

# The Professional **Mountaineer**

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Association of  
Mountaineering  
Instructors

British Mountain  
Guides

British Association  
of International  
Mountain Leaders

Mountain Training  
Association



## LITERARY HITCHHIKING **‘Up on the Downs’**

Mountain  
Leader:  
**WHAT ROPE  
DO I NEED?**

**AGAINST THE GRAIN:**  
wearing minimalist  
footwear in the  
Scottish hills

**HOW TO GET A  
WEBSITE MADE:**  
DIY, freelancer or agency





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# The Professional Mountaineer

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**Autumn 2022** History of OS maps, energy in the Landscape and Sika deer.

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### Our front cover

Elliot Ploughman practicing bringing Dylan Wallis up during Mountain Leader training.

© Mark Garland

### Woodland Carbon scheme

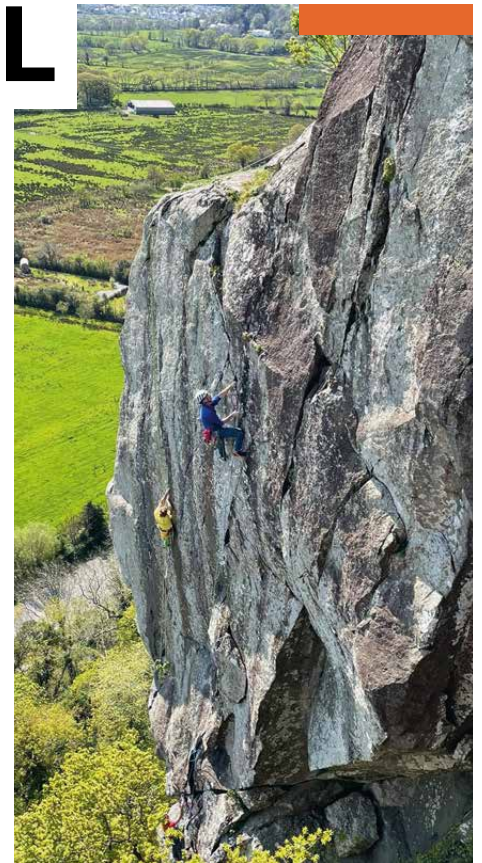


CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the production of the paper used in this magazine has been offset by planting native woodland in the UK, through the Woodland Trust and the Woodland Carbon scheme.

# EDITORIAL

The recent death of John Brailsford, former head of the Outdoor Education department at Bangor Normal College brought back many memories and also reflections of how our profession has developed over the years. JB, or “Basil” as we called him, was at the epicentre of a broad range of seismic shifts in the world of recreational and professional mountaineers and climbers for several decades before his retirement in the mid-eighties, when he resettled in the Ecrins. His patriarchal and competitive persona matched the zeitgeist of the Seventies, but he was a visionary whose influence is unique.

John’s influence as a blacksmith spanned much of the technical development of modern climbing, including the first manufactured nut protection and forging a curved pick for ice tools. As a climber he championed (and in some cases invented) friction hitches and clutch systems that remain part of every climbing instructor’s “toolkit” for problem solving. As a fluent French speaker (with a Yorkshire twist!) he was the first British guide to build a strong professional rapport with the influential ENSA (Ecole Nationale de Ski et d’Alpinisme), and he refused to take no for an answer when tirelessly (and successfully) championing the admission of British Mountain Guides into the international federation. He wrote several important Alpine Guidebooks, and also exerted a crucial influence on British cycling, not least through his mentoring of his son, Sir David Brailsford. The concept of marginal gains was exemplified by Sir David’s father, and we have all benefitted



ABOVE The editor climbing ‘Cream’, Tremadog.

© Rachel Elin Pearce.

from his refusal to accept the status quo.

Speaking of zeitgeist, we are living in exceptional times. It is only fitting that this edition of our magazine reflects a world coming to terms with successive waves of Covid-19, accelerating symptoms of climate change, and war-torn disruption to fuel and grain supplies. This is the backdrop to the breadth of practical and intellectual value compiled in yet another game-changing edition of *The Professional Mountaineer*. Collectively, we can create incremental improvements to bring a better future.

**Steve Long**  
Technical editor

## OUR COVER



### Mark Garland

Mark is an AMI committee member and runs Garland Mountaineering offering MTE climbing and walking qualifications. Mark moderates for NICAS and Mountain Training, and also runs MIAS mountain biking awards.

## OUR SUMMER ISSUE CONTRIBUTORS INCLUDE



### Anthony Eccles

Anthony is a qualified MCI and member of AMI, he runs his own business, [www.higherclimbing.wales](http://www.higherclimbing.wales), delivering rock climbing instruction and guiding. He is also a qualified Secondary teacher of science.



### Bel Myers

Bel is a Hill and Moorland, and Mountain Leader, trainer and writer on the outdoors, personal and global health. Bel is a member of the MTA.



### Charlotte Ditchburn

Charlotte is a Hill and Moorland Leader based in Cumbria. She works full time in the access sector and as an ambassador for Ordnance Survey, British Canoeing, and Green Space Dark Skies. Photo © Gemma Scopes Photography.



### Michelle Baker

Michelle is the CEO of the Melanoma Fund, and authored their sun protection awareness campaigns, including Sunguarding sport. Michele loves being in the great outdoors: mountain climbing, running, and trail walking.



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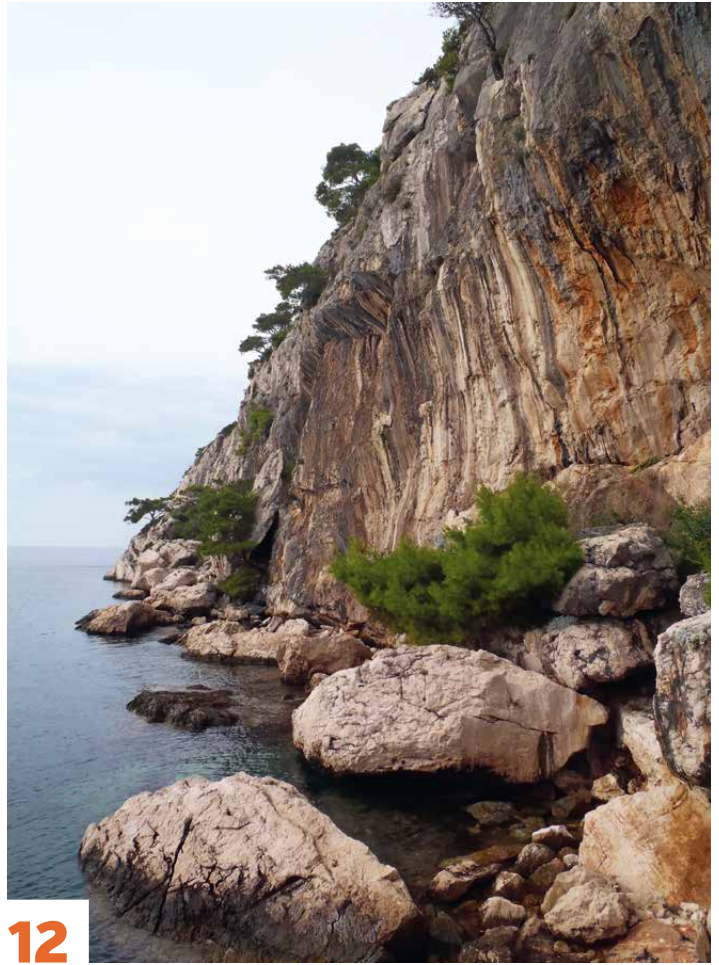
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# NEWS



## ASSOCIATION OF MOUNTAINEERING INSTRUCTORS (AMI)

As the new AMI Chair, I'd like to thank my predecessor, Phil Baker, for his tireless work during his tenure and through the pandemic. Happy Retirement Phil!

Events Rep, Peter Stollery (supported by Corinna Parry), organised a very successful AGM/CPD weekend in the Peak District with over 100 attendees on workshops. Resolutions were passed to amend the AMI Code of Conduct and Complaints Procedure.

Mandatory CPD for AMI members commences on 1st July so ensure your CMS CPD logs are up to date with the required number of points to renew Membership. Social media followers continue to grow: Facebook = 9581, Instagram = 6388, and Twitter = 8066. This winter 15 AMI Members passed WMCI Assessment, and there are 48 MCI Trainee Workshops planned for 2022.

We will be looking for a new Development Officer later this year when Sandy Paterson's tenure comes to an end. If you're interested look out for the email or contact Sandy to see what's involved.

This summer, AMI is supporting both the Women's Trad Festival and Irish Women's Rock Climbing Festival by providing instructors.

And finally, AMI welcomes: Anthony Eccles and Mark Garland as our new Charity Representative/Trustee and CPD Representative respectively; Kath James and Matt Harris as new Regional Representatives; And we thank Kristine Quayle and Jay Jackson who have stepped down from the Committee.

Have a great summer in the mountains.

**Rob Pugh** (Chairman)



© Tim Jones

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](http://www.ami.org.uk)



## BRITISH MOUNTAIN GUIDES (BMG)

As covid restrictions eased during the winter, so the appetite for guiding services increased both in Scotland and the Alps. Members have been busy making the most of long periods of cold, in often challenging and lean conditions.

The Scottish winter assessment saw 3 candidates progress to the alpine stage this year and in the Alps the ski courses ran as planned. We are really pleased to congratulate Louisa Reynolds in passing all the tests and achieving her Guides Carnet. This summer we will begin a venture with ENSA running one of our summer alpine training courses jointly involving French and British aspirant guides and joint staffing.

We have been making a series of short films to illustrate the broad range of terrain and disciplines of the work of British Mountain Guides in the UK, the Alps and worldwide. We have also captured some of the stories and motivation of young trainees coming into and through our scheme. Hopefully this material will encourage the public to seek out qualified professionals.

It is sad to report the death of John Brailsford, one of our major figures as a previous President of the association and a key figure at the time we attained our international status in the 1970's. It is easy to claim someone as our own, but we know John's influence extended much further, as lecturer in outdoor education at Bangor University and as a creative force in the development of climbing equipment.

**Martin Doyle** (President)



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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**  
[www.bmg.org.uk](http://www.bmg.org.uk)





## BRITISH ASSOCIATION OF INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN LEADERS (BAIML)

It's in the name! BAIML members are International Mountain Leaders and for the last couple of years international travel has been pretty difficult. We're seeing a return to travel and we've got everything crossed for the summer! We're looking forward to exploring new places and introducing more people to our favourites, but there is some uncertainty: Will everything be the same? Will those places have changed, or will our clients have changed? Travel and adventure can heal us all and we can play some small part in that.

One of the challenges we'll face is new restrictions on our work as a result of the UK leaving the EU. We relied on EU rights to work for short times in other countries. BAIML has worked for several years to make the UK government aware of the issues, and we've been joined by BMG, MTUKI and others in this endeavour. Most recently, the BAIML board agreed to allocate funds to support this work as we are approaching the limit of what volunteers can do.

We are international and our thoughts turn to Ukraine. UIMLA has been working with regional groups to think about immediate needs, and rebuilding using travel and tourism.

The 2022 BAIML Conference will be held at the Palace Hotel, Buxton from 25 to 27 November with the AGM on the evening of 26 November.

**Ian Spare** [Communications Director]



## MOUNTAIN TRAINING ASSOCIATION (MTA)

We have just launched our 2022 mentoring programme which will be underway in July. We are providing training to MTA members who wish to mentor those who are in their consolidation phase between training and assessment.

Our recent members' survey has given us great insight into how we can continue to provide a valued service to our membership, a report of the findings is available to view in the members' area of our website. We'd like to thank everyone who took the time to complete the survey as we had a great response, and this will form the basis of our 3-5 year strategy and development plan.

Our biennial conference will take place on the weekend of the 19th and 20th November at the Field Studies Centre Blencathra, in the Lake District, more information and a timetable of workshops will be released in due course. At this year's conference we will be presenting our Volunteer Awards, for those who have gone above and beyond in their volunteering, so look out for details of award categories and nominations on the MTA members' area and news.

Our social media campaign to promote members' expertise and profiles is gathering pace so if you'd like to be included, we'd love to hear more of your stories and find out about your niche skills and expertise. This is part of a broader campaign to raise the awareness of Mountain Training's Association and its members to the wider public, a cornerstone of our coming strategy.

**Belinda Buckingham** [Development Officer]



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)

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.

T **01690 720272**  
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# LITERARY HITCHHIKING

## 'Up on the Downs'

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PHILLIPPA SANDERS



**The soft, rolling chalk hills or 'downs' of southern England are excellent lowland walking terrain, and we often find ourselves roaming the wide tracks over the Berkshire Downs.**

**Philippa Sanders** is a Lowland Leader and Hill and Moorland Leader, and environmental planner.

Through her business, Pipsticks Walks, she offers inspiring guided walking experiences and navigation training across the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns.

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

The Berkshire Downs lie within the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); they are continuous with the Marlborough Downs to the west and the Chiltern Hills to the east. Historically wholly within Berkshire, boundary changes in 1974 transferred to Oxfordshire the impressive northern scarp which plunges abruptly into the Vale of the White Horse.

*The Downs ...are among the highest, most spacious, and most divinely carved in rolling ridge and hollow flank (Edward Thomas).*

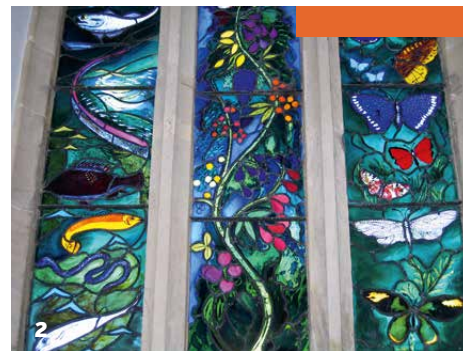
The open downs may not offer the scaly heights and ruggedness of the uplands, but this is a visibly ancient landscape with a sense of remoteness and tranquillity. It is no surprise to learn that many a poet and writer has roamed the Berkshire Downs, inspired by their expansive beauty, shape and solitude, and all

united by a deep love of nature and the English countryside. They make good companions on our walks, offering a deeper sense of place and insight into the portrait of our landscape.

### Always get over a stile

Richard Jefferies (1848 – 1887), an extraordinarily sensitive writer of natural history and English rural life, knew the Downs well. He urges us to become acquainted with the footpaths as it is they, not the roads, which go through the heart of the land (*The Amateur Poacher*). "Always get over a stile" we are told ...that is to say, never omit to explore a footpath, for never was there a footpath yet which did not pass something of interest (*Nature Near London*). Jefferies was deeply influenced by the Downs and his writing portrays the rich landscape as an assault on our senses which *forces the heart to lift itself in earnest and purest desire (On the Downs)*.





MAIN PHOTO The Ridgeway, Streatley Warren. 1. Always Get Over a Stile – The Ridgeway. 2. Betjeman Memorial Window by John Piper Farnborough. 3. Penelope Betjeman Memorial Stone. 4. Laurence Binyon, Aldworth. 5. The Ridgeway, Berkshire Downs.



Jefferies was greatly admired by Edward Thomas (1878 – 1917), the nomadic roaming nature poet and writer of the countryside. Regarded as one of England's most important poets, Thomas was highly influenced by Jefferies and writing his biography (1909) he captures the remoteness and vastness of the Downs:

*There is something oceanic in their magnitude, their ease, their solitude above all, in their liquid forms, that combine apparent mobility with placidity, and in the vast playground which they provide for the shadows of the clouds.*

This playful flowing landscape has inspired many. Alfred Williams (1877 – 1930) describes how the slopes are continually changing and interchanging in localities, assuming new and strange shapes, charming and surprising with their grace and exquisiteness. Even the old trackways of the Downs cannot escape the currents of their fluid form, as Edward Thomas observes: *The earliest roads wandered like rivers through the land, having, like rivers, one necessity, to keep in motion (The Icknield Way).*

### Turf ribbons and coombes

Flowing in timeless motion along the highest ridge of the Berkshire Downs a broad green track runs for many a long, long mile (Richard Jefferies) – England's oldest road, the

Ridgeway. Kenneth Grahame (1859 – 1932) romanced the road, describing in his *Pagan Papers* this *broad green ribbon of turf* as it strikes out *...away from the habitable world in a splendid, purposeful manner ...Out on that almost trackless expanse of billowy Downs such a track is in some sort humanly companionable: it really seems to lead you by the hand.* The Ridgeway, and the many other green turf ribbons leading through the heart of the Downs where our pagan ancestors once trod, are kept in motion by those who tread there today.

Etched within this oceanic landscape, like great troughs, are the dry coombes of the downs. Edward Thomas describes *the steep walls of the winding coombe dotted by thorn, juniper and elder* at Streatley Warren, through which the Ridgeway descends to the Thames. *Of the unwooded coombes or inlets into the downs this is one of the most pleasing to me, and I shall always remember it... and others of those vast turf halls which the sky roofs (The Icknield Way).*

### For the Fallen

Nearby, at the foot of the Downs is Lollington Farm where John Masefield (1878 – 1967) lived. Inspired by the deeply historic landscape around him and seeking to understand where beauty and faith could be found in a tormented world, Masefield wrote *Lollington Downs, August 1914* and *Up on the Downs*. Acquainted with other poets in the area, including Laurence Binyon and Robert Bridges, they would often walk together



## DESTINATIONS

6. Juniper Valley, Berkshire Downs. 7. Leathery Limbs, Racehorses on the Downs.



*Up on the downs (where) the red-eyed kestrels hover.* Masefield extols the joys of walking *under the flying white clouds and the broad blue lift of the sky* in his poem *Tewksbury Road*.

Laurence Binyon (1869 – 1943) lived in the Berkshire Downs near Aldworth, writing some of his finest poetry here. He is especially remembered for his poem *For the Fallen*, inscribed on Lutyen's Cenotaph in Whitehall. On 9 April 1917, Edward Thomas joined 'the Fallen'; he is commemorated with a stunning engraved-glass window by Laurence Whistler in the church of another downland village, Eastbury. Binyon himself rests in the churchyard at Aldworth.

In this churchyard stands the 'Old Yew', at least 1000 years old and representative of that which Alfred Tennyson (1809 – 1892) so vividly describes: *Old Yew, which graspest at the stones, That name the under-lying dead (In Memoriam – II)*. Tennyson married Emily Sellwood of this parish. He was clearly inspired by the area, naming their home after the village and taking the title Lord Tennyson of Freshwood and Aldworth.

### Horses of the Downs

John Betjeman (1906 – 1984), had a long association with the Berkshire Downs. His family would often picnic by the Lord Wantage Monument which towers on the crest of scarp, commanding views over the Vale. Nearby, where the path descends to Lockinge, rests a memorial sarsen stone to his wife, Penelope. His time living here inspired some of his best known and most nostalgic poetry, much written about the locality.

Betjeman loved landscape – *Topography is one of my chief themes in my poetry*. He shows affection for the horse gallops which are so integral to the landscape of the *swelling downland*,

praising the trainers for preserving them from the rising tide of cereal crops – *They alone have kept the turf*. In *Upper Lambourne*, we really sense the *Leathery limbs of the string of horses, moving out of sight and mind*. Near the gallops, in the folds of the Downs lies Farnborough, the highest village in Berkshire (218m). Betjeman resided here and in the church is a beautiful stained-glass window in his memory, designed by close friend John Piper.

The Downs are bursting with great emblematic monuments of time, but none so great as the timeless White Horse riding the crest of the downs above Uffington. It predates us all. At least 3,000 years old and the oldest chalk-cut hill figure in Britain, the Horse, and the land where it roams, is thick with folklore and legend.

*Before the gods that made the gods  
Had seen their sunrise pass  
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale  
Was cut out of the grass.*

(GK Chesterton, *The Ballad of the White Horse*, 1911).

The Horse is kept bright today by an ancient scouring ritual as recorded in *The Scouring of the White Horse* (1859) by Uffington born Thomas Hughes.

The many insights of our literary companions convey a deep sense of place, beauty, tranquillity and remoteness. They foster in us all a deeper connection with the landscape around us. Long may we continue to roam the Berkshire Downs – this vast playground for the shadows of the clouds – which inspires so many. ■



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# Climbing ON HVAR

WORDS BY MIKE RILEY  
PHOTOS BY MIKE RILEY UNLESS  
OTHERWISE CREDITED



**Mike Riley** is a trainee Rock Climbing Instructor who works for the Mountain Training Association as their Membership Strategy and Communications officer.

My partner, Andy, and I travelled to Croatia in mid-October for a spot of out of season climbing. We chose the island of Hvar because it had the most climbing sites of any of the Croatian islands, with a variety of sea and inland cliffs.

Flying from Gatwick we landed in Split and overnighted in the city, which we had the chance to explore that evening and the next day. The old town is saturated in a sense of history, with its Roman ruins and ancient walls, and we took the opportunity to stock up at a local market before catching the ferry over to the island of Hvar, one of a group of islands just across the sea from the more southern end of the country. The ferry, which takes about an hour, eases you through a channel between the islands of Solta and Brac, giving you a first glimpse of the sun-glimmering beauty of the area as you chug along close to their beaches and coves, before landing at the Stari Grad ferry port, a functional concrete car park of a place west of the old town. Driving the winding roads through the island we made our way in the direction of Hvar town before heading on by to where we were staying. Our accommodation was a small self-contained studio apartment, about 10 minutes' drive to the north of Hvar town nestled on the south side of a bay in the middle of low brush.

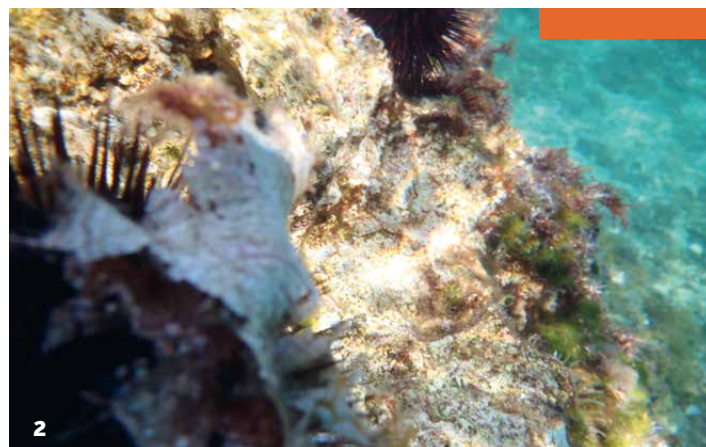
Mornings consisted of a pre-breakfast swim across the bay, carefully avoiding the sea urchins, before fueling up and heading out to

the chosen climbing spot.

We started inland at Stracine, a large expanse of rock sitting way above one of the island's old roads south-west of Stari Grad. Lovely dry limestone with great grip and, as it's north-east facing, nicely in the shade, because even out of season it was surprisingly hot in the sun. Access was up a bit of a steep and indistinct path from the limited parking by the road, but the views from the cliff over the tree covered island below with the Adriatic Sea glinting in the distance made it well worth the scramble up. There was plenty to choose from with a good range of over a dozen sport routes, from a comfortable 4b through to 6c+, giving an excellent introduction and chance to warm-up to climbing on the island. We took turns leading a few of the lower grade routes, which felt a bit scrappy but fine to do, and even clambered up one that wasn't in the guidebook (which we naturally decided was a much higher grade than those that were listed) before calling it a day, happy with the welcome to climbing on Hvar.

The next day we decided to continue with inland climbs and made our way to just outside of Milna, on the south coast of the island, and a crag up in the hills above the village, again with a wide range of short single pitch routes from 4b through to 7b. More dry, robust limestone helped us lead our way up a few quality routes, Juricin (5a), Mirta (5b) and Horizont (5c), before the sun and the heat got the better of us.





MAIN PHOTO Podstine sea cliff 1. Boat in a harbour on Hvar. 2. Sea urchins. 3. Split market. 4. Mike abseiling at Stracine © Andy Hewlett.



On our third day we wound our way through rough-hewn tunnels over to Suplja Stina, also known as Sveta Nedjelja or Cliffbase, which is a popular spot on the south side of the island with bays for swimming and deep water soloing. This area has some heftier routes with plenty sitting above 7a up to 8a+, although there are more than enough in the 5's and 6's for those not wanting to overdo it in the sun. You pay your way in as access is through accommodation that sees climbers sprawled around in hammocks and on mattresses. It costs 60 kuna (about £6.50) to climb here, as the cliffs are on private land, but if you like climbing in company it is worth it for the quantity (over 150 routes), range (5a to 8a+) and setting. We tend to err towards quieter spots, so after a scout around and checking out the impressive and committed climbing, it felt a little crowded after the seclusion of the previous days, so we made our way out and back to Hvar town.

We had a break from climbing the next day and hung out in our quiet secluded bay before heading into town for dinner and an evening out. Hvar town is a picturesque and relatively small town built, as you'd likely expect, around a bay of crystal-clear sea, with pale limestone buildings topped with terracotta roofs, tiny cafes off winding stairs and an open central square with bars and restaurants spilling out in the evening. It has been called the Ibiza of Croatia, but that's simply because there are a couple of large complexes with bars and big night clubs around the seafront, although these were all shut-up and quieted when we were there. If you fancy mixing in some clubbing with your climbing, plan your trip in the main season (June to September) for the fun of both. After a couple of drinks at the Hula Hula bar (not the best name maybe, but potent cocktails) we stopped to eat at one of a handful of little places which were set off the small streets, back alleys, and steep steps of the town.

Our final day took us to Podstine, a small (20-25m) cliff just

along the coast to the west of Hvar town. Access is from the west end of the Put Podstina tunnel, where there are spaces for 3-5 cars, which may be an issue in summer as it's a popular spot for fishing and swimming, but not a problem out of season. It's a short walk down a dirt track, for about 300m, before turning east along the top of the cliffs for a further 100m, looking out for an open area with an anchor, a bolt and a thread, on the clifftop above a ledge and a large boulder at the base of the cliff. The anchor can be used to abseil down the route Sirena (5a) to access the climbs. Sport routes here ranged from 5a to 7a+ and the rock, again, was classic dry, limestone that your shoes seemed to stick to, but with razor sharp edges on holds that somehow still held your weight. We alternated the lead on some of the popular routes here, easily identifiable as they had their names painted on the rock at the start of the route, Supermanu (5c), Galeb (5c) and Macri (6a), before a well-earned dip in the sea. The view over the water to the islands, with boats gliding back and forth, the sun glistening off the sea and the gentle tide lapping the shore was serenely relaxing in the hazy afternoon sunshine. Podstine was by far our favourite spot at which we'd climbed over the week, positive and satisfying climbing, the sea right below to cool off in whenever it got a bit too warm in the sun, and the whole place to ourselves for the day. Spot on.

There are further sites on Hvar island (Lucisca, Velika Stiniva and Pokrivenik), that we didn't manage to visit, giving plenty of reasons to return. ■

Accommodation, Vila Beleca:

<http://villa-beleca-hvar.com/#apartments>

Guidebook: *Climbing in Croatia* by Boris Čujić published by Astoida, 2014





# Short rope DESCENTS

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY ANTHONY ECCLES

**Scrambling with two clients is often a cause for deferral on the MCI Assessment and one aspect which is often overlooked during consolidation is how best to get down a steep section with clients that requires a belay.**

Having a robust and adaptable system for getting down a loose, steep and/ or slippery section will make your assessment much less stressful. In preparation for assessment, it's worth spending some time practicing retreats to ensure you are well-versed in the methods described here.

The methods you use need to be appropriate for the terrain. Thinking about the context of the situation e.g. your client's ability or the weather/ rock conditions, it is essential to avoid

inappropriate or unnecessary methods being used.

## Lowering versus downclimbing

In descent, when you have to negotiate a steep section that requires a belay, the two options you have for getting your clients down it is either by lowering them or assisting them to downclimb. Both options will require a belay and depending on the space you have available, different methods of safeguarding each client will be required.





MAIN PHOTO well-organised belay with anchor in-reach. 1. Method 1 – Using the isolation loop of client 1 to safeguard client 2. 2. Method 2 – Using the isolation knot of client 1 to safeguard client 2. 3. Add another Italian hitch to the system for added friction when lowering two people before you release the tied off one? 4. Scrambling on Tryfan Bach. 5. Stance organisation – avoid having to reach over clients when lowering the first person. 6. Getting yourself down to your clients.

The method you choose will come down to the situation you find yourself in but the major consideration of whether to lower or downclimb, will be if there is a rope running over an edge.

Having 2 adults fully load a single rope that's running over rock is definitely not advised as even smooth looking rock can damage a rope worryingly quickly. Even if there's not an edge and the descent is not too steep or difficult, it is often more comfortable for the clients to get them to downclimb with a tight rope. If the section is longer than the rope between the two clients or too difficult for them to downclimb and there's an edge the rope will run over, you might decide it is safer to lower one person at a time. Abseiling is also an option for descent too but this article will only cover lowering/downclimbing.

**Limited space**

If you have limited space or the length of rope between the 2 clients is shorter than the section to be negotiated you will need to belay Client 2 off Client 1's isolation loop until the rope between them comes tight.

Two methods of attaching the karabiner are:

- 1 through the loop between the tie-on knot and isolation knot.
- 2 through the isolation knot itself.

The advantages of using the isolation knot is that Client 1 will still have the benefit of the isolation loop.

If there is enough distance between the belay and the steepening, you may be able to allow Client 2 to walk towards the edge before belaying both simultaneously.

If you decide to lower both clients simultaneously, you will likely require some extra friction especially if the ropes are wet. Running the rope through two Italian hitches is a good option to achieve this – one on the belay and one on your harness. An ATC device works well for this too.

**Belay organisation**

As you would when belaying clients up to a stance, it is important to think ahead about how you will arrange your clients on each stance when going down. This will save you time and make it more comfortable for everyone. For example, if you are reaching over Client 1 to belay Client 2 down first it could be awkward, so making a decision ahead of time about everyone's position is essential for efficiency and comfort.

**Getting yourself down**

Once your clients have made themselves secure, you need to use an appropriate method of retreat yourself. You may decide that it is safe enough for you to just downclimb, but if you think that the descent is too consequential your only option may be to abseil. ■



**Anthony Eccles** is a qualified MCI and member of AMI, Anthony runs his own business, Higher Climbing Wales from the edge of Snowdonia delivering Rock climbing instruction and guiding. He is also a qualified Secondary teacher of science.

<https://www.higherclimbing.wales/>



WORDS BY MARK GARLAND  
PHOTOS BY MARK GARLAND UNLESS  
OTHERWISE CREDITED

# SECURITY on STEEP GROUND for MOUNTAIN LEADERS

## What is security on steep ground and when do we need it in a leadership context?

Security in this context generally refers to any intervention by the leader to provide additional support or confidence to a party member. The Mountain Leader's role is to provide this extra security and have the responsibility of managing all party members' motivations, aspirations, and physical and mental challenge thresholds, particularly in an emergency. The golden phrase here is "anytime a slip could become a fall" and this is when we need to manage it. However, don't take a rope with the idea of using it as part of the plan: use of the rope should be an unplanned response to an emergency situation only.

As with anything, planning is a critical part of any journey and identifying a good route that will suitably challenge the group and satisfy their aims is key. It is generally accepted that if we have to provide additional security to someone, particularly in ascent, then we have made the wrong route choice. Consider the group's previous experience, the terrain, what equipment you and they have, the weather, if you can avoid any potential tricky sections, and the group size.

If you plan to take a group into steeper ground later in the day a good strategy is to take them into broken terrain early on and ask them to pick a route through it. This shows you, as the leader, what their adventure threshold is and watching from behind you can make a movement analysis on their overall **A**gility, **B**alance and **C**o-ordination. Watch how they place their feet, use momentum and how much they trust their footwear. We can then adjust the initial plan to a more appropriate one based on these observations; This could mean more movement coaching on simpler terrain or creating more (or less) of a challenge as determined by ability.

As with most activities we can use the acronym CLAP to help us lead.

**C**ommunication – can everyone hear you, are you using words they understand, can they question you?

**L**ine of sight – can you see everyone at all times, can you see tell-tale signs of discomfort? i.e., panic in the face, loss of confidence with feet/wet rock.

**A**voidance – can you avoid tricky sections, can you be in a place to reduce exposure, can you identify mild discomfort before it becomes an issue?

**P**osition of most effectiveness – Where can you be to provide the best support in any given situation? Is it above to assist up, is it spotting from below, is it putting yourself between them and the "scary" drop?

Decision-making and picking the correct method to deal with every situation is crucial, so we need to be armed with a number of solutions. Remember: technique is the way to do something, skill is picking the correct technique at the right time and doing it well.

I've split three security techniques into phases.

### Spotting

For someone who is a little nervous or you believe a little unsteady.

Spotting is simply positioning yourself to give a little guidance, providing confidence, preventing a slip, or stopping a tumble if a slip does occur. You are not trying to catch someone, simply guiding them to their feet to stop a larger fall. You must have sufficient stability yourself to do this and not put yourself in danger.





MAIN PHOTO Elliot Ploughman practicing bringing Dylan Wallis up during ML training. Note the tight ropes in all parts of the system. 1. Lewis Metcalfe providing roped confidence to a nervous Paul Taylor on ML training. 2. Dylan Wallis guiding a foot to a good hold and spotting the rucksack. On Mountain Leader training. 3. Angels Wings © Mountain Training's Hillwalking publication. 4. Classic Abseil © Mountain Training's Hillwalking publication. 5. South African single handed © Mountain Training's Hillwalking publication.

**Confidence roping**

Confidence roping involves using a taut rope to guide, provide support and, again, prevent a slip becoming a fall. The golden rules are: you must be **above the person** to prevent a pendulum and then creating any momentum and you must have **tension** in the rope to provide that constant sense of security. Hold the rope tight in the **down-hill hand**, this prevents your body twisting if they load it. Keep the **arm bent** as a shock absorber, if they slip whilst you have a straight arm you have nothing to give. Also, hold the rope **thumb up** and cock the wrist. This gives increased grip and allows for some shock absorbency. Every **foot placement needs to be a solid stance**: If you get pulled over it defeats the objective. If you can't get a solid stance, stop them, then you move, and then you bring them up. **Communicate**, tell them where you want them to go, ask them to stop, ask for feedback on tension/support. Remember this needs to be effective in ascent and descent.

**Body belaying a small step in ascent or descent**

If you need to bring someone up a small rocky section, the best way to protect yourself and the participant maybe to build a belay and bring them up/down via a body belay.

**Knots** You should be able to do everything with a simple overhand knot, this generally simplifies things, although I understand a climber may choose to use something else, i.e., a bowline around an anchor.

**Anchor Selection** Ensure it is solid. Is it big and heavy? Is it part of the mountain? Is the angle at the back of the anchor one that will stop the rope rising up and off?

**ABC (Anchor, Belayer, Climber)** Everything must be in-line to ensure that, if the system is

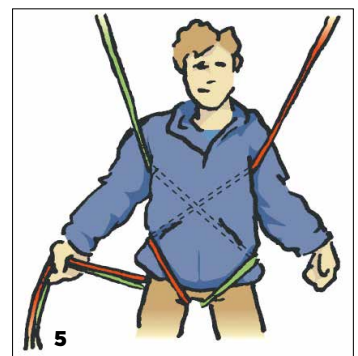
loaded, it stays straight, and everything must be tight, anchor to belayer, belayer to climber to avoid shocks to the system.

**Belaying** A body belay should be a simple process with the rope around the belayers back and ideally over a rucksack to cushion the body, a twist around the arm handling the 'dead' end and a simple pull push, squeeze, slide action ensuring the rope is tight at all times. Tell the climber to slow down if you need to catch up, slack in the system should be avoided. Remember, in descent you are not lowering the climber, but providing security as the climber downclimbs.

**Personal Descent** You will need to safeguard yourself down once you have managed the individual/s or group down. This can be done by using one of these three methods: Angel wings, Classic Abseil and South African Abseil. Each has their own merits, but I would always recommend the South African method due to the rope being higher on the body creating a lower centre of mass and the likelihood of inverting is reduced. The classic is of use if the anchors are far back and more rope is needed in the system, but is more complicated and awkward, especially with a heavy pack. Always try to use an anchor that allows the rope to be retrieved afterwards. But as this is used in an emergency situation you may have to make the decision to leave the rope.

Every situation is different, so just try and do what is best for each. Err on the side of caution, and remember skill fade creeps up fast, so practicing these skills regularly is important. ■

The recommended resource book is *Hill Walking* by Steve Long ISBN 978 0 0541511 9 5



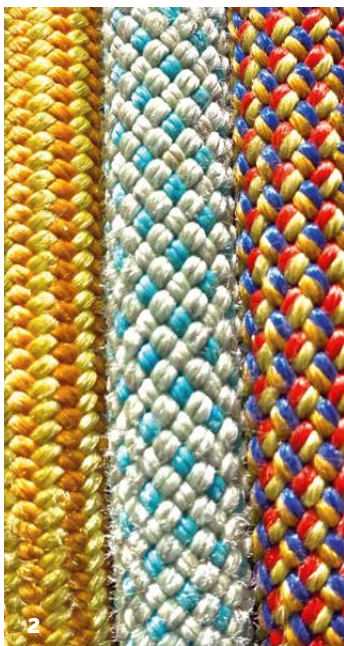
**Mark Garland** is an AMI committee member and runs Garland Mountaineering which offer the full suite of MTE climbing and walking qualifications. He offers Technical Advice for walking, climbing and delivers the new NCC coastering awards. Mark moderates for NICAS and Mountain Training and also runs MIAS mountain biking awards.



# MOUNTAIN LEADER – What **ROPE** do I need?

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MARK VALENTINE

**When delivering Mountain Leader Training and MTA Ropework Workshops, one of the most commonly recurring questions I am asked is, “what rope should I buy?”**



MAIN PHOTO 8mm 9.1mm 10mm Ropes.

1. 8mm Rope Used for Safeguarding.
2. 8mm Confidence Rope 9.1 & 10mm Dynamic Rope.

I certainly remember asking the same question whilst first embarking on my own Mountain Leader qualification journey. My general advice would be, before spending any money, to try the range of ropes that providers will bring along to training or workshops, and then decide. However, when the time comes to begin investing in your own equipment, there is some useful advice below.

To answer the ‘which rope?’ question, we should first ask what does a Mountain Leader need a rope for? Before we head straight to Facebook to ask, future Mountain Leaders would do best to consult the scope of the qualification, as published by Mountain Training. Ultimately, the core aim of the Mountain Leader scheme is to offer participants the opportunity to “gain technical competence in leading walkers in the hills and mountains”.<sup>1</sup> The scheme does not cover the skills required for rock climbing or planned use of a rope. Another important first port of call should be Mountain Training’s *Candidate Handbook*. Apart from being familiar with rope suitability, rope management, knots, methods of belaying and anchor points, the handbook calls only for candidates to be able to “protect a short scramble type descent or ascent” for a whole party, “safeguard a single party member”, and “safeguard themselves in descent” on scrambling terrain.<sup>2</sup> From this information, I would suggest that the rope a Mountain Leader may not plan to use, but look to carry, should at the most be used to protect a short scramble and in the case of a leader, safeguarding themselves whilst in descent.

When selecting a rope suitable for these tasks, the first consideration should be which type of rope is appropriate. Non-climbers may not be familiar with, or have ever heard of, the different types of rope available; static, semi-static, or dynamic. When considering the pros, cons, and uses of each type, it is worth remembering that the client shouldn’t ever be in a situation where they need to be concerned over the type of rope being carried by their leader. The client is being protected

over a short section of scrambling terrain, not being lowered or ascending terrain where a slip would put sufficient load on a rope to cause injury.

Put simply, static ropes are not constructed to have any elasticity. Static ropes are used when sudden loading is either very unlikely, or where the load wouldn’t be transferred to a person. Suitable uses for a static rope would be for abseil lines, rigging, or hauling kit. Semi-static ropes are made to have limited elastic properties, but not to the extent required for protecting a leader fall. Typically, semi-static ropes are used in rope access, canyoning, and caving.

Dynamic ropes on the other hand, are constructed to be slightly elastic (more so than semi-static), allowing the rope to absorb some of the energy should a sudden load be put on it. For this reason, climbers use dynamic rope in case of a fall. The higher elasticity protects both climber and belayer from a sudden load being put on the rope and force being transferred to themselves, which would be grim! A Mountain Leader safeguarding a client will appreciate the elastic properties of a dynamic rope; should a member of the group take a slip and put a load on the rope, it is going to stretch a little rather than load instantly as a static rope would.

The next aspect to consider when selecting a suitable rope as a Mountain Leader is the size. Ropes come in a variety of widths, off-the-shelf confidence ropes generally being around 8 millimeters wide. You may also see Mountain Leaders using retired climbing ropes of around nine or ten millimeters. While it is worth remembering the rope being carried should never be loaded and a retired rope may save buying a Mountain Leader rope, it should still be in good order. The client will be less than confident having a visibly well-worn rope

<sup>1</sup> Mountain Training (2022) ‘13/ As a Mountain Leader, can I take groups scrambling?’, Mountain Leader FAQs. Available at: <https://www.mountain-training.org/qualifications/walking/mountain-leader/mountain-leader-faqs>

<sup>2</sup> Mountain Training (2022) Mountain Leader Handbook, Available at: <https://www.mountain-training.org/england/scheme-information/mountain-leader-award-info>



tied around their waist as you offer to protect them over the terrain about which they are already worried.

When deciding the size of rope appropriate, Mountain Leaders want to consider the pros and cons of thinner and thicker ropes. The thinner the rope, the lighter and easier it is to carry, whereas a thicker rope will be much heavier and bulkier: However, a thicker rope will provide much better grip and is easier to use in cold and wet conditions whilst wearing gloves.

The final aspect to deal with is the length of rope. My answer to this question is "how long is the short section of scrambling-type terrain through which we aren't planning on using a rope?" There are two main considerations involved in selecting the correct length, the client and the practicalities. Firstly, if there is steep ground on a planned route, we need to ensure it is suitable for the client. During planning, Mountain Leaders considering packing a rope to protect clients are already moving out of the remit of the qualification. Furthermore, we should think about how the clients will react to this unplanned, not in the brochure, experience. The individual leader's ability for confident client communication is important here. The client would probably appreciate some comforting words from their leader, who has unexpectedly produced a rope during their mountain *walk*. Moreover, Mountain Leaders should honestly assess their own ability to give instruction and direction to all members of the group simultaneously in order to manage the group safely and effectively.

Turning to the practical considerations involved in choosing rope length, we need to assess how much rope may be used when building a belay or protecting leader descent. Realistically, how far are we considering sliding down the rope, using friction as our only protection, observed by a client group who are already thinking, "we only wanted to go for a walk"? I'd say, not far. Also, do we actually want to be safeguarding the client's descent on terrain we cannot climb down ourselves? Personally, I have used the rope twice in 'real life' situations, both times to give the client confidence over a short section: 26m of the 30m rope, remained in the bag!

Returning to the original question of which rope a Mountain Leader should buy, a dynamic type rope, 8 to 10 millimeters wide and no longer than thirty metres would be sufficient to do the job. When buying your rope, remember the remit of the qualification and that a Mountain Leader should have no plans to use the rope. The rope should only be used to protect the client over a wet rock step, or similar, that has the potential of a slip; protecting clients through short sections of scrambling terrain; or for tying a waist loop around a client to provide confidence, all of these scenarios are within the scope of the Mountain Leader qualification. Lowering clients or belaying them as they travel through a 50m, pitch is definitely not within the scope and therefore buying a rope for such tasks would not only be an unnecessary expense it would also be inappropriate so why spend all that extra money on something you should never plan to use? ■



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WORDS BY BEL MYERS



# Countryside changes: *regenerative agriculture*

## Part 3: The way ahead

### The story so far

Parts 1 and 2 told how farmers around the world are taking up “regenerative agriculture” to enable our soil and the ecosystem it powers to heal themselves after centuries of misuse by humans. At the core of this approach are the following: don’t disturb the soil so “No Till” (or no ploughing); keep the soil covered with diverse crops and pastureland mixes; vary crop rotations; and return organic matter from crop residues and animal dung to the soil. In Part 3 we’ll look at progress so far in the take up of this approach, its future prospects, and how to spot signs of regenerative agriculture in action.

### Growing roots

The practice of putting soil health centre stage is now followed by a substantial proportion of UK farmers. According to a 2020 survey, up to 40% follow “No till” or minimal soil disturbance practices, which are at the heart of this way of farming, and approaching 20% follow regenerative grazing. Many farmers use other core regenerative agriculture measures as well as complementary ones such as planting new hedgerows, trees and wildflower strips.

Adopting regenerative agriculture practices can be challenging, with local soils reacting to the changes in different and unexpected ways and uncertainty over the use of natural alternatives to agricultural chemicals. Giving up ploughing, traditionally a key weapon in the fight against weeds, can be tough. It can take around two years to switch with no or little income in the interim.

However, farmers themselves have been supporting the take up of regenerative agriculture, through knowledge exchange on social media, events like Groundswell’s annual conference, and networks such as LEAF (Linking Environment and Farming) whose members use sustainable agriculture practices. Centres of expertise are trialling crop rotations and pastureland (or “ley”) mixes, and a raft of onsite and online learning opportunities are now available, including two regenerative agriculture degree courses which have just started in England. Farmers are also becoming more adept at promoting their produce through, for example, LEAF’s marque standard and certification.

### Rewarding stewardship

Post Brexit, Government support for farmers has started to change dramatically from rewarding food production according to area of land, to encouraging farmers to act as “stewards” of the land’s natural resources. This reflects the growing realisation that in the long term, food production depends on good stewardship of soil and other natural resources. It’s also now apparent that the benefits of good stewardship go far beyond the farm gate. For example, boosting soil health across the length of a water course can improve the quality of water supply and help avoid harmful flooding of nearby communities, a risk that is increasing with climate change. Providing more shelter, nesting sites, food sources and travel corridors on farmland for wildlife can help boost their numbers and species across a wide area. In this way, farmers are also aiding the reintroduction of lost or endangered species such as turtle doves and great bustards.

The new support scheme for farmers, which is currently being phased in, rewards activities that protect and improve the health of natural resources on which farming has an impact. Priority is being given to bringing forward soil standards - reflecting its health, structure, organic matter and life within it - to which payments will be directly linked. Eligible activities include those at the core of regeneration practice: covering soils with a variety of crops and leys, addition of soil matter and, eventually, “No till”. There will be support too for nature recovery measures, such as creating wildlife habitats to boost biodiversity and restoring rivers and streams, at both the local and wider “landscape” levels.

Farmers are also being encouraged to take part in natural flood management schemes covering inland water courses and some stretches of coastline, with easier access to public funds supporting this activity. In addition, stronger penalties for creating water run-off polluted with agricultural chemicals have been introduced to discourage their use.

### Happily ever after?

There is still much uncertainty about the viability of many farm enterprises under the post Brexit support scheme; they might be eligible for a maximum amount of perhaps a third to a half of the support available under the former system. There is also



the concern that the zero-tariff trade deals the Government is negotiating with other countries will let in cheaper intensively produced food from abroad. This would disadvantage UK farmers pursuing sustainable practices. Though consumers are increasingly seeking locally sourced food, most still buy the cheapest, irrespective of the source. Many working in the sector fear that smaller farms, livestock enterprises and those farming more sensitive soils are particularly at risk of being subsumed by larger farms or rewilding schemes.

Some additional funding is coming from the private sector to farmers to support improvements in farming practices that boost the health of natural resources. For example, Wessex water company is rewarding farmers who reduce fertiliser run off from their fields into the local water supply to improve water quality.

Increasing the capacity of soil to sequester carbon is another area which holds additional funding potential. Some experts believe that as much as 20% of total carbon emissions emitted each year by human activity could be locked up in the soil. This could be a safer method of carbon sequestration than via trees, given their increasing vulnerability to warmer temperatures and incidents of fire. How effective it is though depends crucially on how the soil is treated on an ongoing basis. The UK government made international pledges to pursue farming practices which improve carbon retention in the soil (the Scottish parliament specifically at COP 26), and DEFRA (Department of Environment, Food and Rural affairs) is developing a new Soil Carbon Code on which to base rewards to farmers for carbon retention in soil.

So, what's the future? There is increasing and widespread recognition that our soil needs urgent help if it is to continue to deliver good food and many other benefits to us all. Regenerative agriculture practitioners are showing us how that help can be delivered. However, there are pressures to continue as we are, with dependence on the global market for food at the cheapest price. Which path will prevail? The answer lies in the soil.

**Some telltale signs**

Next time you are out in the countryside, see if you can spot the signs of the regenerative approach in action. Look out for: decaying crop residue left over after harvesting; messy looking cover crops jumbled together; a riot of colour in wildflower borders and strips; newly planted hedges and trees; happy livestock

munching a mixture of herbs, grasses and legumes; cow pats teeming with dung beetles..... And down below, dark loamy soil containing a multitude of worms. Enjoy the walk.

**Want to know more?**

Watch two excellent online videos on YouTube with very good footage of regenerative practice on UK farms and talks from farmers explaining what they are doing:

- From the Ground Up: Carbon Neutral Cambridge, featuring five UK farmers in East Anglia.38 mins
- Tall Grass Grazing showing regenerative grazing on four farms in Scotland: Soil Association: 13.4 mins

Explore good websites, by or for farmers, with more on practice around the UK:

- Groundswellag.com: see their annual conference talks, and details of the next one, 22nd -23rd July 2022
- Leaf.eco: especially their locator map and description of demonstration farm activities, plus open farm Sunday visits onsite (12th June 2022) and online in England, Scotland, Wales

For inspiring practice around the World:

- Watch Kiss the Ground 2020 Documentary 84 mins on Netflix: featuring regeneration pioneers and latest practice especially in the US.
- Read *Growing a revolution: Bringing our soil back to life* by David Montgomery: Reprint 2018

This and the other 2 parts of Countryside Changes: Regenerative Agriculture, are based on information and statistics drawn from many reliable sources including government departments and agencies, academic and research bodies, and conservation bodies and charities. My apologies if any misinterpretation has crept in! ■



Correction: The image of the dung beetle in the last printed issue, Spring 2022, was incorrectly titled and credited: Tunnelling Dung Beetle © www.dungbeetlesforfarmers.co.uk where it should have been titled and credited: Dung beetle on cow pat © Ian Redding, Alamy. Also, an updated version of Countryside changes: Regenerative agriculture, Part 2: A simple solution can be found in the digital download of the magazine in the members' area of the website.

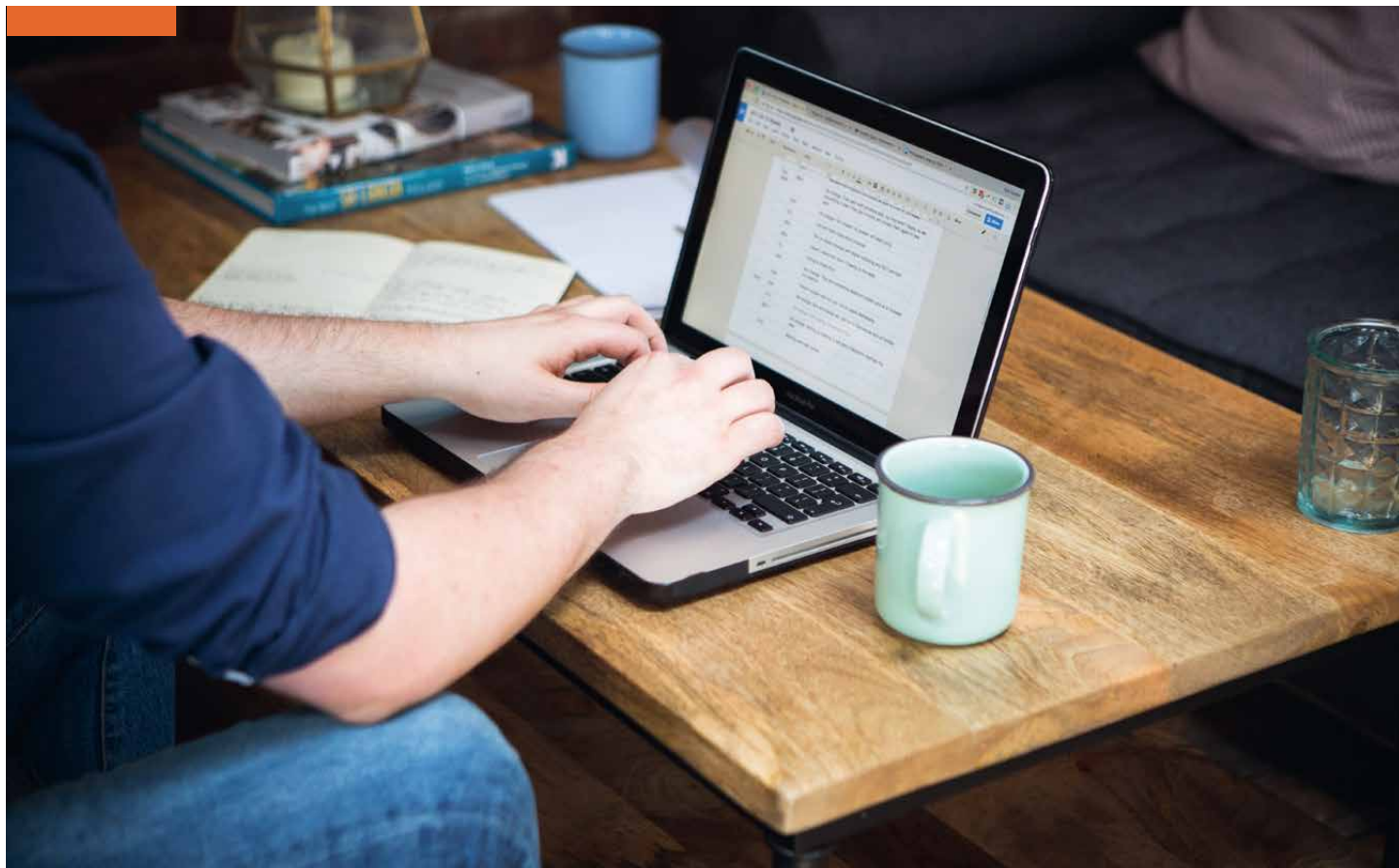


**Bel Myers** is a Hill and Moorland, and Mountain Leader, trainer and writer on the outdoors, personal and global health. Bel is a member of the MTA.



MAIN PHOTO Phacelia cover crop, Wiltshire © Island Stock/Alamy. 1. Calf grazing on a herbal ley mix © Farlap/Alamy. 2. Expert with British Dung beetle © Christopher Jones/Alamy. 3. Newly planted hedgerow, Sussex © John Hobday 4. Farmer with worms in soil © sutterstock. 5. Cover crops, following main crop, Norfolk © PA images Alamy





# HOW TO GET A WEBSITE MADE: DIY, FREELANCER OR AGENCY

WORDS AND PHOTO BY HARRY POTTS

## Where to start?

Like standing below a new crag without a guidebook, it can be daunting when faced with making a new website. Many small businesses and sole traders get started on their websites themselves. These days it's easier than ever with platforms like Squarespace, Wix and Wordpress.

Where template-based platforms like Squarespace and Wix offer easy to use tools to get you going, you are slightly limited to the features and design options available. The most popular platform by far is Wordpress (upwards of 43% of all websites), used by DIYers and professionals the world over. It's a tool that becomes what you make of it. With plenty of free and paid themes, ultimately offering similar easy to build experiences. However, the key difference is how much you can add to it. There exist a huge number of plugins and extensions that add almost any feature you can imagine, such as membership management, ecommerce and elearning, to help you package up your offering any way you want.

If you're keen to learn more about web design yourself, there are also free courses available on platforms like CodeAcademy\*, or the thousands of tutorials and guides available on YouTube.

## Tip 1: Agency level features for free – speed

For an immediate speed boost consider making use of NitroPack\*. Adding advanced optimisation features with minimal setup, such as Content Delivery Networks (CDNs)\* and various caching\* techniques.

## Beyond DIY

The knowledge base for Wordpress alone is vast, so much so it can be easy to get lost in it all. Doing things right can become a challenge. For those that want the extra features and standout designs, but still want to spend most of their time out in the mountains, that's where freelancers and agencies come into the picture. They are especially helpful when you want to add a custom feature; like displaying live weather data or a Google map of your favourite winter peaks.

It's a common scenario to find a friend to help, which can work well. However, not everyone likes to mix work and friendships, so you're left with finding a freelancer through a service like Upwork\* or job boards. Both offer great opportunities, but LinkedIn has the added advantage of giving you the means to check references immediately and even find mutual contacts to provide introductions. Freelancers are especially important if you want your website to stand out from the crowd with a truly unique and attractive design. The DIY platforms often have nice looking themes, but it can be hard to break out from the prescriptive designs to achieve something more eye-catching. Custom graphics, photography and icons can really help to differentiate your website from its competitors. A nice middle ground on budget is to pay for individual custom graphics that you can add to your website yourself. After all, you need someone to film the drone shots while you're scrambling.



## Tip 2: Agency level features for free - emails

If you're looking to fix any issues with emails from your website getting spammed, I recommend SendGrid\*. It's a service specifically for improving the deliverability of emails that your website sends. If you're using Wordpress you'll need an email plugin\* to make use of SendGrid.

## Peace of mind

Once you have a freelancer you may get a great looking website, but it can still be a hassle to manage the ongoing development of your website, and that's where agencies shine. They aren't for everyone, but if you want to leave everything to the professionals then this is the way forward. By making use of a team, you can rely on round the clock support and even active monitoring of your website. Ecommerce clients are often keen to ensure their website isn't offline for a second, to ensure they capitalise on all potential sales.

The level of support you receive from an agency can be tailored to your needs. To keep costs down many clients manage content on their websites themselves, using a Content Management System (which is just a fancy description for the Wordpress login area). Agencies will have a variety of packages that you can pick from, whether it's as simple as just keeping the website online or making regular monthly updates on a retainer.

Another important aspect of maintaining your website is encouraging a regular flow of visitors. SEO (Search Engine Optimisation) and Digital Marketing encompass a wide range of activities to drive this traffic. Ranging from keyword research, email marketing and PR (those of keen mind will realise that's what I'm doing right now). After the basics, ongoing digital marketing is a very time (and wallet) consuming activity. Good use of social media can boost your profile, but if it's just not something you want to dedicate extensive time to, having an agency can work wonders.

While finding agencies is similarly possible on LinkedIn and Upwork, to get the real insights

local digital trade organisations often have the best network. Manchester Digital, are an example for a specific area, they provide a directory of digital organisations as well as events where you can meet potential freelancers and agencies in person.

If you do decide to retain the services of a freelancer or agency, it's a good idea to make sure ownership of any domains is in your name. The easiest way to do this is to simply buy them yourself on a registrar like NameCheap\*, and then provide access as required.

## Tip 3: Agency level features for free - SEO

To get started with SEO you first need to be set up on all the appropriate Google platforms. Google analytics and Google search console are your first port of call. To learn more you can follow the Google Analytics Academy\* lessons.

So, if you're on a budget, willing to learn and don't need any advanced features then getting started on a template based platform might be for you. On the other hand if you have a vision but lack the technical know-how, reaching out to a freelancer or agency is the way to go. ■

## \*Websites

- **CodeAcademy**  
[www.codecademy.com/catalog/subject/web-design](http://www.codecademy.com/catalog/subject/web-design)
- **NitroPack** [nitropack.io/](http://nitropack.io/)
- **Content Delivery Networks (CDNs)**  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content\\_delivery\\_network](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Content_delivery_network)
- **Caching**  
[www.businessinsider.com/what-is-cache?r=US&IR=T](http://www.businessinsider.com/what-is-cache?r=US&IR=T)
- **Upwork** [www.upwork.com/](http://www.upwork.com/)
- **SendGrid** [sendgrid.com/](http://sendgrid.com/)
- **Email plugin**  
[wordpress.org/plugins/wp-mail-smtpl/](http://wordpress.org/plugins/wp-mail-smtpl/)
- **Manchester Digital**  
[www.manchesterdigital.com/](http://www.manchesterdigital.com/)
- **NameCheap** [www.namecheap.com/](http://www.namecheap.com/)
- **Google Analytics Academy**  
[analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/](http://analytics.google.com/analytics/academy/)



**Harry Potts** has been running Huddle Digital for over 7 years, as Technical Director alongside co-founder Tom Parson. With their close-knit team and trusted contractors, they provide web design, development and digital marketing to a range of clients across the UK.

Harry is also a keen mountaineer, aiming to pass his ML assessment in the summer, just before an expedition to mount Cayambe and Antisana in Ecuador later in the year ([workwithhuddle.com](http://workwithhuddle.com))



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**Libby Peter**  
Mountain Guide  
and mother of two







# PROVIDING *feedback* to learners:

## *Drawing on the mindset perspective*

WORDS BY DR LEE C BEAUMONT  
AND VIC WARBURTON

### Introduction

In this article we outline the foundations of the *mindset perspective*\* and the key considerations for outdoor professionals when providing feedback to learners. There has been much interest within the education sector in recent years around the work of Carol Dweck and her concept of *mindsets* in relation to an individual's motivation and behaviour, especially in the classroom environment<sup>1</sup>. However, the mindset perspective is relevant to all education settings, including those in the outdoor sector. In particular, Dweck's work can be used to support the way in which we communicate with learners to promote positive learning experiences.

### What are mindsets?

An individual's mindset refers to their view about whether or not their human attributes and behaviours can change (e.g., morality, intelligence, physical ability, etc.). That is, the different views that a learner has about the attribute or behaviour creates different frameworks through which they attempt to organise their experiences and understand their world (i.e., a lens through which they view and judge their achievements and disappointments)<sup>2</sup>. Through viewing the attribute or behaviour as either malleable or stable, this 'meaning system' can have a profound effect on a learner's behaviour, motivation, and learning. The mindset that



	LEARNER CHARACTERISTICS	
	GROWTH	FIXED
What is their view of the nature of physical ability?	Malleable, controllable quality that can be cultivated through learning.	Fixed, stable quantity that cannot be improved.
What do they value and how does this affect the goals they adopt in sessions?	Learning, hard work and effort. Tend to adopt goals that focus on self-improvement and mastery of tasks or not doing worse than they have done before.	Outperforming and being better than others. Tend to adopt goals that focus on being the best and doing better than others or not being worse than others.
What behaviours do they exhibit and what choices do they make in sessions?	Exhibit persistence, prefer challenging tasks, willing to take risks in their learning to develop and improve.	Give up easily, prefer easy, low effort tasks, and are unwilling to take risks in their learning.
How do they view effort?	Effort is the key to self-esteem and achievement.	Effort is something to be avoided since it implies low ability and results in lower self-esteem.
When do they feel good about themselves?	When fully engaging in a task, when using their skills and effort to master a task, or when working hard and stretching their abilities.	When they avoid looking incompetent, they succeed with low effort, they have an easy success, or others fail at a task they can do.
Is confidence needed to approach challenging tasks and what type?	Not necessarily needed. If it is present it is in relation to their ability to learn and master tasks and skills if they apply their strategies and effort.	Needed. Need to feel confident that they have high ability, that they are better than others or that they are already good at the task.
How do they view mistakes?	As an expected part of the learning process and that they are a cue to invest more effort and new strategies in order to succeed in the future. Mistakes/failures are attributed to the skills and strategies they employed.	As a measure of their ability and that they are not good enough. Mistakes/failures are attributed to their ability.
How do they view feedback?	Sought out by learners and valued for improving skills and future learning.	Want normative, ability-relevant feedback, disagree with learning-relevant feedback.

TABLE 1 Learner characteristics of growth and fixed mindsets<sup>4</sup>

a learner adopts will determine: how they approach challenges and tasks; how they respond to the outcomes of tasks; what they value in the learning setting; their interpretation of their effort; their self-esteem; the reasons they give for their successes and failures; and the goals on which they choose to focus<sup>2</sup>.

Within Dweck's mindset perspective, two mindsets named the *growth* and *fixed mindsets*\*\* have been identified that influence a learner's thoughts, feelings, and behaviours. An individual that adopts a growth mindset views their attributes and behaviours as changeable and controllable qualities that can be developed over time. Whereas an individual that adopts a fixed mindset views their attributes and behaviours as fixed and stable quantities which cannot be developed<sup>2</sup>.

A learner has access to both mindsets, but one is usually more dominant at any moment in time, and this may be due to the learning environment, feedback, and interactions with the coach, leader, or guide. The differences in the two mindsets are most obvious when the learner is experiencing challenges or setbacks in their learning<sup>2</sup>. There is overwhelming evidence that a growth mindset is desirable as it is associated with a variety of positive outcomes for the learner (e.g., enjoyment, persistence, willingness to seek out challenges, and high levels of optimism, happiness, confidence, performance, and learning)<sup>3</sup>. This is in contrast to when a learner adopts a fixed mindset; they typically experience frustration, high levels of anxiety, avoidance of challenges, and low levels of enjoyment, persistence, performance, and learning<sup>3</sup>. *Table 1* highlights some of the key differences associated with each mindset.

### Practical considerations for outdoor professionals when providing feedback

Communicating with learners in outdoor settings is vital and the feedback we provide to learners should be as effective as it possibly can be in terms of achieving maximum learning gains. Therefore, in relation to mindsets, the following factors should be considered:

#### 1 Avoid overpraising effort

When providing feedback to learners in outdoor settings it is important to praise the strategies that they have used, the resilience they have demonstrated, or the effort they have invested in learning a technique or skill when this has led to success (known as process praise). However, we should not rely solely on praising effort as the means to achieve process praise, a common misconception by some individuals in attempting to develop a growth mindset in learners. Praising effort is important when it is appropriate to do so; that is, when 'effort' is the reason that has led to the success in a task or the development of a skill (i.e., effort praise must be accompanied by some kind of improvement or learning gain). Continuing to praise effort when no improvement or learning has occurred is problematic for many reasons, not least that the learner may become demotivated with the activity. This should signal to the outdoor professional that a change or amendment to the task or challenge is required (i.e., perhaps the activity needs to be made easier through differentiation), or that the feedback being provided is not focussing on an



appropriate aspect (i.e., strategy or resilience could be the focus of the feedback rather than effort).<sup>4</sup>

## 2 Provide different forms of effort feedback in the different stages of learning

While effort feedback is useful as part of a package of process praise to support the development of a growth mindset, it is important to be aware that effort feedback should consider the development of the learner's motor skills and competence in the activity. A part of the learning process necessitates that learner's will develop an economy of effort in the production of their motor skills and performance. Effort feedback, therefore, needs to be tailored to the different phases of learning<sup>5</sup>. For example, in the cognitive phase of learning (early stage) effort feedback would be focused on the persistence to practice and develop skills in the face of challenges, working out how to perform the skill, and to engage in trial-and-error learning. While in the associative phase of learning (middle stage), effort feedback would focus on the effort needed to continue to refine skills when improvement gains might be small. Whereas in the autonomous phase (final stage), where proficiency of motor skill development is achieved, learners will require effort feedback to encourage them to engage with and refine their skills in a variety of different situations. Generic effort feedback to 'keep trying' would be of limited benefit to learner's, particularly those in the latter stages of motor skill development, and would do little to develop a growth mindset<sup>4</sup>.



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## 3 Avoid using fixed mindset phrases

Fixed mindset phrases, such as "oh wow, you did that quickly" or "you're a natural at this", are often well-intended by outdoor professionals but should be avoided if possible, or at least not overused, as they can lead to motivational problems for learners in the future. While these kinds of statements are often used to encourage an individual to keep trying or enhance their self-esteem, they can be misguided especially when situations arise where the learner has not tried but has succeeded and knows it was because the task was too easy. In these circumstances, the real reason for the success has been overlooked (i.e., the difficulty of the task)<sup>4</sup>.

## 4 Encourage learners to value failure as part of the learning process

Creating a learning environment where failure (i.e., making mistakes and being disappointed) is seen as a natural part of the learning process should be sought after and encouraged. Not attaching failure to a

learner's own self-worth during feedback is important as it will allow them to seek out challenges more readily in the future; ultimately, supporting their long-term learning. This is because learners with a fixed mindset tend to avoid circumstances where they might fail, as they perceive 'the failure' (at the task or activity) as an indication that 'they are not good enough' and will never be good enough due to their 'fixed' level of ability<sup>4</sup>.

## Conclusion

Mindsets provide an interesting insight into the motivation of learners and the way in which they view the opportunities and experiences provided by coaches, leaders, and guides in outdoor settings. They are one perspective that outdoor professionals can utilise when providing feedback which can have a significant effect on learning. Communicating with learners in a way that promotes and develops a growth mindset will support the development of positive behaviours (e.g., persistence, engagement, curiosity, interaction, willingness, and seeking out challenges) and is likely to lead to positive feelings and experiences (e.g., enjoyment, happiness, confidence, learning, and performance) that encourage future participation and engagement in outdoor activities. ■

\*Mindsets (mindset perspective) are also known within the psychology literature as *Implicit Theories of Ability*

\*\*Within the psychology literature, a growth mindset is also known as an *incremental belief* and a fixed mindset is known as an *entity belief*

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# ACCESS TO THE OUTDOORS

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In England and Wales there are estimated to be 140,000 miles of public rights of way including footpaths, bridleways, restricted byways and byways open to all traffic, this does not include the numerous canal tow paths, heritage trails, riverside paths, commons, woodlands, heaths, nature reserves and open access areas providing access to nature. The rights of way networks provide us with free, unlimited access to these wonderful green spaces.

Health care professionals and mental health advocates promote access to the natural environment in all its forms as having huge benefits to psychological and emotional wellbeing. Exercising in natural environments has been shown to promote greater feelings of revitalisation, increased energy, and joy. The evidence of the benefits of access to the outdoors has been proven to decrease tension, anger, and depression. Physical activity in green space leads to better quality mental health, which is improved by close proximity, better access, connectivity and an attractive environment.

The National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 established the rights of way we know and use today, and it is the responsibility of all users and owners to ensure that we continue to benefit from this access.

## Rights and responsibilities

These rights of way come with rights and responsibilities for both the users and those who care for the land they cross. The public have varying rights depending on the status of the right of way, the public have the right to pass and repass along a public right of way which can include admiring the view, taking a photograph or resting as long as you do not stray from the line of the right of way or cause an obstruction. Whilst out adventuring the public are responsible for themselves which means they should have the equipment and skills needed to look after themselves, at the most basic level this should include a 1:25000 map and the knowledge of how to navigate with it. The public are responsible for their dogs on rights of way, this means that dogs should be kept under close control, not be allowed to foul on the right of way, not be allowed to worry livestock or run through arable crops or flush game from hedgerows.

Landowners have the right to protect their land from claimed public rights of way and they have the right to give consent for additional public access on their land (temporary or permanent) either by using a Licensed Path Agreement or by dedicating the route as a new right of way. Landowners have many responsibilities to public rights of way some

WORDS BY CHARLOTTE DITCHBURN  
PHOTOS BY CHARLOTTE DITCHBURN  
UNLESS OTHERWISE CREDITED



**Charlotte Ditchburn** is a Hill and Moorland Leader based in Cumbria. She works full time in the access sector and inspires and educates people through her blog and social media as an ambassador for Ordnance Survey, British Canoeing, and Green Space Dark Skies. A passionate equestrian Charlotte volunteers at the Lake District Calvert Trust as a horse riding and carriage driving instructor giving people with disabilities the opportunity to enjoy the outdoors. Photo © Gemma Scopes Photography





1



2



3



4

1. Bridleway in the sunlight. 2. Route planning on PRoW © Gemma Scopes Photography. 3. Bridleway users fingerpost. 4. Group exploring open access land. 5. Easedale Tarn Waymark.

of which include: knowing where public rights of way are on their land; not obstructing rights of way; ensuring cross field routes are reinstated; clearing vegetation alongside routes; and for structures on routes such as stiles and bridges.

Local Authorities also have responsibilities for public rights of way. They are responsible for ensuring that the definitive map (the legal record of public rights of way) is up to date and for signposting all rights of way where they leave a metalled road as well as providing waymarks where necessary. They are also responsible for keeping the surface of rights of way in a good repair; managing natural surface growth, ensuring farmers comply with the law regarding routes over cultivated land so that they are properly restored after being disturbed and remain apparent on the ground thereafter. The Local Authority is also responsible for preventing the closure or obstruction of any highway and ensuring the maintenance of existing bridges as well installation of new ones.

District and Borough Council responsibilities include exercising their powers to make public path orders and agreements and for things such as responding to incidents of fly tipping on public rights of way.

**Lost ways**

There are over 49,000 miles of path at risk! The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 means that many routes used by walkers, horse riders, cyclists and carriage drivers that were not formally recorded on the Definitive Map would be lost on 1st January 2026.

Despite the English and Welsh governments' announcement that they

intend to abolish this deadline, until the repeal actually happens, there remains a risk that it could be overturned, leading to the loss of many routes for future generations. Work must continue to record and protect the routes from obstructions, development, and neglect so that they can be used by generations to come. Anyone can get involved with research, there is a lot of support out there from charities like The Ramblers, The British Horse Society and Cycling UK.

**Common issues**

There are many issues that users will come across whilst using the rights of way network the most common of these include structures, obstructions, vegetation (side and surface growth), signage, surface damage, livestock and illegal users. There are many types of structure out on the public rights of way network from stiles to bridges, gates to boardwalks. Gates, gaps and stiles must meet the British standard of BS5709:2018, these structures have to be authorised by Local Highway Authorities to exist on public rights of way. Obstructions come in all shapes and sizes from farm machinery to buildings.

Ploughing and cropping is a very common issue, land managers tend to disturb the surface to be able to complete their agricultural work (although they may not disturb the surface of a byway) after the disturbance of the surface the route should be reinstated by the landowner. There are often reports of dangerous livestock, although the only legal restriction about having livestock on fields or land with public rights of way across is Section 59 of the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 which bans bulls of recognised dairy breeds, subject





to a number of exceptions, from being kept in fields crossed by public rights of way. There are no other specific controls, instead, more general legal principles apply including negligence and liability.

Surface damage covers an array of issues from damage by vehicles to the digging of ditches. All works on public rights of way must have permission from the Local Authority before they go ahead and often require a legal closure. Illegal use of a footpath can include cyclists, equestrians and motor vehicles, although the offence being committed by all those not propelled by motor is that of trespass against the landowner, so it is a civil offence.

Of the total length of rivers in England, of 57,602km, less than 4% have a clear right to paddle. The Countryside and Rights of Way Act (CRoW) 2000 introduced open access land for walking, climbing and running however access to inland waterways and the use of boats were excluded. The laws and principles adopted in Scotland demonstrate that sharing of all waterways can be achieved without significant impacts to differing interests.

Whilst out exploring the downland, mountains, rivers and woodlands the countryside has to offer everyone must learn to use these areas respectfully and follow the Countryside Code or Scottish Access Code. These codes are short and simple and protect the environment, local communities and landowners by following guidance such as keeping dogs under close control, parking considerately, leaving gates as you find them and taking litter home with you. ■



Credit: Richard Beech

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# Against THE GRAIN:

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY RENATE POWELL

## Wearing minimalist footwear in the scottish hills

You know that feeling of taking your feet out of your boots at the end of a long day in the hills and it feels like bliss? Yeah, well, I've lost that.

Ten years ago, in my mid forties, I was (and still am) living in Scotland for the hills, and yet it looked like my hillwalking days might be over. An old skiing injury affecting my knee had flared up, and my surgeon said I needed a new knee, but I was far too young. 'Come back when you're 60'. Really?!!

I could still cycle, but the knee pain was continuous, and hill walking excruciating. But I was determined to try everything to get my life back. Private sports physios, exercises several times a day, cold packs, hot packs, and forever googling.

### A new approach

One of my research areas was minimalist footwear (also referred to as 'barefoot' footwear), which I felt I should try as I was learning to walk from scratch again anyway, giving me the opportunity for a slow transition. I hoped that I would naturally change my gait and stance to help them be more like our bodies have evolved, in order to minimise the stresses through my knees and joints. There was a trend in running for the five fingered duck feet, but I couldn't see myself wearing those. Then I discovered the brand Vivobarefoot.

'Normal shoes' restrict the movement in your feet, but also blunt the feedback from the ground, so you can 'get away' with

over-striding with a heel strike as it doesn't give immediate pain on your foot. However, longer term the additional stresses through your knees start to take their toll.

The characteristics of minimalist footwear are: totally flexible sole that you can roll up; less than 10mm stack height; no heel rise, i.e. 0mm drop; wide toe box so your feet have space to move; no toe spring (the toe spring exposes the metatarsal heads and gives neuroma issues).

I went all out and changed all my footwear, tried to read about how to walk, but there was (and still is) a lot more information about how to run, and conflicting advice too. My go-to books have become Katy Bowman's 'Whole Body Barefoot', and 'Older Yet Faster' by Heidi Jones and Keith Bateman, a running book, but it appeals to me for its body mechanics (well, I am an engineer), the best foot exercises ever for anyone who likes (or wants to like) their feet, and a Facebook support group by the authors.

### A different experience

Although you feel a lot more ground in minimalist footwear, walking on a new track with un-weathered stones was the most challenging for me in the early days. I still find the footwear blunts the senses, and the transition didn't happen by itself after years of wearing foot-coffins. However, I'm too much of a wimp to go actual barefoot; the cold, the wet, it just wasn't going to



happen. Instead of 'hardening up' my feet, they have actually 'softened' to bend around things, and calluses have all but disappeared as I no longer have the shearing forces on my feet.

I had assumed I would only be able to walk on standard easy ground in the hills, but I found that as pain in my knee subsided and I slowly introduced more hills, and being who I am, I strayed more off the beaten track to terrain I walked on before. I would carry my fell-running shoes and change for steeper downhill terrain for the grip, but after a while I noticed I no longer needed to change. Getting my hips and weight forward and aiming to land underneath the hips onto the ball of my foot made me in balance on steep, muddy terrain. I also found that being more in balance on land going uphill works better too, and reduced the natural Scottish weather pose of looking at your feet, rather than swinging legs out in front to an over-stride which means your body has to overcome a braking force with every step, and the associated forces on the joints.

My other adjustment was to straighten my feet, making the outside of my feet parallel, by turning out my knees, and then doing single leg squats. This pulled up and strengthened the arch (support an arch bridge from below and it collapses!), melted my bunions and again gave better forces on the joints.

### Adaptation

Lots of people show an interest in my footwear, but I dissuade most from trying it if they don't have any problems. The risk of injury from overdoing it early on is too great in my opinion. It needs a very gradual transition, building up stabilising muscles and tendons takes at least 6 months, but probably longer. It took me 2 years, but then this was nursing an injury. And it needs full commitment.

An added benefit of a flexible sole is that it causes a lot less erosion to our wet ground than anything with a stiff edge. Grab the positives while you can!

### So what about safety?

Are you more likely to slip in minimalist footwear? Although us hill-goers are trained to think that tread and stiff soles are good, and flat is not, to my surprise this has not been a limitation. I can't vouch for everyone, and I do think it has to do with adjusting how to walk in the hills (and gain those joint benefits!), but landing relaxed on my forefoot downhill works for me – you do have to build this up slowly else shin-splints, or worse, are awaiting. I am comfortable scrambling to grade 2 without a rope, or going up and down broken wet gulleys. I do not find the flat sole an issue at all on any terrain I go in the Scottish hills in summer conditions, although both Vivo and Freet now have boots with a deeper, traditional tread. However, I have no need for them, and I do

wonder if they allow you to be less balanced, thereby not getting the 'reduced forces on the joints' benefit.

Obviously, there are no crampons for flexible boots, so this is where the hill-story has its limits for my footwear. I carry my Salomon S/lab alp (lightest I could find) with crampons, and use micro-spikes for as long as I can. The spikes work great on verglas, but they ball up much worse than on stiff soled boots in soft snow.

There is clearly more discussion needed around minimalist footwear and whether it is a safety hazard for new hill walkers. Around 15 years ago there was the discussion about whether approach shoes are appropriate. I'm glad to see that the general opinion has changed making the hills more accessible for more people. Minimalist and barefoot are more common in alpine countries, and the footwear is becoming more available in the UK, so it is likely to become more prevalent here too. My personal opinion is that people should wear in the hills what they are used to wearing and have at least 6 months of transition to be comfortable on summer ML terrain.

Do I set the 'wrong' example? Most mountaineers will automatically say yes, but hey, I wouldn't be in the hills anymore if it wasn't for this. Or am I actually setting an alternative example, one of accessibility and breaking down traditionally held views and barriers to access.

### The hardware

I now use Freet as I found them a bit cheaper than Vivo (other brands available, like Lems, Xero, Ahinsa, Joe Nimble), and they last for a similar length of time. They used to wear out very quickly for the first few years, as I was still learning to 'tread lightly' and not have shearing forces on my feet. However, they still aren't hardwearing, as there isn't much to them and I'm happy to glue and patch to keep them going. I no longer try to get waterproof boots, as the upper fabric makes the boot stiffer, and the waterproofing never seems to last long (and I intensely hate wet feet!). Instead I use waterproof socks, and I found that the military gore-tex oversock works best for me and is the hardest wearing. However, a local friend runs in the cheap amazon water-shoes in our hills and is training to run the Glencoe Skyline race again.

I love the feel of my feet moulding to the ground, whether rock, mud or heather: it's addictive. Even scree slopes are a joy, just hopping over the tops rather than trying to dig in. As a result, my feet have a lot of movement and do a lot of work while I'm walking. So, there is no relief for my feet when I take them out of my boots at the end of the day, as they are already happy. ■



MAIN PHOTO Freet Mudee and a rolled up Freet Kidepo. Zero drop, totally flexible sole, wide toebox, less than 10mm stack height 1. It takes 6-24 months of slow transition to build muscle, tendons and ligaments to avoid injury from changing to minimalist footwear. 2. I haven't found typically Scottish weather to be a problem with my minimalist footwear.



### Renate Powell

is a Mountain Leader. She did a year exchange as a student from

the Netherlands to England and fell in love with the hills so decided to stay. Renate has operated a holiday cottage business for 23 years in Tainuill, near Oban ([www.bonawehouse.co.uk](http://www.bonawehouse.co.uk)) and is a freelance engineer advising on energy efficiency in buildings and industry. Renate has been an active, non-operational supporter of Oban Mountain Rescue since 2001.





# THE TTPP MODEL

WORDS AND PHOTOS BY PETE EDWARDS

**“Improving a climber’s performance” can be an overwhelming task on the face of it. Thankfully, there are models we can apply that help to break the overall performance into smaller facets to allow us to target more manageable aspects of our client’s climbing and one such model is known as TTPP [Technical, Tactical, Physical and Psychological].**

Here, we look at this model in more detail, how the model works and how we can use it to improve both our offer to potential clients and our work with them.

## Introduction: What is TTPP?

Those who participate in other sports, such as skiing and paddlesports, may already be familiar with this Model. TTPP – and any other variants therein – is an abbreviation that breaks the whole performance into four distinct facets: Technical, Tactical, Physical and Psychological, the concept being that instead of looking at any particular performance as an overall, we can focus our attention on one smaller aspect in order to achieve more specific gains.

Background on this model is scant and can be hard to find although it is clear that TTPP serves a purpose for many. AMI member and WMCI (Winter Mountaineering and Climbing Instructor) Sandy Paterson used this model to discuss some considerations for winter climbing<sup>1</sup>, while North Wales based instructor Mark Reeves gives some bullet points on his website<sup>2</sup> as to considerations using the TTPP headings. Furthermore, although it certainly has its detractors (Davie & Lux, 2022), these authors admit the TTPP “has been used as an effective coaching framework” (p. 3). The model

even seems to frame Goddard and Neumann’s (1993) still popular text *Performance Rock Climbing*.

Historically, there has been a great reliance on physical improvement in climbing coaching. Increasingly, though, coaches are looking to other aspects of the TTPP model in order to help people progress. Dr Rebecca Williams wrote an excellent piece on Coaching Mental Skills for Climbers for the *Winter 21* issue of this publication and is due to release a book this year, *Climb Smarter*, which will cover both psychological and tactical aspects of climbing. Meanwhile John Kettle’s *Rock Climbing Technique* continues to be very well received alongside the work of Udo Neumann and Dr Jasmin Honeggern (@crimplabs on Instagram). All of these coaches are targeting aspects of the TTPP model beyond the purely physical.

Of course, as shown by Davie and Lux, TTPP does have its limitations; as with any performance model. However, as a way of breaking any assessment of a client into relatable learning episodes, TTPP can be a starting point, and for me, forms the basis of every coaching session. However instead of very specific and tight definitions, here I will explain how I use TTPP personally (which I’ve arranged below as TPTP – Technical, Physical,



**Pete Edwards** runs Proress Climbing Coaching<sup>7</sup> based in Llanberis, North Wales, working with established climbers of all ages, ability and experience to enhance their own climbing skills. He holds the Development Coach Award, CWDI (Climbing Wall Development Instructor) and a Master’s Degree in Elite Performance in which he studied the teaching styles of several leading climbing coaches.

As a dedicated boulderer, this summer Pete will be running both guided bouldering sessions as well as workshops on teaching outdoor bouldering.



MAIN PHOTO Bouldering can sometimes eliminate psychological constraints and allow us to focus on other aspects of TTPP. James Slater at Sheep Pen.

Tactical and Psychological) using broader definitions that allow for more flexibility within an educational setting.

### Technical skills

#### *Is the climber moving in the most efficient way?*

Technical skills are some of the first we begin to work on with our clients, either in their climbing career or ours as coaches. For most of us, experience has taught us a wide **array of techniques** that our clients aren't aware of and that we are able to pass on to them to help them improve.

However, we must remember that we are professional coaches and not beta sprayers<sup>3</sup> at the wall; the way we address any weakness in these technical skills should be done in a structured and well considered manner. Much focus from many coaches goes towards teaching 'named moves' such as rockover, layback and so on. However, as both the climber and coach develop, this becomes more nuanced and we dig a little deeper into the **technical principles** rather than the technical moves.

Personally, when coaching technical skills, I worry less and less about 'can they do a drop knee' and instead focus my attention on three things in turn: are they utilising the holds with their hands correctly? Are they using their feet to find stable positions? And are they using hip movement to move between these positions? Concentrate here and everything else will come.

### Physical skills

#### *Is the climber strong/fit enough to perform these movements (without getting injured)?*

Coaching physical skills is a very popular method of coaching, especially at the moment. The company Lattice Training<sup>4</sup> is a fantastic example of climbing coaching that focuses heavily on physical skills. The concept here is simple: our climbers can always benefit from **being stronger** (as well as being **better conditioned** to avoid injury) in order to complete their goals, but often aren't aware of how to do this in a structured way. If we help them to structure their training, we can help them get stronger and thus climb harder, which is what they want.

While I am not suggesting that coaching for physical gain is easy, this facet of coaching complies easiest with various technical templates and shared mental models and is the best for demonstrating measureable gains. As such, many climbers who are self-coaching tend to focus on this area. It is my belief, however, that more adept coaches will be able to find greater gains by looking at the other three facets (Technical, Tactical and Psychological) and while I'd never suggest to a climber not to develop their physical skills, I would remind them not to dismiss other facets too quickly.

### Tactical skills

#### *Is the climber applying themselves in the right way at the right time?*

Tactical skills may usually be associated with team sports or races but tactics are equally important for a single person on a bouldering wall. We may notice once we begin to look at tactical

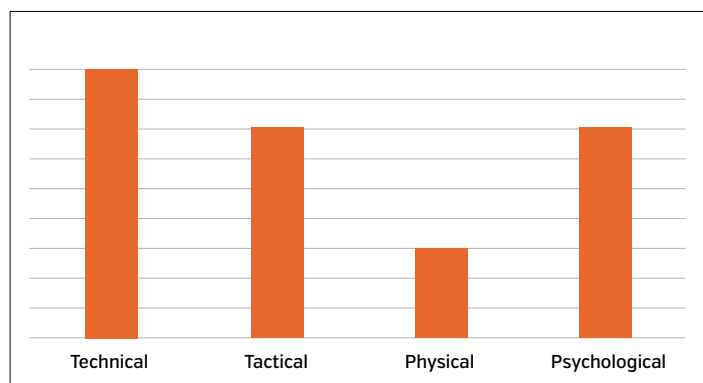


FIGURE 1. A TTPP Self Assessment by the author

attributes that there is much crossover with psychological skills. The distinction between each can be quite clear: tactical improvement is an improvement in the climber's decision-making while psychological skills are committing to those decisions. However, semantic debates can often derail good coaching work, so we try to be not too focussed on which facet we are coaching as long as our climber is still making gains.

Common tactical areas on which to work with our clients include **structuring** sessions, **pacing** throughout the session to save energy and skin, and **route reading (including where and how to get protection)**. Once we venture outside, there become other **environmental considerations** for both client and coach that will also fall under the heading of tactical skills (see Collins and Collins body of work on PJDM<sup>5</sup>). All of this gives us plenty of scope to work on with our clients.

### Psychological skills

#### *Is the climber actually applying themselves?*

The obvious area for us to work with clients on their psychological skills – and one that is regularly discussed – is **fear of falling**. This often segues into **fear of failing** and several other areas of interest. The psychological skills to tackle these fears present focus points for our attention when helping our clients improve as climbers, although there are many more.

Any aspect where our climber is not fully committed to their attempt on a climb offers an opportunity for us to question why they might be holding back, and to create a scenario to help them work through it.

### Compensation theory

So for any given climber on any given performance, there will be a combination of Technical, Tactical, Physical and Psychological traits that contribute to their levels of success. What's more, we can give a rough indication of the levels of each attribute to help us decide how we are going to work with our client. Figure 1 shows my own personal self-assessment for personal skills across TTPP and as somebody who loves a good graph, I've put it as a bar chart.

[Note: I have not found results such as this assessment to be typical of most climbers, probably stemming from my position as a movement coach in rock climbing leading to enhanced technical skills. Remember each climber is unique and their assessment will vary according to their own skill set.]

As you can see, it is my perception that my performance is currently lacking not through technical skills, nor through application but through a lack of physical strength for my goals and this leads to what I refer to as compensation theory<sup>6</sup>. Assuming my self-assessment is correct, I am managing to compensate for a lack of physical skill with enhanced technical ability. Ergo, if I were to want to continue to improve, I should

1 [https://www.tiso.com/blog/getting-ready-for-winter?fbclid=IwAR1juKQ62InkQvYxwRo4\\_nRub4uNntDL8uxwmVNAOb5NOHTA19\\_0exj8ihk](https://www.tiso.com/blog/getting-ready-for-winter?fbclid=IwAR1juKQ62InkQvYxwRo4_nRub4uNntDL8uxwmVNAOb5NOHTA19_0exj8ihk)

2 <https://snowdoniamountainguides.com/instructional-art/technical-tactical-physical-psychological/>

3 Beta sprayers – someone who gives advice on how to climb without the climber asking.

4 <https://latticetraining.com/>

5 PJDM: Professional judgement and decision making.

6 Please note, Compensation theory is as yet untested and remains a belief-based approach, rather than evidence based.

7 <https://prowesscoaching.co.uk/>





ABOVE The author discussing technique and tactics during a coaching session.

focus my attention on physical training.

There are many caveats here: this is very context-driven and any assessment should take into account the goals of the climber in question; there may be impossible mitigating factors contributing to a disparity such as physical stature or mobility; and/or the climber may have difficulties with some aspects of learning. This graph is merely a pictorial representation of compensation theory: whereby a climber has compensated for a weakness in one facet of TTPP by enhancing their skills in another. We regularly see this in the opposite direction where a climber compensates for a lack of technical skill by becoming much stronger than is necessary for their goals.

Coming back to Goddard and Neumann, we find this quote that goes far to show why TTPP can be so useful in helping our clients to perform at their best, and how compensation theory might help explain or indicate what is limiting performance: "Your weaknesses pull down your climbing performance much more than your strengths buoy it" (1993, p. 10). If we can use TTPP to better identify which aspect of our climber's performance is truly weakest, we can really help them to improve and find even greater gains. ■

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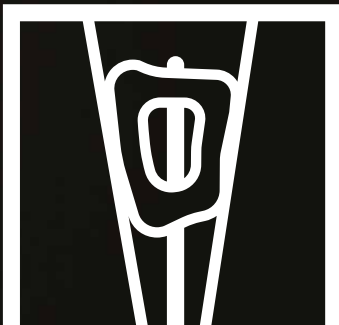
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# SUN PROTECTION

## for outdoor activities

**Climbers understand that preparation and adaptation in the sport is key, and especially so when it comes to the weather.** WORDS BY MICHELLE BAKER

From waterproofs to insulation, layering to footwear, it's important to get your kit exactly right, and the same can be said when it comes to sun protection.

However important, many of us tend to get caught out by the sun, starting so early in the morning that warmer weather is not a consideration, so the sunscreen gets left behind. Similarly, we can leave it too late, having already spent a couple of hours in the sun, feeling the prickle of sunburn before applying sunscreen.

As it turns out, sun protection – in all formats – is not seen as a climber's friend, in fact it's unpopular. Protective clothing can be restrictive, inhibiting movement, hats can fly off, sunglasses can dislodge, and sunscreen can cause a greasy grip, and when combined with sweat, it can cause a stinging sensation in the eyes. So, it's not a surprise that many don't bother, but at what cost?

When climbing at higher elevation, we are exposed to approximately 25 percent more ultraviolet radiation from the sun when compared to sea level, so forgoing sun protection, whatever your age or skin type or colour, is just too risky.

With rates of skin cancer up by 140% since the 90's this is a health and safety issue that needs addressing. But it's not just skin cancer, prolonged sun exposure will also lead to all forms of sun damage, including early ageing of the skin, wrinkles, age spots and solar keratosis, which looks unsightly. Who wants to look older than their years?

Accumulated exposure can cause many types of non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) the most common cancer in the UK, which can be disfiguring and invasive. And at worst, melanoma, the most dangerous form of skin cancer, which can spread to other parts of the body. However, the good news is that it is all preventable.

***“Sun protection is so undervalued in sport, as many of us grow up with this as a resource for a beach holiday. I lost a close friend (a third-generation mountain guide) to melanoma in 2012, so I am acutely aware of the risks, and as a result have developed a habit which is second nature now.”***

Ashley Charlwood: a course director of Mountain Training courses. As a Sunguard ambassador for the campaign, he is keen to inspire more climbers to take closer look at their habits in the sun.

To create awareness and solutions to these issues in mountaineering, and all sports, the Melanoma Fund created Sunguarding Sport, a free resource containing guidelines, sport specific advice and a toolkit of materials designed specifically for all in sport and outdoor recreation.

The campaign is supported by Mountain Training England and has even inspired executive officer, Guy Jarvis, to introduce more awareness within their resources: The causes, symptoms, prevention, and treatment of sunburn has been added as a syllabus item into all their walking leader qualifications, to spread greater awareness and the protection of participants.

The following tips for staying sun protected have been taken from the Sunguarding Sport's guidelines:

- 1 Sunscreen can have a potential negative impact on items of PPE (Personal Protection Equipment), so always consider clothing as the first line of defence.
- 2 To avoid transferring sunscreen or the dreaded greasy grip, use an applicator, or clean palms with a small towel and alcohol gel.
- 3 Remember that the best way to check if sun protection if required is by the UV Index. If it reads 3 or above then use protection, even in overcast conditions.
- 4 Make sure to take regular breaks, ideally in a shaded area out of direct sunlight.
- 5 Zip-off trouser legs are a great way of protecting your skin during the hours when the sun is at its strongest – whilst allowing you to easily convert them into shorts outside of these hours.
- 6 Sunglasses are critical as your eyes are vulnerable to UV radiation and can cause damage to the cornea and even melanoma, especially on snowy terrains and high altitudes.

### Support in sport

Mountain Training England, along with the British Mountaineering Council and over 60 national governing bodies of sport, support Sunguarding Sport, which launches on the 3rd May.

Building habits is never easy, but by simply being aware and educating yourself on the facts, you can start to make small changes, which will keep you up and out there for longer. For further details on all aspects of sun protection in sport, visit [www.melanoma-fund.co.uk](http://www.melanoma-fund.co.uk)



**Michelle Baker** is the CEO of the Melanoma Fund, Michelle loves being active in the great outdoors. From horse riding, mountain climbing, running, trail walking, paddling to rowing, she understands the importance of fitness, having respect for the elements, and not taking health for granted. She authored all the charity's sun protection awareness campaigns, including the most recent, Sunguarding Sport.



WORDS AND PHOTOS BY MARTIN SWITHENBANK

# The secret country: Toponymy for group leaders

**Let's start with a question; how important is our understanding of language and naming in relation to the outdoor worlds we inhabit?**

I grew up in West Yorkshire in a small mining town east of Leeds. It was surrounded by arable land and woodland and early adventures and explorations by myself and friends were to the far reaches of 'the beck\* near the farm' and 'the big field'. The talk around the yearly sacrificial haybale under 'the jumping tree' was of who had been the furthest up the beck, up to 'the waterfall', 'big bend', 'dark ravine', 'sheep trap' or even further towards the, as then, uncharted reaches closer to the Farm. The older haybale jumpers had pushed beyond and made it into, and out of, the piggery without an encounter with the Farmer. They were revered as pioneers and the names that we had given these places stayed with me for years afterwards and formed a spark of enquiry.

As I grew so did my explorations, but this time with a map of the local area. The names and markings entranced me, but I could make no real sense of them and was only really interested in how the lines translated into the real world. When I started, as a youth of around 17 or so, to visit my now beloved Yorkshire Dales, I collected some ancient Ordnance Survey Outdoor Leisure maps and began my wanderings. After a few excursions I noticed that certain names were repeated on these maps and patterns began to emerge. I asked a family friend, who worked as a National Trust Ranger, what the names meant and what the significance was, if any. His reply was simply 'well done, you've just discovered toponymy, now go and read something by Gelling or Ekwall'. I forgot about the reading part but continued my explorations which, by now had turned into point-to-point marches or circular ramblings visiting sites of interest and past habitation. I continued this for years and became interested in burial sites, stone circles, rock carvings, standing stones and any prominence that looked to stand out from the surrounding area or hollows that were deeply buried and secretive. I loved the names that these places had been given too; Nine Standards Rigg, Dinas Cromlech, Kit's Coty, White Isles, Ashlar Chair, Lanshaw Delves and Juniper Gulf to name but a few.

Fast forward several years for a stint at Art College, work, life etc., and I returned, map in hand, to the familiar places of my youth. Only this time with a copy of *Placenames in the Landscape* by Margaret Gelling as my guide. Gelling's seminal work on toponymy stayed with me for years and I went about decoding what was underfoot, overhead, in the distance and round the corner, giving my ramblings much more of an exploratory feel than ever before. I had discovered, much to my surprise, that the words on maps actually meant something.

Toponymy, for the unfamiliar, is, put simply, the study of placenames. The study of toponymy can be said to be concerned with two things: the primary motive for the choice of a word and the etymology of that word. To break this down further then, toponymy asks firstly why this place or feature is called such and secondly how has the name been changed or altered throughout the course of time? Placenames don't just appear; they all have an origin, a reason for existing. We named things, and continue to do so, so we can make sense of the world. We demarcated areas for agriculture, worship, settlement, burial, social gathering, and anything we did and do as humans. The ghosts of this toponymy remain in varying degrees in folk memory, some are largely forgotten, whereas some sites retain both their name and primary usage. With a little understanding of how place names are constructed, and an idea of common words derived from, generally, Norse, Olde English, Celtic or Gaelic we can start to decipher the land around us, how it was shaped, what it was used for and apply some historical context to it.

Let's outline a few simple conventions used in toponymy and start with my hometown of Marsden and a nearby farm called White Syke. Toponymy seeks to break down words into 'elements' and the two elements at work in Marsden are a prefix and a suffix, namely 'Mars' and 'den'. White Syke remains as written. If we look firstly at White Syke and accept that the first word literally means White, then we can very quickly move on





MAIN PHOTO Marsden nestled beneath Moorland. 1. The Syke Diverted over a Railway line. 2. White Syke Farm. The Syke now runs under the tarmac driveway.

outline above where toponymy asks about how names have been changed? Well, Mars was March or Marches (similar in use to the Welsh Marches) and as such meant a border land or area of high ground forming a physical barrier. We can walk up to March Hill just above Marsden (or to give it its older name, Marches Dene), and survey the area where we see the small Pennine town nestled below the border of high land at the head (Mars) of a valley (Den).

This is a very brief introduction to toponymy. However, there are many, many more areas of land to decipher and countless books and journals written on the subject, two of which are included at the end of this article, the rest I will leave the reader to discover should they wish to look further. I would like to close just by raising a few points of note. Firstly, every name has been chosen by an individual or a community at some point in time, these names, as discussed, may have changed over the centuries but the root is still present and decipherable. Secondly, these names are therefore inextricably linked to human land use and habitation. These points may seem straightforward enough but had a profound effect on me and the way I read the landscape when I understood what they were telling me. I was no longer simply walking, I was following past lives and detangling the words from the map and exploring what they meant under my feet and all around me.

To return to the question I asked at the start then, on a personal level, I can answer that through a better understanding of placenames my wanderings are enriched, better informed and have a much deeper connection to the past and the lifetimes of the people who have gone before me. So, for me, an understanding of placenaming is very important in my reading of the landscape. ■

For further reading see; Placenames in the Landscape by Margaret Gelling and The Concise Oxford Dictionary of English Placenames by Eilert Ekwall.

\* A beck is a stream or small river.



**Martin Swithenbank** is currently undertaking an apprenticeship in Outdoor Education and works at Cliffe House Outdoor Study Centre. He holds a Postgraduate Certificate in Education, CWI and PSI 1 certificates. He has been an active Climber and Walker for 23 years in Scotland, North Wales and northern Britain and is looking forward to developing his teaching and instructing skills post apprenticeship. Based in the Yorkshire Pennines he maintains his interest in exploration and esoteric bouldering areas.

to the more mysterious part of the name. Our question then is, what does Syke mean? Syke is, quite probably, an Old Norse word meaning stream. The addition of white at the start would possibly denote that this was a fast-flowing stream and appeared white when it was in heavy flow. Sometimes the word 'kettle' is used to denote waterways that appear to boil also. Farms were generally built near a water source and if we investigate White Syke Farm we can clearly see the farm still standing and a fast-flowing stream running into the farmyard where it has nowadays been diverted underground. OK, that's that one solved, so what about Marsden? We have Mars and Den: Den is easy and is a very commonly seen name which is derived from an Old Norse word, Denu, meaning valley. The prefix, Mars, has been altered down the ages. Remember our

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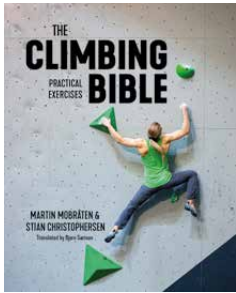
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# BOOK REVIEW



## **THE CLIMBING BIBLE – PRACTICAL EXERCISES** By Martin Mobraten and Stian Christopherson

Reviewed by Becca Lounds

This book is a collection of exercises specifically designed to help you train technique and strength to develop and improve as a climber. It is split into three sections; Technique, Strength and Power, and Children and Youths (which covers exercises for younger climbers). It is textbook size and full of inspirational photographs, with almost more pictures than writing making it lovely to look at. The stories about Norwegian climbers link the exercises to outdoor climbing, providing motivation and inspiration. All exercises are generally clearly explained with accompanying photographs and bonus helpful hints in red and there are a good range with variations to make training more fun.

The 10 commandments of climbing at the beginning of the book are a good starting point for novices and a welcome reminder to experienced climber, particularly number 10 'Preserve the joy – climbing is all fun and games'. There is then a small section on warming up, explaining why you should, and showing a useful set of exercises.

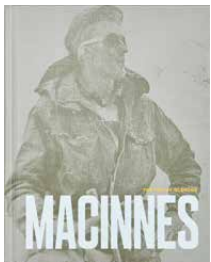
Chapter 1 – Technique. It is refreshing to find a training guide that puts technique before strength as this is an often-neglected area and one that many climbers could improve. It becomes clear that this is a companion book to *The Climbing Bible* (TCB) and it assumes that you have a basic knowledge of the fundamentals of climbing movement. However, the exercises do stand alone and there is good progression through the chapter. A novice climber would gain a lot from working through this section which covers: footwork, grip position, balance, tension, and dynamic climbing. The chapter slowly builds up techniques

to a section of combination exercises which would be of benefit to many an experienced climber.

Chapter 2 – Strength and Power, contains exercises that climbers will be familiar with. The first set are all shown based at an indoor climbing wall, although this is a good stand-alone section and is easily accessible as it requires no specific training facilities. It provides both a solid introduction to strength training for the novice and a helpful set of ideas for the more experience climber when they are faced with time away from a finger or campus board. It is when it gets into Isolated Strength Exercises that I feel that it needs the information contained in TCB to make it complete: TCB is referenced several times and the methods in this book are designed as 'further methods for training different properties, to ensure progression and variation in your finger strength training'. If you have a strong basic understanding of training then this section will give you more ideas, but for a novice, I don't feel that it would work without the information on basics and technique contained in TCB. It also lacks information in core training, endurance and mobility.

Chapter 3 – Children and Youths, is a good addition, full of games and fun exercises to help children develop good technique, a few of which I will definitely be adding to my coaching repertoire. This section covers a wide range, with games that work well for younger children up to more structured exercises for 10-12 year-olds. There is a final section on strength training in older children and how to begin it in a structured and progressive way to avoid injury. This chapter would be useful to parents and coaches who want to encourage children to fall in love with the sport.

While it does work best as an extension to *The Climbing Bible* it will definitely provide ideas and inspiration to a range of climbers from the novice through to the more experienced climber. Overall, this is an excellent book that is well produced and easy to take to the wall to use as a training companion. ■



## **HAMISH MACINNES – FOX OF GLENCOE** Edited by Deziree Wilson

Reviewed by Mike Margeson OBE

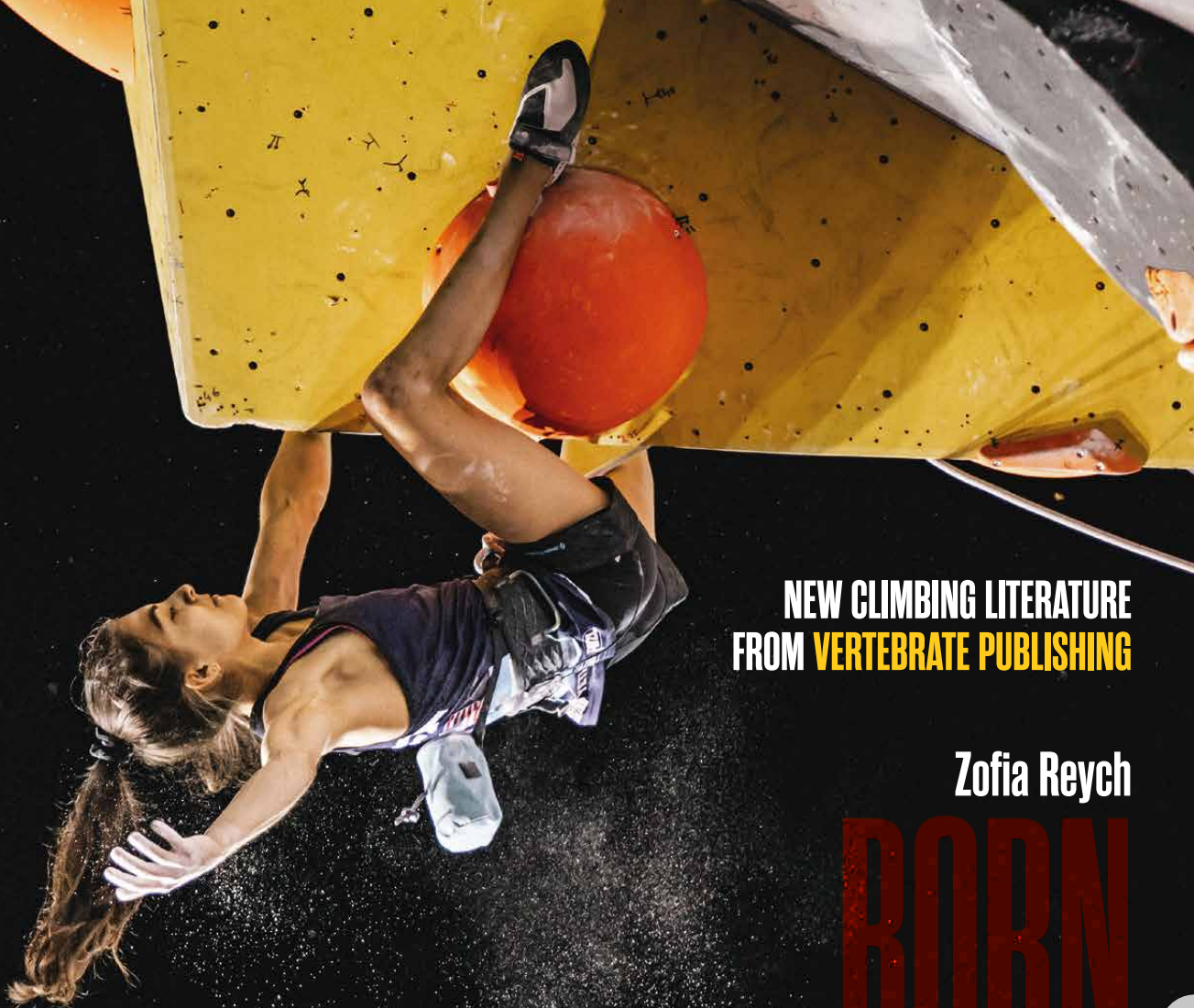
I could not put down this biography of Hamish MacInnes and his lifetime of adventure around the world. Starting with a young Hamish soloing behind

Lionel Terray, the famous Chamonix guide and his client, on the Charmoz- Grephon traverse; the story of how he had an abseil accident on the same in-situ sling anchor that Terray had just used and is rescued by Terray and some other guides was a great beginning. I like that, although presented as a chronological journey, each chapter is a full adventure in its own right. This is a huge book of 368 pages with wonderful illustrations, which is fitting for such a full life. Some material has been published elsewhere but the editing is excellent. Many will remember Hamish as an engineer and synonymous with Mountain Rescue due to the huge contribution he made in developing his stretchers. Others, for the introduction and formation of the Search And Rescue Dog Association (SARDA)

as well as his many years as leader of Glencoe Mountain Rescue Team. Those of us of a certain age will remember what a revelation for winter climbers the Terrodactyl short ice axes (or knuckle bashers) were and it was fascinating to read about their evolution. What is important in this book is that it recognises that Hamish was first and foremost a climber and mountaineer. Many of his projects as a film technical advisor or in writing, were in many ways tied up with enabling the next adventure, feeding the rat; whether in the former eastern bloc, South America, New Zealand or closer to home in the Western Isles. We also get insight into some of his great contemporaries; such as Yvon Chouinard, Joe Brown, Tom Patey, Don Whillans and Mo Antoine, to mention a few. The editor highlights Hamish's matter of fact descriptions of epic and hair-raising events, often with comic asides, which I believe is a product of so much mountain rescue experience. Hamish almost thinks aloud through the text, his thought processes, judgments and decisions, both good and bad, are openly discussed.

This biography is insightful, very funny at times, exciting, sad and above all, full of a life of adventure. There are many such adventure biographies on the bookshop shelves; this one simply should not be missed. ■





NEW CLIMBING LITERATURE  
FROM VERTEBRATE PUBLISHING

Zofia Reych

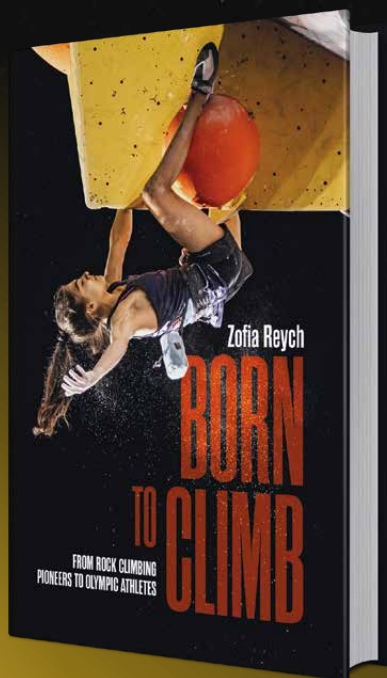
# BORN TO CLIMB

FROM ROCK CLIMBING  
PIONEERS TO OLYMPIC ATHLETES

Climbing is one of the world's fastest-growing sports – exciting, addictive and, arguably, much more fun than going to the gym.

In *Born to Climb*, Zofia Reych examines the fascinating cultural history of rock and competition climbing, offering a fresh perspective on some of the pivotal moments and outstanding individuals of the sport, from eighteenth-century exploratory forays on rock to the limelight of the Olympic arena for the stars of today.

The book also explores the culture of sporting participation and the author's own climbing journey, alongside often overlooked topics such as gender divide, capitalism and the tension between aesthetic and athletic approaches to climbing.







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GUIDING UP THE BREITHORN WITH THE WÄTTERHORN BEHIND.  
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