



# **SWMC Newsletter**

## **Autumn '08**

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



**Hello from your editor**

**Welcome to the Autumn 08 newsletter.**

**I'm sure we've all been busy making the most of the usual S Wales Indian summer. This issue we have reports from two very different trips; the first lead weekend in N Wales, and the eventful Lundy trip. We've also got an update on the recently resurrected bolt fund. Thanks to everyone of their contributions.**

**Deadline for articles for the next newsletter is Dec 31<sup>st</sup>**

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# The Full Lundy Experience

13-16<sup>th</sup> September

By Nik Goile

## Day 1: Arrival – Summer Arrives – Successful First Day

On Saturday, 13<sup>th</sup> September, a seventeen strong team from the SWMC boarded the MS Oldenburg and departed for the island of Lundy.

It's been a while since a club trip of this scale has been organised. Chris Wyatt's initial suggestion had been quickly pounced upon and the trip was "sold out" almost immediately. Chris did manage to squeeze a few more people in after the cut-off date, thanks to some smooth talking with the Landmark Trust, the organisation that runs the island.

It was under blazing sunshine that everyone disembarked on the island. Most of the team were glad to get going, if only to get away from the sea sickness inducing old boat and we quickly spread out across the island, keen to pluck the key gems from the guidebook while the weather was good.

Flying Buttress, a pillar of perfect granite suspended above the sea, was the most popular option. Several teams soon ticked off most of the major lines under E1 on the cliffs.

Another group massed at Landing Craft Bay and the classics Indy 500 (E1 5b) and Formula One (HVS 5a) both saw ascents.

Looking for a bit more solitude, Haydn Griffith and Rob Eagle had gone further afield. The day saw them capture the ticks of American Beauty (HVS 5a) and Immaculate Slab (HVS 5a) on cliffs they had entirely to themselves.

Sunset saw sun-burned but sated climbers returning to the campsite to swap stories and relax in the comfort of the mess tent.

## Day 2: A Brooding Sky – Incoming Tides – Near Tragedy

"This impressive cliff plays host to some of the most serious undertakings on Lundy," I read from the guidebook about the Devil's Chimney Cliff.

"That'll do nicely," replied Chris.

It was day two and it was dry. This meant it was time for everyone to get out and get ambitious. All those weeks of poring over guidebooks searching for adventure and excitement were finally over. It was time to do it.

We headed out from the campsite under a brooding sky. The sun and warmth of the previous day had disappeared. A more sombre veil of cloud hung over the horizon while a cold wind brought threats of worse from the Atlantic.

It was to turn out to be an eventful day....

The Devil's Chimney Cliff didn't shirk its reputation. Chris and I came away from it with the scalps of Sliver (HVS 5a) and The Fifth Appendage (E1 5b) but not without a price. Chris was required to traverse onto the tenuous 5c climbing of the E2 direct start of Fifth Appendage due to slime while I was being belaying under the sea spray of an avaricious sea.



*Hash on Formula One, Landing Craft Bay*



We managed to escape with me getting only a mild soaking but the sea claimed our abseil rope. The main “non-tidal” ledge was under water and the end of the rope had disappeared to be snagged on the boulders below. We had no choice but to tie it off until low tide the next day when it could hopefully be rescued. We suspected that some of the other teams might be having trouble with the fast encroaching tide that had caught us out. But we had little idea of the seriousness of the events that were unfolding on other parts of the island.

Andy White and Kevin Evans had ventured to the north of the island to try some routes in Arch Zawn. They’d climbed a couple of routes before deciding to retreat as the swell began to batter the rocks with growing fury. Unfortunately during their scramble out of the climbing area, Andy slipped on a rock and was washed into the sea.

Burdened by a rack and rope he fought to stay above water and after a long five minutes was fortunate enough to be washed back into the rocks where he was able to pull himself clear of the sea.

A lucky escape from almost certain tragedy considering the size and power of the tide.

During this time Hugh Wormington, Jim Slater and Dave Payne were also battling the conditions, this time on the Flying Buttress. At one point Hugh and Jim were swamped to their knees in water while belaying in a sea cave. Dave led out as quickly as he could to get them climbing before the water rose any higher.



*Alys, Alan and Ralph on top of Flying Buttress*

In contrast, further up the coast at the Devil’s Slide, two parties from the SWMC, Ian Goudge & Alys Rook and Ee Fu Thong & Chris Jones were subjected to a very different ordeal: “classic climb traffic”.

While every one else was battling the sea, they were battling boredom behind some incredibly slow teams on the classic Devil’s Slide (HS 4a). After a very long day, they finally topped out to tick one of the most famous (and impressive) climbs in Britain.

Just in time for Chris and I to wander over in search of a bit more excitement. Ian and Alys were easily persuaded and we mixed teams so Chris and I could get on the “Slide”. We decided that Ian and I would do Satan’s Slip (E1 5a) while Chris and Alys would do Fear of Faust (E1 5a).

Full of confidence, and with a bit of friendly competition, we both launched up onto the easily angled but poorly protected wall of granite.

Then it started raining!

An enjoyable romp suddenly took on a much more serious tone. Chris wisely decided his 15m run-out from his last piece of gear meant it was too dangerous to continue and asked for a rope to be passed down. Soon afterwards his rescuers, a non-SWMC team, were also being evacuated from above.

Almost oblivious to the drama next to us, Ian had been coaxing me up the wet slab. Weaving a line of poor RP placements, copious amounts of chalk and a fair amount of swearing, I finally reached the point where my route joined the well protected and sheltered safety of Albion (VS 4c). From there I put in some real gear and dashed up to the stance so Ian could begin the 40m prusik up the route to join me.

Eventually we topped out, a bit damp and a bit wild eyed but happy to be at the top.

The rain built as we all headed back to the campsite.

Everyone rendezvoused and swapped stories. Haydn, Rob, Hash Popat, Dafydd Jones, Alan Rosier and Ralph Giles had all had successful days though the rain had denied the coveted tick of Indy 500 by some of them.

But the talk was dominated by Andy's epic. He must've been sick of the hugs and pats on the back by the end of it but we were all so glad he was ok.

### **Day 3: A Damp Start – Rescue the Ropes - An Unlikely Afternoon**

Monday started damp. The overnight rain had subsided to a persistent drizzle. This wasn't too bad a situation as the rain gave a convenient excuse for a lie in after the exertions of the past couple of days.

Eventually everyone emerged briefly into the open air and converged on the mess tent. Plans were varied; some were off for a walk during a relaxed rest day while others departed for an energetic run around the island (Rob and Haydn making some of the younger members of the team feel very unfit and unmotivated).

Others headed out to climb some easy routes despite the weather. Finally, the last of us went out to rescue our beleaguered abseil ropes.

Despite the weather it turned out to be a productive day. Ian, Alys, Rob and Haydn (post-run!) all climbed a few routes around the Seal Slab area before heading over to the Devil's Slide. For Ian and Alys it was a chance to enjoy the route minus the queues.

Jim, Dave and Hugh also enjoyed the fact that the weather had removed the queues and added another SWMC tick of the classic route up the Slide.

During all of this, Chris and I had headed back to Devil's Chimney to retrieve our abseil rope.

I went first and shoes off and a bit of wading in the now calm water led to the rope quickly being cleared. We bundled it nice and high on the cliff to avoid a repeat of the day before when the tide came in and turned our attention to escaping.

Neither of us fancied a 60m prusik out of the cliff so we climbed the Tindale Route (HVS 5a).

I was glad it was Chris's turn to lead as the route was even wetter than the day before due to the rain. With quite a shady aspect, this was a crag that didn't dry out in a hurry. The crux when dry is probably not that bad but I wasn't ashamed to pull on the gear to get past the final slimy layback move as the rain once again closed in like a damp, unpleasant veil.

We'd had enough of big sea cliffs for the time being so headed over to Beaufort Buttress. It turns out that this cliff is easy to access, is very clean, fast drying and blessed with eight pleasant routes between severe and E1. Retrospectively it is a great "first day" crag to get used to the climbing on Lundy and I would recommend it to anyone who visits the island for the first time and isn't used to climbing granite.

The afternoon sun came out and we managed to tick five of the eight routes before our grumbling bellies drove us back to camp.

That night as we recounted our exploits, the mention of Beaufort Buttress drew a particular sparkle from the eyes of Rob and Haydn. We'd managed to do five of the eight. The gauntlet had been thrown down for someone try and do more...

### **Day 4: Respite from the Weather – Final Routes – A Clean Sweep**

The last day – what would it bring?

Excitedly the various teams gathered under a clear sky and a cool drying breeze. The final routes would go but time was of the essence with the boat leaving in the early afternoon.

Everyone dispersed. Rob and Haydn headed towards Beaufort Buttress while Alan, Ralph, Jim and Dave made the short hike down to Landing Craft Bay. Hash, Daf, Chris, Hugh and I chose St Patrick's Buttress at the other end of the Landing Craft Bay.

Ee Fu, Chris Jones, Alys and Ian instead set off in the other direction. Ee Fu and Chris had a successful morning at Kistvaen Buttress but unfortunately Ian was stricken with a stomach bug and was unable to climb.

Meanwhile in Landing Craft Bay, the guys were making the most of the weather. Jim and Dave did Formula One while Alan and Ralph finally ticked Indy 500 after being rained off a couple of times during the past few days.

Over on St Patrick's Buttress, Hash and Daf ticked Shamrock (VS 4c) before Alys arrived. She joined them and they finished the day by cruising up Cow Pat (VS 4c). It marked a relaxed end to a successful weekend for those team members.



*Nik seconding Double Diamond, Flying Buttress*

Chris, Hugh and I sampled the delights of Meninirons (E1 5b), firstly bold and delicate on the initial wall then burly and well protected through the capping overhangs of the buttress.

We rounded out the day with Holiday in Cambodia (E1 5a). The climbing was easy but the route was run-out. Luckily for me, Chris got the dodgy pitch again which he dispatched in style born from years of soloing experience.

As we topped out, followed closely by the other guys on Cow Pat, Alys pointed out that she'd noticed damage to the abseil rope when she had slid down to the base of the crag. We pulled up the rope to discover that at some point before she abseiled in (the last person to do so) the rope had been cut on a sharp edge and hadn't been noticed. The cut was substantial and the rope very much weakened. It was lucky for us that Alys is only little and escaped unharmed. It could've been very different if it had been one of the big lump blokes going down it instead!

This cast a bit of a shadow on the day - there had been simply too many near misses! But a near miss is a miss so we thanked our luck and headed down to the Marisco Tavern for a quick pint before catching the boat.

As we stood in line under perfect blue skies and sunshine, smug with success and tired from our efforts, we spotted Rob and Haydn looking equally as smug already on deck.

"Hi guys, how did you do? Did you beat us at Beaufort Buttress?" I shouted over.

"Yep," replied Rob very matter of fact. "We ticked the whole crag!"

Not a bad end to the holiday. The journey back was pleasant and without the stomach churning of the voyage over and it was with nostalgia for the island that everyone started to slowly disperse back towards the pressures and pace of normal life.

I think the magic of Lundy had touched everyone in different ways. We'd discovered it was a benevolent magic, sometimes possessed of a dangerous power that could easily overwhelm anyone.

But we'd all returned home in the end, a bit wiser and better climbers for the experience.

And I'm sure we'll all occasionally glance across the Bristol Channel in the future while climbing on the cliffs of Gower and pick out the hazy shape of Lundy in the distance. We'll think back fondly of the adventure of what was, for most of us, our first full Lundy experience.



## **A Final Note from Chris**

Whilst we all had a great time in Lundy everyone should take note and learn from the two safety incidents that occurred while we were there:

1. Remember that the tides in the Bristol Channel are enormous (up to 30 ft range). They come in the fastest between 2 and 4 hours after low water. Give yourself plenty of time to get out.  
Don't leave it till the last moment.
2. Kit is replaceable and nothing like as valuable as you
3. If in a hazardous situation with swell carry your rack on a sling/bandoleer so that it can be ejected immediately. Likewise the rope can be tied on with one simple knot and not go round your body six times
4. If in a really hazardous situation just get to the nearest/easiest high ground. It does not matter if you spend 7 hours trapped by the tide
5. Don't scramble on wet rock. If you have to don't rush and consider tying on.
6. If there is a remote danger of being swept off a ledge by the sea tie yourself to the rock in good time
7. Learn to prusik in an easy environment - not when the chips are down
8. Always check your kit thoroughly.
9. Be careful where the abseil rope runs - avoid sharp edges
10. Invest in rope protectors
11. If you think anything is amiss discuss it with your mates.

Just a thought - there are more deaths in climbing caused by abseiling than by leading. Why do we religiously retire our lead ropes while abseiling on any old ribbon?

As you can see I have rather mixed feelings about the trip because of these issues. I enjoyed arranging trips but I would like to see a wiser safety culture within the club - hopefully not at the expense of adventure/self reliance etc. I would not like to be the organiser who did not bring everyone home !

Please note I am not trying to get at anyone here. Just trying to make sure we all learn from these experiences

## First Lead Weekend, N Wales

By Rhys Jones

Friday 6<sup>th</sup> June saw S.W.M.C.'s annual commute to the hut for the annual 1<sup>st</sup> Lead Weekend of 2008.

Saturday morning began at Little Tryfan (Tryfan Bach Ogwen). For those of you who have never been there before it is a relatively small rock face at the foot of Tryfan & the Glyder mountain range. The rock face is generally used by novice climbers to gain experience/tuition in gear placements and for those who have limited lead experience to simply gain confidence in their gear placements. Climbers with little experience (like myself) were paired up with an established/experienced club member who provided advice and guidance as and when required.

After a brief tuition on gear placements by Ian Goudge & Chris Jones, Nigel Lewis began the day by establishing an abseiling/safety rope, which he then spent the day going up and down whilst giving guidance to the new leaders. I'm not sure how many times he went up and down that rope, but he must have felt like a Yo Yo. Covered some miles that morning!!!

By lunchtime everyone had progressed well and were ready to move on, and we decided to wander around to the Milestone Buttress on the north ridge of Tryfan. Some of the more experienced climbers in the group decided to climb Direct Route, via various variations.

In the afternoon I found myself paired up with Steve Lucoq, who was amazingly climbing one handed as his left hand was bandaged up from a previous incident with a loose rock that resulted in damaged tendons too his fingers. Steve I hope that you have fully recovered from this injury *[Ed: Steves fingers are now 90% better and he's back to climbing with both hands]* Due to his injury Steve requested that I lead all the pitches. Not knowing the area we decided it was best to follow Christos, Andy & Polly up the Rowan Tree route.

This route is one of the nicest "lower grade" climbs located on the North Face. After some conversation about who would carry Andy's guidebook that eventually got lost!!! Christos, Andy & Poly and myself found ourselves sat on the first ledge while Steve to our amazement climbed the first section one handed.

I must admit that I found it difficult at first to think about the gear placements, direction of climbing in relation to the direction of karabiners while holding onto the rock for dear life. However once we got the first pitch over with the rest came easily enough.

My adrenalin rush and sheer speed of Steve's one handed climbing resulted in us passing Christos, Andy & Polly who had somehow managed to tie herself up in the two ropes.

We continued to the top of the route that I believe is approximately 285 feet long. Throughout the climb Steve provided further guidance on gear placements and demonstrated alternative options in setting up quick anchor/belay points. After a relatively simple descent back to the base of the cliff we found other members either basking in the glorious sunshine or soloing some of easier routes.

As we headed back to the car a few of the group decided to head for the RAC boulders for brief session before meeting up at Pete's Eats. However the glorious sunshine had awoken an army of midges and we were on the menu! So the impromptu boulder session turned out to be extremely short! We proceeded to Pete's for food and then onto the hut for even more beer and wine. It was at that point I discovered there was no such thing as hot water in the Hut.



The venue for the next day was to be the Upper Tier of Craig Pant Ifan at Tremadog. This proved to be a very suitable location as it offered enough easier graded routes and slightly harder routes to keep beginners and experienced climbers happy all day. This was combined with arguably the best weather of the summer (we actually saw the sun for the whole day). All the new leaders again made progress, getting in plenty of practice in placing gear and setting up their belays. However probably the most notable climb of the day was Steve Lucoq breezing up a VS 4c – one handed!!

Over the course of that weekend it became obvious that I was the only “totally” new beginner (with the exception of the beginners day the month before) within the group. Members who attended the weekend were either there to provide assistance or simply to build confidence and receive assurance that they were setting up anchors etc correctly and safely.

Over my three month period with SWMC I have been amazed not

only by the willingness of established club members to help and provide guidance to new members but also the wide range of people who are attracted to climbing. The club consists of people from all backgrounds who's paths would never cross in daily life, really quite amazing when you think about it.

Originally the thought of joining a club and meeting up with new people seemed a daunting task. After all how could you trust someone you do not know to hold the other end of a rope and belay you in a safe manner and how would you fit in? However I have personally found it great and an enjoyable experience and would like to thank all those members for their time, effort and patience in helping myself and other new members to gain experience, knowledge and confidence to lead outdoors.

I hope that experienced club members will continue to provide support to new climbers without sacrificing too much of their own climbing.



## Bolt Fund and Crag Clean Up Report, by Roy Thomas and Myles Jordan

Bolt Fund and Crag Clean Up Report, by Roy Thomas

The S Wales bolt fund now has collections jars at Up and Under and Boulders in Cardiff, Cotswold outdoor shop in Llantristrent and Dynamic Rock in Swansea.

The first donation was received from the munificent Gary Lewis at the Mountain Ash clean up in July, which went brilliantly many thanks to Martin Koscis, Dan Middleton and the hard working volunteers. Lots was achieved, any one going cragging there now will find the brambles cleared good access and light onto the crag and many routes cleaned and regeared especially the easier ones which are in much demand. This has cheered up a grumpy old fart who was chuffed to see other people showing some commitment and belief in their own local crags. South East Wales is becoming increasingly popular, and is proving itself to be more than just a stop off for the subsidiary crags of "little England beyond Wales"

There is also a raffle for the bolt fund, with tickets available from the outlets mentioned above. £2 per ticket, and over £100 of climbing kit in prizes. The raffle will be drawn around Christmas. If you are interested in donating prizes, or want a ticket but can't make any of the collection points, please email [swbf@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:swbf@yahoo.co.uk).

Please send any cheques to

Roy Thomas

90 Robins Hill  
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Payable to 'the S Wales Bolt Fund'.

The bolt fund has been resurrected up as a charitable trust fund with 100% of donations going to the crag in accordance with area bolt policy. We are particularly keen to promote lower grade sports routes and improve quality of insitu gear especially lower offs. More information including Topos of recently developed crags can be found at [www.southwalesboltfund.co.uk](http://www.southwalesboltfund.co.uk). contributions both financial and ideas would be great, in particular we call for speakers willing to donate their time giving a climbing related slide show/talk, the entrance fee would go to the fund. A winter climbing talk might be particularly timely, any takers?

The BMC's South Wales team will be hosting a gathering on **Thursday 30th October** at Dynamic Rock, Swansea at 1930. Items up for discussion and decision include

**Future crag restorations**....venues, cakes, access.

**South Wales Bolt Fund**...publicity, fund raising, recruitment & training.

**Access issues**...why, where, when and what.

**Open Forum**...anything you want to talk about, know about, get a decision on.

Food and drink will be laid on, and there may be a raffle as well as news about an up and coming film night in aid of the Bolt Fund.

Let [Martin@thebmc.co.uk](mailto:Martin@thebmc.co.uk) know if you're planning to come along so we can get the catering right, and feel free to pass this on to anyone else you think will be interested.



# 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](http://www.southwalesmountaineering.org.uk) for details of less formal meets

## Annual General Meeting

St Helen's Rugby and Cricket Club, Swansea, **12/11/08.**

Minutes from Last AGM,  
Chairman's Report,  
Treasurer's Report,  
Barn Report,  
Youth section Report,  
Motion from Committee to increase Membership Fees and Hut fees,  
Election of Officers.

Free drink for every member that turns up!

## Annual Dinner,

Discovery Inn, Cardiff **21/11/08.**

Contact Chris Jones for further details and tickets  
[chrjones@gmail.com](mailto:chrjones@gmail.com)

If you have anything to contribute, email  
[\[tuckergd@hotmail.com\]](mailto:tuckergd@hotmail.com)