



SWMC Newsletter

Summer '07

www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk

Spring Clean

A weekend in March saw a band of dedicated domestic engineers arrive at the SWMC hut to administer some tlc. The aim: to give the club hut in North Wales a good spring clean, paint the kitchen walls and have a bit of fun.

Saturday dawned somewhat overcast with typical Snowdonia low cloud and a very stiff South Westerly blowing. Weekend organiser Sara Davies decided on a brisk walk up Snowdon despite the inclement conditions. After dropping Sara at Pen y Pass, a look at a very damp Dinas Cromlech and the prevailing weather conditions saw the choice of Ogwen Valley. Once at Milestone Buttress, Nik Goile and Dylan Tomkins set off up Superdirect (HVS), with Sylvia Noorbhai and Ian Goudge climbing next to them on Direct (V Diff). Big grins were seen as Nik and Dylan dispatched the crux pitches in style, only to be matched by the laughter coming from the neighbouring route as Ian squeezed himself into a rather slimy chimney on the final pitch of their route. Even the descent route was fun, as the gully was running with water. Dylan observed that people pay good money to go canyoning in similar conditions!

After lunch, Sylvia and Ian completed the classic Pulpit Route (Diff) linking into Ivy Chimney (V Diff), whilst Nik and Dylan slithered and slipped their way up a very slimy and appropriately named Soapgut (HS).

There was a quick stop at the RAC boulders, before a well deserved trip to Pete's.



Sylvia and Nik

Saturday evening saw the team spring into action in the hut. The kitchen walls were given a good scrub with anti-mould cleaner strong enough to warrant the kitchen door being opened despite the chilly weather. Nik invented an alternative use for his buff - a decorating face-mask! At least the walls were ready for painting the next day...

Sunday was another early start. As soon as breakfast was eaten, a 'non-stop painting blitz' saw the kitchen walls painted in anti-mould paint in under an hour and half! After this, the mattresses, bunks and walls in the dorms were de-cobwebbed and swept; the lounge thoroughly cleaned; the drying room cleared of rubbish; and the loos and bathroom given a good cleaning with potent anti-fungal spray by Nik wearing his new-fangled facemask. A Lincoln Mountaineering Club member popped over to say hello, and commented on the strength of the cleaning and paint smells emanating from the kitchen doorway! That just left the kitchen to be cleared and cleaned once the paint had dried, and all of the downstairs floors to be given a vigorous sweeping and mopping.

Nik just couldn't resist a last minute trip to the slate quarries. He bagged Seams the Same (E2 5b) in the Serengeti Area. The others watched in admiration, as a very strong wind blowing straight across the face forced him to make the crucial moves during the brief lulls. His success capped off a fine weekend!

The weekend was enjoyed by all and a huge "thank you" to every one who gave up some of their precious time to invest in the comfiness of our hut.



Coaching Weekend

A coaching weekend with John and Anne Arran is taking place on 1st and 2nd September 2007.

John and Anne are experienced climbing coaches with a climbing CV involving competitions, sport and numerous high adventure routes. Their website is theFreeClimber.com

The weekend is aimed at technique coaching for our more proficient members (ie comfortable leading VS+). It is not a ropework/safety course

Initially up to 12 members may attend. However, additional courses will be laid if there is sufficient interest

The cost will be around £85 excluding travel. Some features of the coaching method:

- Groups of up to 6 but everyone looked at individually
- Individual questionnaire to analyse goals and inform planning of weekend
- Strengths and weakness analysis & ways to improve your technique and tactics
- Advice on training
- Advice on finding the best conditions and planning your strategy for success
- Use of video analysis to improve
- Written performance feedback on request as well as helpful hints during the day
- Coaching handouts & photo CD plus evening slideshow on request.

This will be extremely useful for those who are keen to improve their climbing skills.

Please book your space by registering your interest on the bulletin board or contacting Chris Wyatt [christopher.wyatt@majotech.com] Places will be allocated and to ensure nobody misses out, in the event of the course being oversubscribed additional courses will be organised.

Club Barn

Bryan Smith, Barn Warden, is interested in views on the idea of shoe lockers under the stairs and a no outside footwear upstairs rule. This will be required as the installation of high density foamy interlocking tiles in the bunkrooms is being considered in an effort to make the night times less bumpy when people get out of bed to answer the call in the wee hours.

Any interest in a work party to finish off the dry stone wall / do some track works please contact Bryan Smith at [bryan@bhsmith.fsnet.co.uk]

A drill has been purchased to equip the hut and subject to it being used responsibly, members may borrow it for their own purposes. Contact Paul Rogers [fathorsepig@yahoo.ie].

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SWMC First Lead Weekend

The club's annual first lead weekend is 7th -8th July in Llanberis, North Wales.

If you've been out with the club but haven't led yet, have done a bit of leading but want to get some more experience or just need an excuse to get to North Wales, here's your chance to climb under the watchful eye of some experienced club members.

The club's hut in Llanberis is used for the weekend and you have the opportunity to climb some of the most famous crags in the country. If the weather is bad, there's still plenty of hill-walking and scrambling to be done.

If you're interested, either as a first-leader or as a helper, pop Nik Goile an email at [nikgoile@gmail.com]

Good Luck!

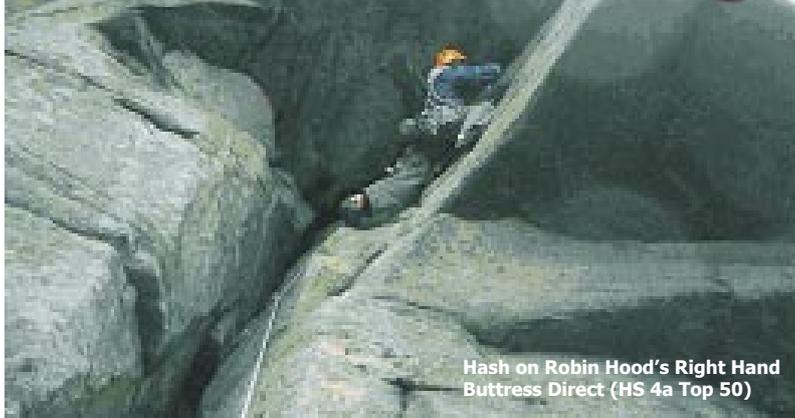
Children from the SWMC Children's Club are competing at the BRYCS this weekend in Edinburgh. You can follow their progress on the BMC website and look out for the update in the next newsletter.

Next issue...

Been somewhere different?
Got a favourite crag?
Want to give advice on the best equipment?

If you have anything to contribute, email Jane Brookes [swmcjane@ntlworld.com]

A Beginner's Guide to Stanage



Hash on Robin Hood's Right Hand Buttress Direct (HS 4a Top 50)



Hashmet Popat enjoyed a successful sunny weekend in Stanage, Sheffield

Having lived in Sheffield for three years and originally learnt my climbing trade there I was pleased to return for an Easter Weekend of climbing on gritstone and catching up with old friends.

For most of us who live in South Wales, the Peak District seems a distant place somewhere in the North of England. The drive from Cardiff is actually only just over three hours. The Eastern Grit 2006 guidebook published by Rockfax was a must buy and excellent for orientating yourself. Janette and I had decided to base ourselves near Stanage and booked a one-bed cottage.

Stanage is the largest and arguably most impressive of the gritstone edges. Situated on the moors north of Hathersage, and visible from miles away down in the Hope Valley, it stretches for a length of almost three miles from its northern tip at Stanage End to the southern point near the Cowper Stone. The climbing areas are split into about four areas starting at Stanage End in the North, High Neb and The Plantation area in the middle and The Popular End at the South Eastern end.

The rock is a real jumble of walls, slabs, cracks, breaks, arêtes, roofs, and just about any other feature you could wish for. Three-starred routes are everywhere; there really are no bad bits, and hardly a single route that is unworthy of an attempt. Driving past Stanage, it is a rare day when you don't see someone climbing on the Edge - even in the foulest of weather.

Our first day was spent at Stanage High Neb which has a good selection of routes across the board. Being our first climbs of this season outdoors, we weren't going to push the boat out too far but ticked off routes including Straight Crack (HS 4b *), Eric's Eliminate (S 4a *), Norse Corner Climb (HS 4c **) and High Neb Buttress (VS 4c Top 50). The weather was glorious and as we soaked up the sun, we watched some Scandinavians go for the hard stuff (Quietus E2 5c ***).



After a thoroughly enjoyable day we headed into Sheffield to visit some old haunts with friends. A rest day followed which was spent largely in bed (hungover!) but we did manage a walk round the spectacular reservoirs near the Strines Inn.

We spent our third day at Inverted V, Stanage Popular End. Again, a good selection of grades and a great way to continue the outdoor season.

We ticked off three top 50 routes, including Inverted V (VS 4b), Bishop's

Route (S 4a) and Robin Hood's Right Hand Buttress Direct (HS 4a). Sadly the weather was drawing in and after some light rain we decided to head to Hathersage and sample the climbing shops, afterwards heading back to Cardiff.

Stanage has pure quality, short intensive routes and here are a few quick tips for anyone thinking of heading up in the future:

The Climbing - Gritstone climbing is completely different from most of the climbing in South Wales, with mostly rounded edges. There's often not much to hold onto, and it requires a lot more attention to balance and body position using friction moves and flat palming. You really have to trust your feet.

Gear - You aren't going to need a huge amount: a reduced rack with a range of cams, extendable quickdraws, and a set or two of nuts is plenty. There are usually huge boulders at the top so long slings are handy for setting up belays.

Accommodation - There is a very convenient campsite 1km below the crag at North Lees (01433 650383). Hathersage is also close by for supplies. Parking is free except in the Plantation car park. Car crime is supposedly a popular pursuit, so leave nothing on display.

Weather - In the summer beware of the midges and it is often too hot for anything tricky. Winter can be very wet - but ideal for the harder routes when it's dry as friction is premium. Spring and autumn can be perfect.

Happy climbing!

Novice's Day 2007

Chris Wyatt tells us more...



On a sunny day in April, six 'novices' arrived at Little Tor, Gower raring to go. Well actually they were experts pretending to be novices such as the impact of these new fangled climbing walls! So we engaged in a little student centred learning – some wanted to top rope a few outdoor routes while others learnt to lead.

I think everyone was successful in getting what they wanted out of the day. Congratulations to Ralph and Carl for getting their first proper leads in.

The tide held back canute-like allowing us to climb until 2.45pm and the sun shone. My biggest problem was that I had to go home and therefore could not be bought drinks afterwards!



I'd like to thank Des, Dylan, Alan, Gwyn and Ian for helping out on the day and Dave and Jane for turning up but not being needed.

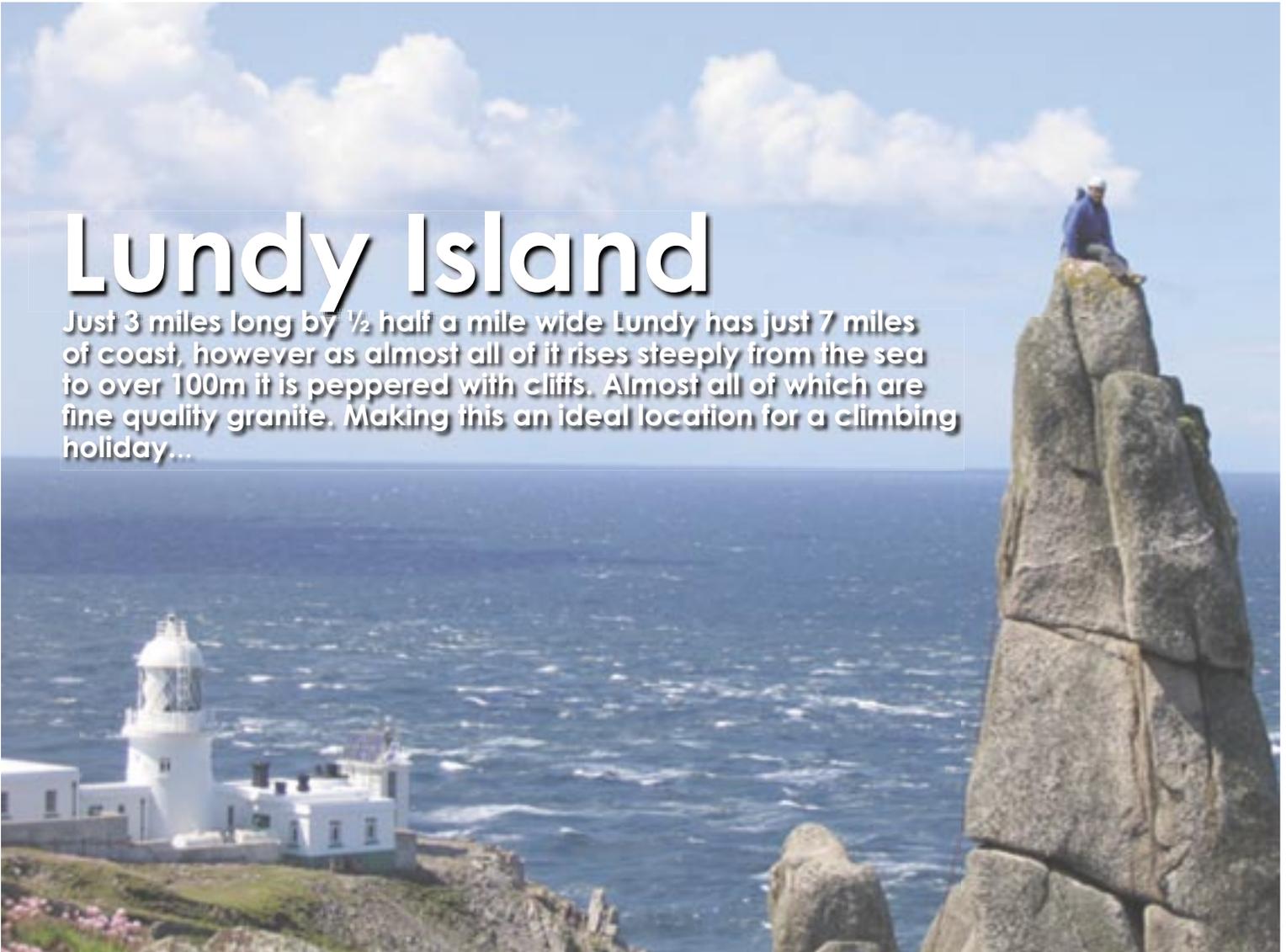
Having plenty of helpers meant we could all have a bit of fun ourselves. Dylan was persuaded into having a go at leading Superdirect which he did with much finesse and a broad smile.

I would ask all members to make sure that people joining us on the Novice days also get a warm welcome on Wednesday nights and other climbing meets.

Chris

Lundy Island

Just 3 miles long by ½ half a mile wide Lundy has just 7 miles of coast, however as almost all of it rises steeply from the sea to over 100m it is peppered with cliffs. Almost all of which are fine quality granite. Making this an ideal location for a climbing holiday...



Day 1

Jane and I decided to spend the May bank holiday on the island, sailing from Ilfracombe on the north Devon coastline on the Saturday morning with a very dodgy forecast and lots of optimism. The only two certainties were it would remain dry-ish until the evening and we would be hit by a storm after that!

We arrived on the landing pier at mid-day, and faced the walk up the steep track (or high street as the residents call it) to the village and island plateau. We left the bags to be delivered by tractor; putting up the tent would have to wait, in preference to getting at least one route in, hopefully we would get back before the weather closed in.

We chose the island classic – ‘The Devil’s Slide’ a classic 3 star HS. The slide is three quarters of the way along the island, about two miles from the landing beach and village.

The brisk walk was rewarded with 400ft of slab climbing. The route has a gentle angle to begin with, and a gradually increasing gradient, culminating in an airy traverse across the headwall.

We had a much more leisurely walk back, including a trip to the top of the old lighthouse for the best panoramic view of the island and to the far horizons of the Pembroke, Gower, the Brecons, North Devon and Cornwall.

The Marisco Tavern is also a well worth a mention and a couple of visits!

Sitting above the Chief Constable (E4) fortunately, or unfortunately, not the line I ascended by! The north lighthouse in the background.

Day 2

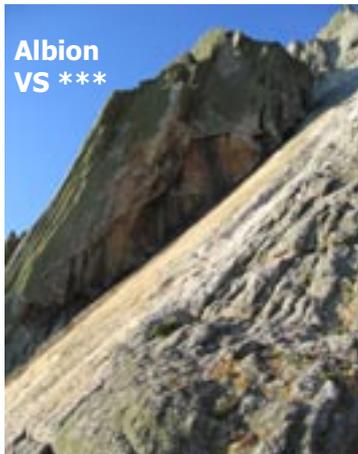
The Sunday was as predicted, we were woken in the morning (and night) by torrential rain and gale force winds. That familiar sound of yours and other’s tents flapping and straining in the wind and the uncertainty of whether the protective sheet of coated rip-stop tissue paper will still be there when you next open your eyes. Fortunately we awoke dry – some didn’t.

The day was a wash-out with 6 inches of rain and wind gusting to 50mph. We donned the foul weather gear and braved the elements to walk around the old quarry workings. These were reputedly worked on by convicts bound for America, who were diverted by the then owner, a cunning Mr Benson. He got free labour and the £20 government shipping fee for each prisoner. Not bad for a day’s work in the 1750’s!

Day 3

The next morning was indeed dry, the wind persisted – although the granite required little persuasion from this quarter and was bone dry! We headed back to the Devil's Slide to complete the route, Albion. On arrival the wind was still too strong, so we took a scenic walk around the northern end of the island. The Northern lighthouse still has the original construction workings in place. Building materials were evidently lifted from a small quay 50 meters up an overhanging cliff and then along a short length of railway track. Dave spent time investigating the sea cliffs, searching out excellent solo lines to return to on a warmer, stiller day!

We then did a short but pleasant climb 'The Original Route' HS, the first route ever climbed on the island. This lead to the top of the impressive looking rock spire is called 'The Constable' - displayed in the photo above.



We returned to climb 'Albion', the wind was blowing so hard up my ankles my trousers and smock were inflating! The climb follows an excellent rightward trending crack line where the slab meets the steep headwall. The climbing is fluid and instinctive, using bridging or a combination of undercutting and smearing. Once comfortable with the slab's friction, stopping to place gear was not at all strenuous and placements were plentiful. I got so excited at this prospect that I let the greedy crack swallow most of my gear before the halfway mark, leaving an exciting upper half.

Jane did not appreciate the bomber gear as much as me, and couldn't retrieve a persistent nut.

This left me with no choice but to drop down, retrieve the gear and climb the upper half of 'Satan's slip' - very enjoyable (on a top rope!) but not a sniff of gear. It's there apparently if you look hard enough and have wires small enough.

Day 4

On the Tuesday Jane chose to lead 'Bideford Ridge' a pleasant V.Dif rising above the Rhododendron woods on the Eastern side of the island. In contrast to the slabs this was a gnarly chimney crack which required a varied repertoire of traditional techniques like back-n-footing, hand jamming, and making lots of noise.

From the top of this climb we watched the MS Oldenburg, our lift home, steaming into the landing bay.

Goodbye Lundy until next time.



Sailing back we were joined by the air sea rescue helicopter from nearby Chivenor. They practised hovering just above the boat and occasionally drop a winch man to deck.

The best time to visit is after July 31st, when the majority of bird bans will be lifted (about 75% of the island is banned) although there is plenty to do on a short break. We're happy to provide information, just ask us if you're interested in visiting the island. Log onto the website to discover more about Lundy www.lundyisland.co.uk

