schemes.

Using a belay plate in guide mode is another welcome addition especially for those heading towards Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor along with clear explanations of lowering multiple clients in a scrambling context.

Overall, our staff team particularly liked the logical, simple explanations and reworked diagrams. We also loved that the advantages and disadvantages of different methods are explained without getting dogmatic. As instructors we are commonly told, "I saw this on YouTube so it must be okay". The reality is that some ways are frankly dangerous, some ways are safe sometimes, and some ways are safe most of the time. This more nuanced approach will hopefully support the potential instructor without confusing the novice.

We would not hesitate to recommend this massively updated resource to our clients. Either to those starting their climbing journey or those wanting to gain or practice skills prior to an indoors or outdoors assessment. ■



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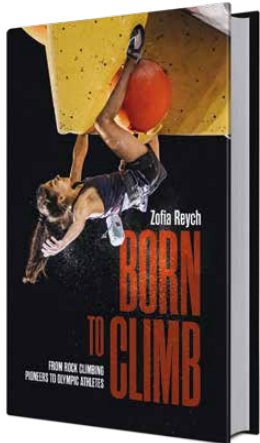
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# BOOK REVIEW



## **BORN TO CLIMB – FROM ROCK CLIMBING PIONEERS TO OLYMPIC ATHLETES**

**By Zofia Reyech**

Reviewed by Malcolm Creasey

My initial thought of this book was one of scepticism as I wondered whether it would be 'my sort of book', however, as always nothing ventured, nothing gained. From the outset, *Born To Climb* is an interesting read which takes the reader from,

just as the title suggests, the early beginnings of rock climbing though to the development of climbing as an Olympic sport.

The author traces the early pioneers of rock climbing throughout Europe, and North America. Many of their humble beginnings will be familiar to some, particularly older readers, however there were some interesting facts that I was unfamiliar with and I'm sure many readers will enjoy the antics our predecessors employed whilst attempting a previously unclimbed face or pinnacle.

The book has been incredibly well researched, not only regarding these early ascents, but also in the background these early climbers had with gymnastic or fitness clubs, particularly in Europe. Although the lengths to which some Victorian alpinists would go to reach Chamonix was unlikely to be quite the '6,000 miles of poor roads' as stated here.

In North America the major developments centred, as one might expect, around the Yosemite Valley where the shocking treatment of the indigenous population, for me, overshadowed the achievements of Harding, Robbins, Chouinard and the other valley activists of the 50's and 60's.

The overriding influences though which have allowed the sport to develop have been increased leisure, improved transport and, of course, the World Wars: with the advent of the specially trained mountain troops; huge advances in equipment such as nylon ropes; widespread use of karabiners; and advances in rope techniques. Later chapters deal with further advances in equipment from pitons to bolts and on to

the massive advances in trad (British) leader placed protection and bouldering. Not forgetting the harder economic times when many young climbers existed for months on end on dole cheques, or, as they were called at the time, Government Climbing Grants.

Moving towards more modern times, Reyech highlights some significant events, characters and first ascents, explaining the impact these had at the time and how each event, or individual impacted the recognised ethos and ethics of the time.

Here, the author looks in detail at other influences and draws parallels between the developments in climbing in different parts of the world. You could perhaps disagree with some of the authors findings however they present very compelling arguments and after all what would the world of climbing, and climbers be without some discussion on how we got to where we are. And, as I mentioned earlier – this is a very well researched piece of work.

There are a few factual inaccuracies – dates in one case, and a couple of wrong first ascentionists, although I suspect rampant predictive text or spell check on steroids is to blame. Still, what are proof readers for? However, these small details do not affect the overall quality of this piece of work.

Interspersed between the various chapters Reyech tells of some of her own adventures, or should I say misadventures in some cases. Perhaps we should call these learning experiences, we have all had them if we care to admit it especially in our formative years. These chapters help to set the scene and often form a link between what has gone before and the next developments.

20 chapters, eight pages of photographs, an Epilogue, Acknowledgements, Glossary, Acronyms, Grade Comparison tables Notes and References, Further Reading and an Index complete the package. A must read for any serious student of rock climbing because as someone very famous once said – To understand History is to Understand the Future. ■

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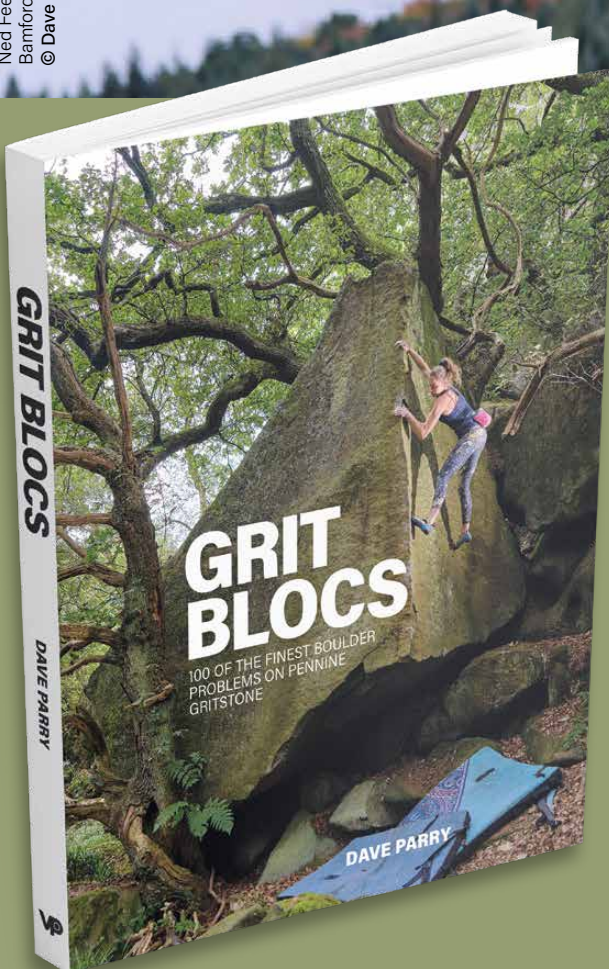
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