



SOUTH WALES
MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

Welcome to the Summer 2013 Newsletter. Not got loads of content for this one, which is why there wasn't a spring one. However there's been quite a few trips now, so I expect to see lots of photos and write ups from you all. Not just from Joe!

Rebecca Williams (who is giving a talk on the 12th of July in Cardiff) has done a article on improving your climbing. It's a really good read.

Sadly, I've got another obituary for this newsletter. Pete Leyshon passed away earlier in the year. Dave Parsons has written a very moving obituary.

Trips still to come:

22nd - 23rd June	North Pembrokeshire
29th June	Bouldering Ogmores
June / July	Dartmoor (no date set yet!)
6th - 7th July	South Pembrokeshire
24th - 26th August	North Wales
28th-29th Sept	Peak District
13th November	AGM, Cardiff
22nd November	Annual Dinner

There's plenty of informal stuff being arranged on the forums and despite the less than excellent weather seems like folk are getting out and getting stuff done.

Smart Climbing's Top Ten Tips for a tip-top outdoor climbing season



1. Think Pyramid

Climbing progression follows more of a pyramid model than a linear improvement model; that is, you need lots of volume and breadth of experience at a particular grade to enable a successful move up to the next grade. Most people make the mistake of thinking 'well that VS was ok, lets try a HVS' and coming unstuck. Try to give yourself a broad range of different types of VS on different types of rock and on different days with different partners to consolidate your skills before making what can be a big jump up a grade.

2. Think Volume

This is sort of reiterating the point above, but in reality studies have shown that the main difference between top climbers and ordinary climbers is volume and frequency of climbing. When you think you have had enough, drop a grade or two but do one more route, or if possible, 5 more routes. You are building up a bank of climbing experience as well as improving your stamina, and gaining confidence in pushing yourself when tired.

3. Identify your exits

Having a think about how you might back off a route before you get on it might sound negative, but having a pre thought out plan actually makes people feel more confident and less likely to panic if things go wrong. Having a good look at the route, identifying the crux, looking for good points to abseil off and some old tat to leave behind if needed, or even having a rope set up above you are all part of preparing exits that should free your mind to focus on the route itself.

4. Warm up

I think I have very rarely seen anyone do this at a British crag, yet in France and Spain it is common. If there are no easy routes to do to warm up at the crag, spend 15 mins bouldering around at the bottom of the route, perhaps even putting in your first piece of gear then coming down for a rest. Get your body and brain in climbing mode, and don't spend the warm up time chatting with your partner about your week in work – focus on the task ahead!

5. Breathe

If you have just raced up to the crag to get ahead of a team, your breathing will be unsettled and it can aggravate any feelings of apprehension you may have. Spend 5 mins centring yourself by breathing from your belly, making your out breaths slightly longer than your in breaths (a count of 5 in to 7 out is good). Calm, steady breathing sends relaxed signals to your brain which will help you stay focused when you are climbing.

6. Slow down

Many people rush their climbing when they don't need to, especially if there is another pair waiting at the bottom to have their go. Try to put that out of your mind (you have as much right to rock time as they do) and only move quickly through cruxes or overhanging moves. Having a steady pace will again settle your brain and keep breathing steady, and prevent you making silly mistakes, like having a foot slip off a perfectly good hold, which can unnerve you.

7. Re-focus after a crux move

If you have just made a crux move, try to find a pause where you can re-settle your breathing, release any muscle tension, and look ahead to what comes next. Most of us spend so much time thinking about the crux and then find we make silly mistakes on easier ground because we haven't thought it through.

8. 'Am I alright where I am?'

This is the crucial question to ask yourself when you feel panic starting to rise. Most panic is to do with anticipatory anxiety – things which haven't yet happened – such as 'I'm getting pumped, what if there isn't any gear' etc. If you are ok where you are, take a moment to pause, breathe out slowly, and stop overgripping! Look for gear placements and give yourself a moment to refocus. If you are not alright where you are, can you readjust your feet or hands to get more comfy and then refocus? Or do you need to down climb and hang on your gear for a minute? How many times have you thought there were no holds, fiddled in a piece of gear feeling desperate, only to find a huge jug the minute you have clipped your rope in? Panic narrows our focus and we can miss obvious hand or footholds, so try to ask this important question early as soon as you feel the first flutterings of panic.

9. Take it in turns

I don't necessarily mean, lead a route in turn, but instead consider doing all the leading one day and letting your partner do all the leading the next day, if you find belaying stressful. It can be hugely exhausting watching someone try really hard to lead a route at their limit, particularly for couples who climb together, and this can sometimes ruin your own head for leading. One solution therefore is to designate one day for one of you to choose whatever you wish to lead, and another day for your partner to have their turn on the sharp end whilst you are an encouragingly watchful belayer.

10. Sum it up

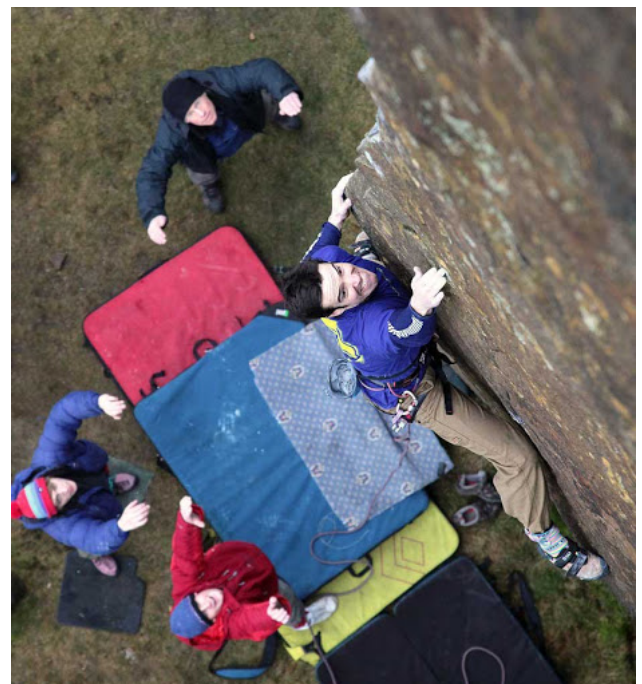
If you struggle with feeling like you are not making any progress, spend a minute at the top of a climb identifying what you did well (a move, a gear placement, managing your breathing etc) and what you need to do more of next time (ie an improvement to make but stated positively such as 'place feet precisely' rather than 'don't scrabble with my feet'). This is a way to 'front load' your next route with both positive vibes and things to work on to improve your performance.

Have a good climbing season!

Rebecca

Dr Rebecca Williams is a Clinical Psychologist and Climbing Instructor and runs Smart Climbing, offering psychological performance coaching for climbers.

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Obituary for Peter Leyshon

I met Peter when I joined the club in 1963 whilst still at school. He was at the time an art teacher in the Rhondda. He was a great influence on quite a few young and inexperienced climbers and encouraged beginners with his own enthusiasm. There were no climbing walls in those days and most training and instruction was done at Taffs Well quarry on Wednesday evenings and Morlais at weekends. He became secretary of the club in 1965 and was a member of the committee for many years.

When Taff Fechan was being opened up for climbing he was active in developing new routes and even wrote the SWMC guide to the area.

He was also active in the Alps climbing in Chamonix and Zermatt as well as in Norway. He led an SWMC expedition to Arctic Norway and also to the Romsdal in 1964 before it became a popular area for climbers from Britain.

Peter stopped climbing when he started to pursue an interest in politics. He was active in both the Conservative and the Labour parties at different times and became the 1st conservative councillor in the Rhondda for over a hundred years! He stopped being active generally when he had to become a full time carer for an aged aunt.

He was one of life's real eccentrics, he had the ability to upset people, even friends, he was stubborn and seemed to delight in embarrassing people in his company. Even so, he was really missed when he ceased to be a member of the club.

Sadly Peter died a rather lonely death of prostate cancer at the end of last November. He lived alone. His relations who came over from Canada did not go through his address book and inform his friends who were still in contact with him. Sadly none of us were therefore present at his funeral. When we eventually heard of his death, a group of us decided we needed to get together and have a drink to his memory and reminisce. This we did a few weeks ago in the Taffs Well Inn which was the home of the SWMC for many years.

Pete was a real character, one we were glad to have known as well as being someone to whom quite a few of the club owed a debt of thanks at the beginning of their climbing careers. Many of the people he influenced are still very active despite advanced age!

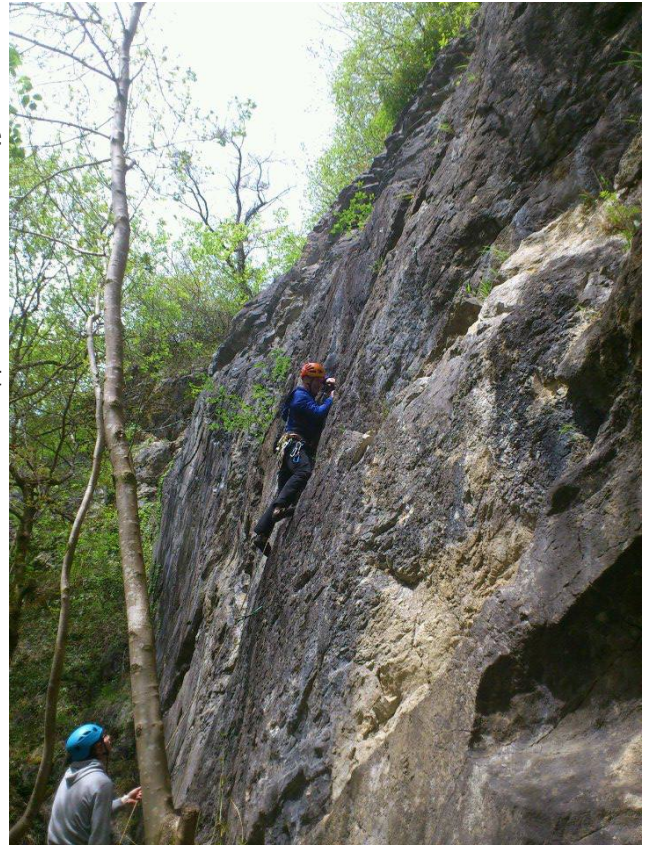
New Members Sport Day - 18th May 2013

Sat 18th of May saw the first "New Members Sports Day " listed in the clubs meets programme which had been added at the suggestion of sport/boulder aficionado Matt Dix...nice one Matt , good idea. The venue chosen for this first foray into sport climbing was Dinas Rock

A sparkling clear day greeted the healthy turnout of 8 new members. The group were a mixture of newish climbers and some who were quite comfortable with the process. They were run through the basic "top of the route" process by Julian Williams and Joe before being let loose on the rock.

The day was a mixture of top rope / seconding and leading their first sports route for various members of the party.

Seen in the picture is Jul, blasting up a 6B route, making it look like a ...a.....a 6B route ! while Joe watches on in wonder thinking "When I grow up I want to be a climbing farmer".



Big thanks to Juls, Paul (Griffith), Matt Dix , Rhys and Joe for supporting the new members & introducing them to a new technique and new venue.

Also thanks to all the new members who turned out to make it a most enjoyable day. Well done, good craik, excellent climbing form.