



SWMC Newsletter

Summer '08

[**www.southwalesmountainreering.co.uk**](http://www.southwalesmountainreering.co.uk)



Hello from your editor

Here is the Summer 08 newsletter. Hope you've all been out enjoying the glorious sunshine that S Wales has been offering these last few weeks. Thanks to everyone of their contributions, particularly Simon for his honest and gripping article about his accident at Ogmore last year.

Deadline for articles for the next newsletter is Aug 31st

In this newsletter:

1 A Message from our Esteemed Chairman, Chris Wyatt

2 The Fall, by Simon Williams

3 BMC Bolt workshop/Crag Clean Up, by Stu Llewellyn

4 Swansea Valley Crag, by Gareth Tucker and Nick Smith

5 Yoga for climbing, by Lydia Beaman

6 Dates for the Diary

Chairman's (possibly wise) words

I would like to take this mid year opportunity to reflect on what the club is trying to do and to review how we are doing.

The overall vision thing is relatively easy: We want to be a club where people can take up climbing/mountaineering, build their skills together, enjoy each other's company and understand the risks they are taking and how to minimise them. We want to support the ambition of those who wish to reach high. Finally we also want to take our part in improving the climbing environment/infrastructure - particularly in South Wales.

While aiming for these goals we have to administer the club in a prudent and professional manner

So how are we doing?

Building Skills

The Youth section is working very well with Linda, Roy and Hayden giving up most of their Saturdays to support it. One of the challenges for next year is how to join more effectively with the adults. We are considering changing the committee structure to include a post for the youth section.

So far this year we have had 2 successful beginners meets - one in box bay arranged by Chris Jones and one at Fall Bay in the Gower. These meets represent entry level into the club. We also staged a rope work meet very ably arranged by Gary Lewis and Ian Gouge's got folks on their first lead in North Wales. Recently some Pembroke virgins lost their virginity. Now for many people this is not enough! However, realistically it's about as much as we can put on 'officially' to promote climbing skills. Unofficially the Wednesday evening meets were going fine until the summer weather struck!

What's missing? Well in my opinion it's mountaineering - but there are serious issues regarding safety here. Personally I would not want to take anyone who 'Fancies a go' into the dolomites or the Alps. So maybe this is an area where we have to get the professionals involved!?

Supporting Ambition

Our Rock Idol membership is definitely increasing. The aim, I think, is to encourage people who do climb at a high Standard to join and be active within the club, to encourage regular training and coaching where necessary. It's all a bit fuzzy at the moment and I would welcome input from members and even prospective members on how the club can better support high standards of climbing in S Wales.

The climbing Environment

You might like to call this climbing infrastructure. It includes the Hut, The guidebook, fixed gear and paths, litter etc.

I would like to thank Sara for taking the lead with the Hut. We have had two very successful and useful 'Love the Hut weekends' which not only get work done but make us really realise the hut belongs to all of us. We are attempting to get the showers fixed but it's not that simple!

Al Rosier is the new guidebook editor. He and the team have done some preliminary work and publication **will** be on time in 2010 (I understand)

Al is a hard working chap! In conjunction with Martin Koscis and Dan Middleton of the BMC he has done a brilliant job on climbing infrastructure. We have provided support to individuals who have re-bolted sports routes which needed TLC; we have cleaned up crags, removed tat etc. Funnily enough all this work has been far less controversial than anyone expected with almost universal support - sometimes after a detailed explanation of what is being done.

Prudence

Operating the club in a prudent and professional manner actually is quite a headache. Members who have not served on the committee will have no idea of what this entails - Trustees, Deeds, Constitutions, Audits, minutes,
So next time you see Dave Ewing (our treasurer) or Ian Gouge (our secretary) or any other member of your committee a pint would be in order! If you love this stuff then can we get you on the committee next year please?!

Anyway have a great summer. Push yourselves (its good for you!), but most of all, be safe!

Chris

What did he do wrong?

Simon Williams

It's taken a long time to sit down and write this. It's nearly a year since the sunny August evening when my partner Llio and I were out alone, climbing the 40 metre sea cliffs at Ogmore.

I've told this story dozens of times, but writing it down is different. Having to think properly about it. About what happened, and what could have happened. What went wrong. And what I did wrong.

Because that's what you want to know. It's what every climber always wants to know when they hear about a bad fall. "What did they do wrong?" What you're really asking is, "What stupid thing did they do, that I'd never do myself?" And every climber always wants to know the answer, so they can add it to the list, tick it off as something they'd never do.



But maybe it's seldom that simple. You get some things right, and some things wrong. Get enough things right, and when that one thing goes wrong, maybe you'll live to climb again another day.

It was my birthday, and all I'd wanted to do was enjoy one nice, easy climb somewhere spectacular, and get to the pub in time for a feed and a beer. Just back from the Alps, stronger and fitter than I'd been in years, Ogmore felt like the right challenge. Big and intimidating, and known for a tendency to looseness, many refuse to climb there, while others claim it to be the unrecognised gem of South Wales climbing.

The tide is out, so there's no chance of an epic with the sea closing in. I leave Llio on the rocks and set off up one of the few easy climbs.

The next thing I know, it's dark and I'm lying on my back unable to move. There are flashing lights and a deafening noise, and a large man in a jump suit is stroking my hand. I'm looking out through one misty eye, and half my face feels like a wet, oozing pudding.

Memory loss is a funny thing. This is the first moment after the fall I can clearly remember, yet I can remember knowing exactly where I was. Strapped into a stretcher and neck brace, in a rescue helicopter charging towards the hospital.

But what had gone wrong? I'll probably never fully know, but apparently, lying at the bottom of the cliff, in and out of consciousness, I'd told Llio that a jug had pulled, just as I was reaching out for my next piece of gear.

My last piece of protection had been a long way below. The climbing had felt so easy, I was moving up to a decent ledge, and all the difficulty seemed ahead. So I was holding back gear. It was a 40 metre pitch, but I had just twelve quick draws, and a couple of crabs for hexes, cams and slings.

Do the maths. That's about one piece of gear every three metres. At best.

It was always going to be a big one. Three metres above the gear makes a six metre fall. Slack in the system, add a couple of metres more. Rope stretch, and I pulled my partner a few metres up the cliff. Tot it up, and that's a pretty big fall.

But people take bigger all the time. It might not have been so bad, the scrapes I took on my chest and thigh and forearm might have been the worst of it. But on the way down, clattering among the jugs of a v diff, I got caught in the rope, spun upside down, and smashed in face first.

It was three morphine-pumped hours in A&E before they finally took the neck brace off. The scans said there was no brain damage, and the x-ray had found no problems with my spine. They weren't yet sure what they could do about my face, but believe me, at a time like that, half a face seems a small price to pay to be told you'll walk and talk again.

Actually, they did a pretty amazing job. Swansea's Morriston hospital happens to have a specialist facial unit, and even they were proud of the work they did piecing me back together with titanium plates.

It's been quite a tough time for both of us since that night. The days in hospital, the weeks just sitting in a chair, the months off work. And when you're used to climbing, hiking, windsurfing and running for most of your fun and all of your stress control, spending half a year barely able to make it up the stairs without a head spin gets frustrating. Even now, my energy levels are all over the place. Making progress is encouraging, but just as often it feels like two steps forward, one step back.

And a constant, 24-hour-a-day headache doesn't do much for your personality. I was well on my way to grumpy old man status before the bash, but even I can recognise that the last months have seen my patience minimal and my temper quick to flare. And that's definitely not great to be around.

But it's not just coping with me that's given Llio a hard time. I might have got away with not remembering too much (although some of the flashbacks are pretty unsettling), but Llio has it all recorded in vivid, technicolour detail.

She remembers being dragged ten feet up the cliff as I fell, watching her knuckles and forearms ripped open by the rock, and wondering if she'd be able to hold on to the rope that would save us both. She remembers lowering me off, upside down, dripping blood and unconscious, not knowing if I was alive or dead. She remembers the frantic rush across the beach, looking for the phone reception to call for help. She remembers the long 45 minutes lying alone together, waiting on a steadily chilling beach, trying to keep me warm and talking while the stench of blood filled her senses.

But we're getting through it now. We're into a new summer, and slowly getting fitter again. The titanium plates feel a bit odd when my face gets cold, there's still some numbness and throbbing around my temple, and a couple of my teeth still ache in the night. But the headaches are getting better. The mornings are still bad, and some days take me by surprise, but the gaps in between the pain are getting longer every month.

We're back climbing, but it's not quite the same. I'm not really leading yet. I'm still too nervy on rock for that. It's something barely conscious, a new lack of certainty, something in me not quite believing the rock isn't going to crumble under my weight.

It's rather like being a beginner again. But with none of the excitement of always learning something new, and all of the frustration of always having to find others to depend on.

But what I've lost in arrogant independence and indestructible self-belief, I've gained in a little more wisdom. In fact, I now feel qualified to pass on some of my hard-won new knowledge. Some of the things that I did wrong. Some we did right.

Wear a helmet. If I hadn't, I probably wouldn't be writing this now. And make sure it fits well. My new helmet comes right down to my eyebrows. If my old one had, I might not need to be writing this now.

Take enough gear for the job in hand. I didn't. And place it well. I did. That number three cam deep in a pocket held a 30 foot fall and two of us hanging off it. Not a time for anything marginal.

If you're on a tidal belay, think about what would happen if it all goes wrong. If the sea had been lapping at us under the cliff, helicopter rescue would have been virtually impossible.

Set a bottom anchor that'll take an upward pull. It'll stop the belayer from being dragged up the cliff by a leader fall, and give them a chance to escape the system if they have to.

Enjoy your climbing. It's part of what makes life worth living. But it can happen. It does happen. So please, do all you can to stay safe. And put that bloody helmet on.

Yoga For Rock

Train your Flexibility with Yoga, by Lydia Beaman

Ed: I'm planning to include a short section on training in some newsletters. This issue has exercises recommended specifically for climbers by Lydia Beaman, a S Wales yoga teacher.

Flexibility is useful to all climbers, whatever the climber, for awkward moves and conserving energy. Stretching also helps recover and reduced the possibility of injury. Rather than focus on general flexibility, this article looks at specific stretching of forearms. *[Ed: These might look like a lot of effort to stretch relatively small muscles, but they work better than any of the usual forearm stretches. As well as speeding recovery and help loosen the tightness that builds up in tendons. I've not had any finger injuries since doing them!]*

Read through the instructions and give it a try!

Kneel down with your toes flexed under.

1. Begin to walk with the hands with your palms on the floor, turning one forearm facing forward and then the other. Palms facing, down while you place one palm back, then the other back, then forward and back a few times.



2. Then with the right palm back only and the left hand forward pull the hips back a couple of times. Bend the elbow and extend out of the shoulder by pressing through the base of the thumb of the left hand. Roll the wrist out
3. Come onto the back hand press. On the back of the hand, fingers pointing inwards towards the left forward palm, begin pressing into the right wrist and externally rotating out of the shoulder. Now press the base of the left palm, the inner heel of the left palm into the inner heel of the right palm. Round the back and use the shoulder to stretch the forearm. Release and roll the wrist slowly a few times. Use the fingers to articulate motion through the wrist, toning the joint.
4. Repeat on the left side. [how long each side]



Never stretch into sensations of pain. Stretch slowly and listen to your body.

Lydia currently teaches yoga in Swansea, and will begin teaching yoga in Cardiff in September. Several SWMC members are regular attendees of her classes.

Email: info@yogaevolving.com

Tel: 07790019680

www.yogaevolving.com

Bolt Workshop/Crag Clean Up: 19th July at Mountain Ash

Start at 11 am, meet at the crag

We'll be looking at some of the issues involved with placing good quality bolts, with help and advice from Dan Middleton, BMC Technical Officer.

There will also be a crag clean up, organised by Martin Koscis, BMC Volunteers Officer.

Bring as much equipment as you can for the event, the BMC will provide the rest. For the clean up, scatters or loppers and a soft brush will be useful. Scruffy clothes and kit for abseiling will also be useful.



For the bolting workshop, kit for abseiling and any bolting equipment you have will be useful, especially cordless SDS drills.

For this event, you need to sign up!

Email dan@thebmc.co.uk or phone 0161 438 3326 to sign up, and indicate which event you are coming to. Details of any bolting equipment and experience you have would be very useful.

And on the subject of sports climbing, donations to the S Wales bolt fund are always gratefully received.

Please send any cheques to

Roy Thomas
90 Robins Hill
Brackla
Bridgend
CF31 2PJ

Payable to 'the S Wales Bolt Fund'.

Roy will also (probably) be at the Mountain Ash clean up on Sat 19th.

Swansea Valley Crag

The Swansea Valley area has had relatively few recorded routes, until recently. With the opening of Dynamic rock, crags within a short drive of Clydach can be easily combined with a training session at the wall when the nights are short or the weather dubious.

Below are two of the lesser known crags, one sport, one trad, which are well worth a visit if in the area

Glais – Craig y Pâl (*spade crag*)

A good, quick-drying series of quarried buttresses with lower grade sports routes and a couple of trad climbs, recently developed by Roy Thomas and friends. Easy access, in a tranquil location, and less than five minutes drive from Dynamic Rock. There are two towers in an open position at the start of the crag and a hidden wall some way further round the hillside.

ACCESS GR707007

Above the village of Glais. From junction 45 of the M4, follow signs for Pontdawe and follow the A4067 to a roundabout. Take the third exit, signposted Glais. Drive up the hill, turn second left, at the Globe Inn, then second right, at Craig Pal *. Follow this up the hill, about ¼ mile to parking spaces on either side of the road in the trees. Follow the obvious path into the woods, taking the right fork to gain the first obvious buttress.

THE ROUTES

The routes are described from right to left, as approached. The first routes are on a prominent buttress split into two sections by a central groove.

1. Ass Bandit 12m E1,5b Fr6a+
At the top of the right-hand side of the buttress is a prominent crack and groove system. Gain this and pull up the headwall to the left.
2. Pension Fund 12m E2,5c Fr6b *
Gain the second prominent crack at the top of the buttress directly, and jam through the overlap in a fine position.
3. Friends In High Places 12m HVS,5b
The groove and jam crack. Belay up the trees.
4. Confidently Clipping The Corroded Contents Of 12m E1,5b Fr5+ *
Goi's Grandad's Cabin
A fine open route up the blunt left arête of the buttress.
5. Nice In Glais 12m E1,5c Fr6a+
The short wall between the two buttresses.

The next routes start on the left-hand buttress.

- | | | | | | |
|----|---|-----|-------|-------|---|
| 6. | Golden Handshake | 12m | E2,6a | Fr6b+ | * |
| | <i>Start only marginally right of the flying arête of the buttress, gain the arête with difficulty and climb it in a fine position.</i> | | | | |
| 7. | Out To Pasture | 12m | E2,5c | Fr6b | * |
| | <i>Climb the left-hand side of the arête of the buttress.</i> | | | | |
| 8. | Tommy Tucker's Mother's Cooker | 12m | E3,5c | Fr6b+ | |
| | <i>Climb the mildly leaning wall left of the arête. Sustained.</i> | | | | |

The next routes are some 200m left, accessed by scrambling through the trees at the base of the crag.

- | | | | | | |
|-----|--|-----|--------|-------|--|
| 9. | Six Years Enhancement | 12m | E1,5c | Fr6a+ | |
| | <i>Follow the cracks up the right-hand side of the wall.</i> | | | | |
| 10. | Actuarial Reduction | 12m | E1,5c | Fr6a+ | |
| | <i>Follow the cracks up the left-hand side of the wall past old peg stumps.</i> | | | | |
| 11. | Crackin Saw | 12m | HVS,5a | | |
| | <i>Climb the trad crack, passing a capstone. Womble up through bushes to a stake and oak twig belay.</i> | | | | |

Craig y nos GR 841149

Craig y nos is a peculiar limestone rift on the NW slope of Cribarth in the beautiful Glyn Tawe valley, close to Craig y nos country park. The rift forms a small natural gorge that's climbing potential is only apparent upon entering it. The crag has been used by groups in the past, evidenced by some large belay stakes, but was dismissed as too loose and no routes were led until now. While there is certainly some worryingly loose rock, the best routes are on excellent sound rock.

The floor of the gorge is a chaos of unstable boulders. It is advisable to gear up at the top of the crag and ground falls are not to be contemplated! The crag tends to weep after rain, especially on the west face. A good dry spell is needed for these routes to come into condition.

Cars can be parked in a lay-by next to Craig y nos castle at GR 841153. A footpath opposite leads passed quarries to the open fell. The crag is on access land.

The rift lies north/south and the walls are referred to as East (facing west) and West (facing east). The routes are described from South to North.

East Face

The cracked face right of Craggy Nose is structurally unsound and has been left unclimbed. You're welcome to it!

Craggy Nose.

Diff. Steve Rose (solo) 00-00-04

Start at the narrowest part of the gorge. Go up trending right over jutting blocks (of tenuous structural integrity) then straight up steeply, taking care with the rock.

Clean Sweep.

V.Diff. Steve Rose (solo) 00-00-04

Start as for Craggy Nose but pull gently left around the arete, then go straight up.

West Face

Polite Refusal. *

MVS 4b. Steve Rose. 00-00-04

Opposite the East face routes, just south of the narrows, is a prominent corner. Climb the blunt arete left of the corner then steeply up the arete and wall above.

Verdi.

HVS 5a. Nick Smith, Steve Rose, Anna Stickland. 12-07-05

The corner is usually wet. When dry it gives a good, if lichenous, climb. Finish on the left wall taking care topping out.

Above the narrows, the floor of the gorge rises. There is a prominent tree on the West wall. A route has been climbed just left of the tree but is on dangerously loose rock. Right of the tree is a steep wall of excellent rock.

About Thyme 9m **

E1 5b. Steve Rose, Nick Smith, Anna Stickland 12-07-05

A stiff problem which yields to a positive approach. Start 2m left of the central crack line of Repetitive Strains. Pull up to a pedestal below a flake crack (runners). Step up and left onto a slab below a low overhang (PR). Surmount this (PR) and finish strenuously to the right of a tree on improving holds.

Project 9m

Start as for About Thyme to the pedestal. Step right and climb directly to a prominent wide crack in the head wall, just left of Repetitive Strains.



Red: About Thyme

Yellow: Repetitive Strains

Blue: Queen of the Night (corner obscured)

Orange: Magic Man (partial line)

Repetitive Strains 9m ***

E2 5b Nick Smith, Steve Rose 11-07-05

A fine route which takes the crack line and shallow right facing corner in the centre of the steep wall. A small roof caps the crag at this point. Gain a small ledge on the right then step awkwardly left and climb the crack and corner to exit steeply to the left of the roof.

Queen of the Night 9m *

VS 4b. Nick Smith (solo) 27-06-05.

The corner on the right is climbed to a ledge. The left wall is then climbed to the top. Bold.

Magic Man

Mod. Steve Rose (solo) 10-07-05

3m right of the last route is a smooth wall. Step up left to a ledge at 2 metres. Traverse left to the arete and go up the blocky staircase to the top passing a small tree

Meets

In addition to the meets listed below, club members are active throughout the year. Look at the SWMC bulletin board www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk for details of less formal meets

Lundy – 13-16/09/2008 – Chris Wyatt (Fully booked)
Granite adventures in a beautiful setting

Bolt Workshop/crag Clean Up – 19th July, Mountain Ash
Contact dan@thebmc.co.uk for further details

Classic Rock weekend –26/07/2008
Training weekend for lower grade climbers. Details tbc

Evening Meets take place every Wednesday throughout the summer. Please see the bulletin board for further details

Next issue...

Trip reports

Training

More New Crags

**If you have anything to contribute, email
[tuckergd@hotmail.com]**