



# CRUX

The Magazine of the Hertfordshire Mountaineering Club

2016 ISSUE

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CLIMBING

WALKING

MOUNTAINEERING

BIKING



*Towards the end of a perfect mountain day!  
The view out to Loch Linnhe descending from the  
summit of Ben Nevis to the Carn Mor Dearg Arete.  
(Photo Paul Hearn)*







# Welcome to our latest issue of Crux

Hi to all,

Welcome to the latest edition of Crux. Thank you all for your enthusiastic support of the club. We continue to enjoy a varied range of activities and meets organised throughout the mountain regions of the UK and Europe.

The year kicked off in the Peak District where we enjoyed plenty of snow and high winds on Kinder plateau. March saw us in Snowdonia and Easter was spent in Glencoe & the Ben. Later in the year saw us sea cliff climbing, cragging, and a most successful summer trip the Dolomites and some via ferrata.

The annual dinner was held at the Snowdonia Centre and the MOTTY mug (member of the year) was awarded to Stephen Deaville for his tireless work as Club Secretary.

The Club continues to hold weekly climbing wall nights at both Hatfield and St. Albans walls, where new members are warmly welcomed and encouraged. The Pub social nights are currently very poorly attended, if any members have any suggestions how this might be remedied then please let a committee member know.

The club applied for a BMC grant, and we were successful in being granted £150 towards club publicity (allowing us to print this issue of Crux). We have also been awarded £200 for Instructor training. Stephen has been given £50 toward his ML training, and the balance remains available for members wishing for a subsidy for a specific accredited training course.

There are an exciting range of venues for club meets this year, many of them in new locations to the club, so why not have a look on the website and get booking, they are filling fast!

With very best regards to you all.

*Paul* Paul Hearn  
CHAIRMAN



## On behalf of the Committee

I would like to thank once again the St. Albans branch of Cotswold Outdoors for hosting our Annual Slideshow and our AGM. I should also like to say a special thanks to Jacqui Deakin for working especially hard canvassing contributors and editing this edition of Crux. Thanks to all those who took time to write such interesting articles. Everyone kindly gave up their time and labour so that every penny of the grant we have received has gone

towards getting as many copies of this issue printed. Thank you once again. Phil Whitehurst also deserves a special mention for maintaining our superb website, and of course our heartfelt thanks go to all those club members and fellow committee members who have worked hard to make this the great club that it is.

### Cover Photo:

*André and Paul T on the Grossglockner - Photo Paul Hearn.*



## Stephens's Gear Guide

Suunto Core, £250 Cotswold Outdoors

The Core Classic is a stunning addition to the Suunto range of ABC watches, it has a stealthy look to appeal to professionals and other more serious users. A multitude of functions and features help you to make the right decisions when you're pitting your wits against the great outdoors.

The altimeter is ideal for when you are out and about on your adventures, it can be helpful in accurately pinpointing your location on a map as well as encouraging you to monitor yourself and others around you when at high altitudes and Acute Mountain Sickness might be a risk.

The barometer is ideal for helping you make a decision where the weather might be concerned, if it is about to take

a turn for the worst you might not take the longest route while if it is looking brighter you can make the most of your time on the hill while you are up there. The storm alarm helps to keep you aware of quickly changing conditions.

The sunrise and sunset times are great for helping you plan your day, letting you know how long you have in the daylight so that you can arrange your day accordingly.

### Product Features

- Altimeter, Barometer, Compass
- Temperature
- Multiple watch, date and time functions
- Altitude difference measurement
- Depth meter for snorkelling
- Automatic Alti/Baro switch

- 7 days Alti/Baro memory
- Storm alarm
- Sunrise/sunset times
- Countdown timer and stopwatch
- Water resistant 30m with underwater buttons
- Composite case; black aluminium bezel; black negative display
- Elastomer strap
- Low battery warning
- User-replaceable battery





# Annual Dinner March 2015

The last Annual Dinner was held at the Snowdonia Centre and, for the first time that I can remember, the meal was to be at the Centre itself. Twenty attended, but more of the dinner later.

We awoke to fantastic sunny weather on the Saturday and, not to miss the opportunity of this good weather, some of us decided to do the Snowdon Horseshoe. So with Dave Williams volunteering to drive, four of us, Jane Eyre, Dave Nicholson, 'Welsh' Harry and myself piled into his car and went off to Pen-y-Pass car park. It was full and it was only 9.30am. Dave Williams suggested the four of us got out and started walking and he would go down the hill to the Capel Curig road and park and then catch us up. Agreeing it was his best suggestion of the day so far, we hopped out, booted up and started on our way towards Crib Goch.



Jane crossing Crib Goch

We had got as far as where the Crib Goch path diverts from the Pyg Track when Dave caught us up. He must have run as we were not going that slowly although we were hampered by a slower group in front of us. On the way up to the ridge Harry led the way - he said he does Crib Goch two to three times a year - and finally, at the top of the scramble, we managed to pass the slower group and had Crib Goch to ourselves. Dave Williams and Jane strode ahead and the oldies followed. We stopped for a refreshment break before the climb up to Snowdon where we joined the masses coming up the Llanberis path.

The top was packed, people coming up every which way including bikers. We sat at the top in the sun and had our lunch before setting off down the Watkins Path and then on up to Y Lliwedd.

The oldies, Harry, Dave Nicholson and myself, decided to drop off Y Lliwedd down to the mine and go back that way to the hut and Dave Williams and Jane went on to complete the Horseshoe and then down to collect the car. We got back to the hut just a



Dave Nicholson coming up Y Lliwedd path, above Glaslyn tarn.

few minutes before Dave Williams and Jane. It was a fantastic day out with superb weather. We couldn't have had better conditions on Crib Goch, dry, sunny and no wind and views all around all day, topped off with a good group of friends.

Back at the hut preparations for the evening meal were underway. We all piled in to help prepare the salads while Paul Hearn laboured in the kitchen with the paella and Jane got out her home made puddings. The first course was onion soup with garlic bread, followed by salad nicoise and then the main course of paella with a choice of veggie, chicken or seafood and, not to be undone by those three lovely courses, Jane was in charge of pudding, and what puddings - raspberry pavlova, apple pie and custard and ginger cheesecake! Finally, there was a cheese board. What a lovely meal we were treated to!



Eddie, Dave, Jane & Welsh Harry preparing to go up Y Lliwedd path.

Between each course the sleeves were rolled up and we took it in turns to do the washing up. Paul gave the Chairman's speech during which he announced the MOTY (Member of the Year) award was given to Steve Deaville for his good work as secretary. Many thanks were given to Paul and Jane for a very successful and enjoyable meal and more alcohol was consumed during evening before we retired to recover from the day's efforts.

Eddie Cornell





# Glencoe: my first winter meet



My first winter meet with the HMC was to Glencoe over Easter where we stayed in the local youth hostel, critically very close to the Clachaig Inn which was an amazing pub with great history. I had just purchased some new winter B2 boots, crampons and an ice axe that I was very keen to use.

The first winter training day was at, what we later found out to be, Boomerang Gully, which is a grade 2 winter route. We unfortunately thought we were on somewhat of an easier grade but, due to bad visibility, we found ourselves on a very steep gully and had to then back off due to the steep slope and the rocky exit that lay ahead. It was quite a situation and for inexperienced people it certainly concentrated the mind as none of us had put crampons on and then we were told we had to reverse the route. It certainly wasn't easy but we all survived and had some great stories to tell in the pub after.

A few days later we decided to attack Ben Nevis using the Castle Ridge route. The day didn't start well as we all woke up with varying degrees of hangovers due to the previous night's activities. However, I set off with Dave Williams and Tony Richardson equipped with crampons, boots, ice axe and rope. Castle Ridge is a grade 2 - 3 winter route which normally shouldn't be that difficult. Nevertheless, it is around 900 metres of vertical ascent making it quite challenging. Tony decided to lead this route followed by Dave and myself.



A large portion of the route was deep snow and required loads of effort to climb up. We hadn't put crampons on as the snow was very soft and quite slushy but we were all roped together. The beginning of the route was quite straight forward but it quickly became more challenging with some demanding rock climbing. There was one very difficult section we had to set up a belay for and we needed to move quickly as we hadn't started the route until after lunch time.

At one point Tony came across lots of rock climbing gear, including 2 axes, rope and a head torch which he picked up and we later found out that someone had been rescued off this route a few days earlier. (The gear was returned). Towards the end of this route it became somewhat extreme and the snow quite hard so we had to put crampons on. Unfortunately I had a very small ledge on a steep slope on which I had to get my rucksack off and then put the crampons on, with Tony shouting instructions. I had never tried to put crampons on before and luckily my effort seemed to work out ok. We also had to walk across a very narrow ridge with steep drops either side which wasn't exactly safe. We managed to finish off the route just as the sun was setting and we had some absolutely amazing views.



Unfortunately, we never topped out on Ben Nevis as we ran out of time. However, Tony did use the head torch he found to descend the mountain. I had a text from the other walking party who had done a different route up Ben Nevis and had just finished. They were expecting us to have finished and be down at the pub. However, we were still at the top and, by the time we got back, it was about midnight and we couldn't even get any food in Fort William. All the same, it was an incredible day with the most amazing weather.

Chris Smith





# Coastal Climbing



Picture 1

I have been climbing on and off for around 15 years but not by the sea until about 2 years ago when Dave Hall introduced me to the cliffs of Pembrokeshire. Our base then was the campsite in the lovely little village of Bosherton. The campsite provides the essentials; a field, one toilet, one sink and one shower, with lots of cold running water, and peace and quiet: at £3 a night, a bargain. A splendid pub, a world famous café (at least amongst the climbing community) and some excellent crags nearby complete a near perfect package.

During this first trip we visited crags at Flimston, Crescent Slabs and Jackdaw Point. One of the first noticeable differences to non-coastal climbing venues is that you generally arrive at the top of the crag, rather than the bottom, and often require an abseil. And so it was at Flimston Slab. Good anchors are obviously essential and this can involve quite a bit of creativity to achieve given the rock at the top is often sparse and loose. It also means you need a rope for the abseil in addition to the single, or two half ropes that will protect you when you climb. So we set up the abseil, lowered ourselves to a small ledge and secured ourselves to the rock. After a couple of straightforward but pleasant climbs we moved on to Crystal Slabs where we enjoyed some more challenging routes.

The following day at Crescent Slabs I experienced first-hand another major consideration of climbing by the sea – tides! I belayed from a comfortable rock whilst Dave led up the slab. I soon found though that I was on a small island and had to carefully manoeuvre my way up the slab to establish a new stance clear of the incoming sea. This was a relatively minor issue and many routes are not tidal but where they are, planning and timing are everything!

On the final day of this first trip we went to Jackdaw Point where, as well as climbing some great routes, we provided entertainment to a resident seal who spent his afternoon bobbing up and down in the shallows watching our rock antics and yes, we also saw jackdaws! All in all a great weekend that left me wanting more.

Since then I have cliff climbed in South Wales multiple times, primarily in the Pembrokeshire area but also on the Gower peninsula. Perhaps one of the reasons I have enjoyed this environment so much is that there is much more to it than just climbing. Some routes on cliffs can often turn into something more akin to an expedition as they can involve abseiling, scrambling, coastering or a combination thereof to reach the start of the route and/or to retreat from the finish. Just occasionally they can turn into “Epics”, well at least that’s how they are described in the pub later that evening after a few beers! Chris Smith and I climbed one such route in Pembrokeshire last year.

The day went as follows:

The crag area was called “Mother Carey’s”, sometimes referred to as “Mother Scarey’s” – with good reason. There are many hard routes there, many beyond our capabilities but just a few at the grades we like to think we are capable of. We started in the morning with an excellent route called ‘Sea Groove’. This 38m route graded at VS 4b is in a stunning location on an impressive rock formation known as the White Tower. A scramble down past the relatively blank front face of the Tower, home to a number of silly hard routes, brings you down to sea level and the start of our chosen route. We split the route into two pitches, although one is feasible. Chris led the first and I the second. The climb follows a huge groove up the eastern edge of the Tower gradually steepening with height with the crux near the top - an excellent climb and great start to the day.

A spot of lunch high on the Tower with idyllic views all around, then it was on to our next climb.



Picture 2



Now for something perhaps a little more complicated but, with a grade in our guidebook of severe, we didn't anticipate any significant issues. The route was called "Threadneedle Street".

The only other couple we'd seen all day had set up an abseil rope where we wanted to go and kindly said we could use it but pointed out that they were off shortly and would be removing it. "No problem," I said, confident we would not need to ascend it. So down we went to the large rocky area exposed by the low tide. The route, described in the guide book as 'A brilliant and highly entertaining route that gets you into some spectacular situations' breaks down into three pitches.

stance. Chris had no difficulty with the climbing but the exposure and lack of visibility as to what was coming next resulted in a string of expletives! Relieved to have made it out of the cave before dark I led the final straightforward pitch.

A fantastic route. Highly recommended but for that first pitch think VS not S! Fortunately the St. Govan's Inn at Bosherton opens late allowing us plenty of time to eat, drink and recount our epic!

I'd recommended sea cliffs to all climbers throughout the grades but bear in mind you'll probably need a bit more kit, the ability to safely set up an abseil and a set of tide tables!



Picture 3

We geared up at the back of a large cave for the start of the first pitch. Chris led off up a narrow slope towards a chimney near the top of the back of the cave. Whilst initially OK he ground to a halt about half way up cursing whoever had graded it at severe. I lowered Chris off to see if I could continue the pitch. Eventually I did but not without significant difficulty and cursing of my own.

Perched high at the back of the cave, I belayed Chris up the first pitch then paid out the rope for him to lead the second pitch, an amazing traverse described in the guide as a 'massive juggy hand-rail'. This pitch culminates in a very exposed high exit out of the cave and around into a niche on the rock face for the next



Picture 4

I've enjoyed climbing with many different club members on the cliffs in the last two years but I'd particularly like to thank Dave Hall for coaxing me down to Pembroke in the first place and Chris with his youthful, (a relative term), enthusiasm for helping create and share some of the madder moments by the sea.

**Dave Williams**



Picture 5

Picture 1: Dave atop the White Tower above Sea Grooves-VS 4b  
Picture 2: Another trip with Tony Richardson on Chocolate Brownies-S  
Picture 3: Chris abseiling down to Threadneedle Street.  
Picture 4: Chris 'resting' on Bludgeon HVS 5A, Stennis Head.  
Picture 5: Dave climbing up through Sea Tube.



# Fairy Cave Quarry



Fairy Cave, such a delightful name. Ok, I need to add Quarry to the end of it which takes some of the romanticism away but, tucked away as it is in the Somerset countryside, down a narrow tree lined lane, amid rolling hills, stone cottages and pubs that sell that most wonderful of beers, Wadworths 6X, it is quintessential England.

In one of the few parking places there is a car with Slovakian number plates. Fairy Cave Quarry, an international climbing venue within a rural idyll?

Once through the securely locked gates, (access code from the BMC), it opens out into a sandy amphitheatre edged by 40m limestone slabs and seems no longer part of Somerset. On a hot day when a blue sky bakes the scrubby bushes scattered across its floor, it reminds me of Spain. At other times it's reminiscent of a set from Dr Who, where the Tardis appears by a dried up pool, and cyber men scuff the dusty ground.

Adrian Daniels had introduced me to Fairy Cave Quarry about a year ago. This was now my third visit and I viewed the slabs with a feeling of familiarity and expectancy. The air was warm, it was Spring, it was going to be a good day.

Though sometimes it just doesn't go right.

Second route of the day, my turn to lead, but if climbing is reading the rock, then today I'm incomprehensibly dyslexic. My head is not in gear, my body out of sync with that inexplicable something that makes a climb come together. I could make excuses. On the first route of the day, Adrian pulled off a hold and took a little tumble - a slow motion unexpected backward fall near the top of the route followed by the thump of a fist sized lump of rock hitting the ground close by. No problem, the gear held fine, but maybe it sowed a seed.

And now I hesitate.

But there is no excuse. Climbing is not about excuses. It's about getting something done! It's an easy move. Reach out to a flat hand sized block, edge my feet along a diagonal crack and then a

quick pull and up. The block moves, not much but it moves and doubt spreads. What if it pulls away in my hand? I look down at the piece of gear in the crack by my foot. Solid. I edge a bit further along the crack but, as my foot twists, a lump of rock flicks out off the side of the crack. If a simple twist of my foot can prize off a piece of rock, the nut just a way back in the same crack will never hold a fall. I feel time passing. I study the rock's colour, grey flecked with orange and feel the smoothness of the slab. I tentatively move upwards then retreat. This I repeat several times. In my heart I know this is as far as I'm going. I curse inwardly. Just do it! It's easy. Gear is irrelevant. I won't fall off this. But what if?

"It's not going to work. I'm coming down."

Sometimes it just doesn't go right. I can accept that. If it did, if there was no battle with fear, if movement was always fluid, my body in tune with the vertical, then the challenge, the thrill of achievement would not exist and this climbing game would no longer be for me.

So I descend. Joke self-deprecatingly of my inadequacies, untie and hand the ropes to Adrian.

The day passes. We do a few more routes. Drink coffee. Chat with other climbers. Enjoy just being there.

Driving back through Stoke St Michael, a pickup truck pulls out of a pub and swings a wide U turn in the road. At the wheel, a florid faced farming type. A terrier sits on his lap, paws on the steering wheel, eyes on the road, clearly more alert than his owner. The pickup lurches off in the opposite direction to us. It's good to know the rural idyll is alive and well.

Lots more detail here:

<http://www.ukclimbing.com/log-book/crag.php?id=1290>

**John Parrott**





# I would walk 500 miles...

## Here I go again on my own through Northern Spain.

For hundreds of years Christians have been donning their walking shoes to make the 500 mile pilgrimage across the North of Spain to reach Santiago de Compostella where, reportedly, the remains of St James lie.

It is a great commitment to complete the whole route, taking an average of a month to travel by foot from the French border to the Spanish West Coast. Today the 'Camino de Santiago' remains a well-trodden path enjoyed, not only by pilgrims, 'Pelgrinos' as they are referred to, but by active holiday makers and those who regard it as a spiritual break to perhaps consider a turning point in their lives.

Whilst in the midst of a challenging time at work, a stranger in a coffee shop suggested that I embark on this walk which was unknown to me, remarking that he thought it would "be good for me".

Sparkling some curiosity, I watched the film he had recommended, 'The Way,' which was filmed on location in Spain. It put me off completely! When all I needed was a rest, the thought of walking miles everyday and sleeping in creaky bunk-beds alongside hordes of snoring and wind-breaking trekkers was not what I wanted.

Nonetheless, eager for a change of focus, I decided to start the journey, as most walkers do, in the quaint French town of St Jean Pied de Port.

Setting off alone as the sun was still rising, fully equipped with a rucksack and my well-worn mountaineering boots, I realised that this was to become my new routine for the next few weeks. Walking over the lush green Pyrenees, I stumbled upon the Spanish border, marked only by an isolated caravan and a man who stamps pilgrims' passports and sells a very welcome range of hot drinks and snacks.

The first day, sometimes remarked as the hardest, can seem a little lonely but, with so many people travelling solo, it does not take long to meet people from all over the world. Meeting a fantastic bunch of Italians along the way, I soon gave up the race to be the first to leave each morning in favour of regular coffee stops, lots of laughter and singing! Within a few days we had made it to Pamplona and in the next town we were lucky enough to stumble upon a smaller version of the running of the bulls, yet with all the excitement and typically Spanish atmosphere you might imagine!



Throughout this well marked route, there are many hostels called 'Albergues' run exclusively for pilgrims which enforce a curfew at around 10.30 - 11.00pm and generally expect you to leave by 8 - 9am at the latest the next morning. They are reasonably priced, as are pilgrims' menus; ideal after a long day on foot. The pretty villages and beautiful countryside are the perfect back drop all the

way to Burgos; a historic and charming city which is roughly a third of the way along.

The next few days take you through the Mazettas which is a fairly sparse and dry stretch with little shade. Staying at, what I call 'the veggie-yoga retreat' house, was one of the highlights of the second half of this adventure. Stretching through 'downward dog' under a tree and watching the sun go down while eating food grown in the garden was ideal.

There are so many wonderful memories of this experience. People say that the journey reflects life with its ups and its downs, its highs and its lows and all the different characters you meet along the path.

And of course to coin another phrase, it was not about the destination, it was about the journey. Arriving in Santiago, there was

no fanfare or champagne in the sun as we imagined. It was, as it often is there, pouring with rain and I was too exhausted to get my Compstella which is the certificate to prove that you have completed the Camino.

I didn't need a piece of paper. I had the blisters, scars, and fantastic memories to prove it as well as some life-long friends who I have since visited in Italy.

To complete the whole route, fly to Biarritz in France and return from Santiago in North-West Spain. Leon is a good half way point. Buen Camino!

**Paula D'Souza**

*Pictures 1 & 2: Walking the Camino you pass through many quiet villages lost in time*  
*Picture 3: The route is clearly signposted along the way and is easy to follow without a map.*

*Picture 4: Taking the time to reflect on the journey. Inside the Cathedral at Santiago.*  
*Picture 5: At the Cruz di Ferro, where pilgrims lay a stone, for some, symbolic of the worries and burdens they have been carrying.*





# Ice climbing in Norway

The big advantage of ice climbing in Norway is that you don't have to walk in far to get to the waterfalls. Rjukan, in the south, has over 150 waterfalls

I went on a trip with 4 others to Rjukan in February last year organised by an ice climbing instructor, John Allen. He hired a local guide who knew the ice conditions and we did some amazing routes.

I went back there this year in February and hope to do more ice climbing trips in the future. If you want to join me, get in touch via the HMC outdoor meets co-ordinator at [www.thehmc.co.uk](http://www.thehmc.co.uk).

To give you an idea of what it's like, especially if you've never climbed on ice before, here are a few tips I've picked up:

Using an ice axe is a very controlled movement. Take the axe behind your head, swing it over and hit the ice with a flick of the wrist to make sure you've got a solid contact. Always look where the axe is going. Beginners need to use a leash to save the axe from falling if they drop it.

It's important to strike the ice slightly to one side of your head, away from your face, to avoid being cut by chips of ice.

When you're climbing on sheer ice, just kick once and keep your heel slightly raised. Don't keep kicking as the ice splinters and you can't get a proper hold as you're making the hole bigger.



Ice crampons can be mono or dual points. I used mono point crampons on B3 boots although you can get away with two season B2s with a normal Alpine crampon. Beginners would usually start with dual points because there's more contact with the ice and you feel more secure.

If you are traversing a rock face, it is much easier to use mono points. You may need to bring a spare pair of crampons though as they can get pretty trashed when you're kicking into tiny features. However, you're not likely to be traversing rock if you're a complete beginner.





Using ice screws correctly is important and you also need to carry spares. The idea is to use an ice screw to create a hole at a 45 degree angle to the left and right so that they meet in the middle. This takes a lot of practice. A six millimetre cord is threaded through to create a belay. A long tube of ice comes out of the end of the screw and you've got to make sure that you knock out any remaining ice before you put it back on the rack otherwise it will be frozen before you need to use it again.

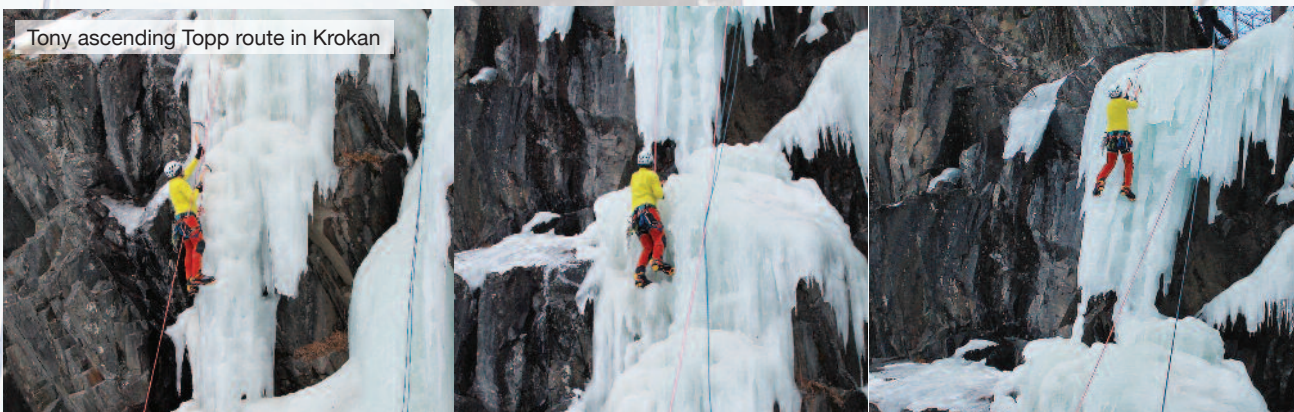
**Some of the best climbing in Rjukan is in the Upper Gorge.**

We did a three pitch route called Bakveien and the first pitch is completely sheer. This was the first time I've led a multi-pitch route and making my own belays and bringing up two other climbers with everyone relying on you was really satisfying. John, the instructor, climbed up alongside me, giving me encouragement and taking photos.



If you want to find out more about ice climbing over there, the only book about it is 'Ice Climbing in Rjukan Norway' by Jan Haukåsveen and Tom Atle Bordevik. In the meantime, you can try ice climbing nearer to home at The Vertical Chill London operated by Ellis Brigham's Covent Garden Store. Tel 0207 395 1010, [vertical-chilllondon@ellis-brigham.com](mailto:vertical-chilllondon@ellis-brigham.com), [www.vertical-chill.com](http://www.vertical-chill.com).

Tony ascending Topp route in Krokan



You've got to be reasonably fit to do it. I find it exciting and a completely different technique to rock climbing. There are so many different styles of climbing and so many different ice forms. I enjoy the challenge and getting pumped up about it. You're totally focussed on it so it is a complete break from everyday life.

**Tony Richardson was talking to Jacqui Deakin**



# Alpine Trekking



## Two great Alpine Classics - The Tour of Mont Blanc and walking the Haute Route

Visiting the Alps is always a wonderful experience, and if you have sampled some Alpinism - climbed some of the super granite and bagged some 4000 metre peaks, then you will know that although rewarding this can also be super stressful. Pre-dawn starts from high huts and the risks from altitude, avalanche, crevasses and the weather can become tiring.

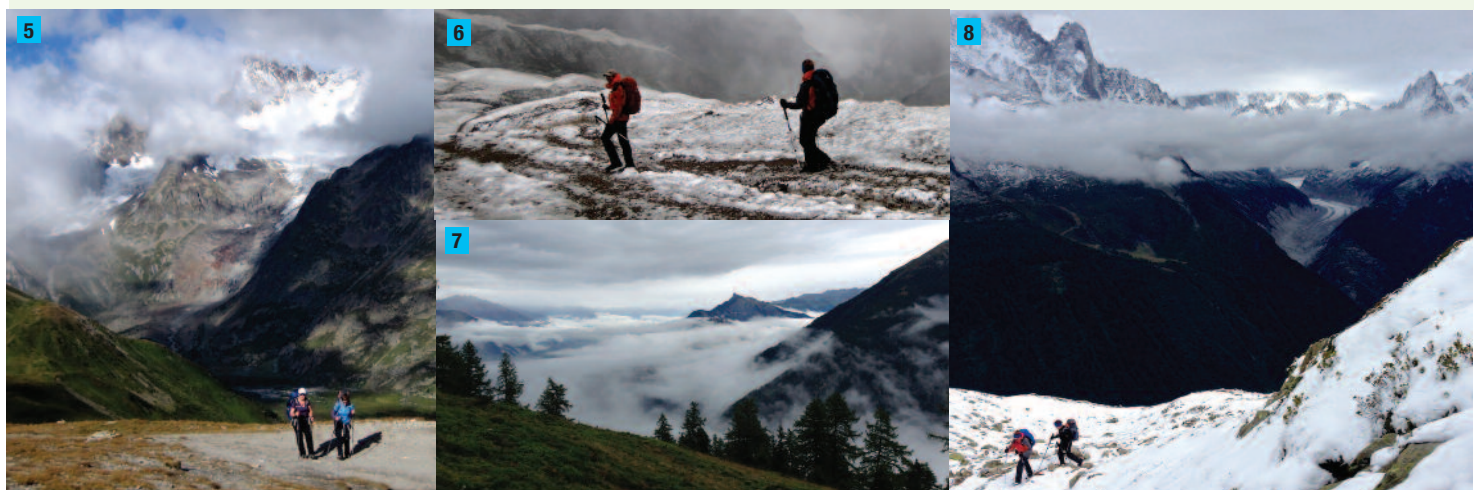
If you fancy something a bit different, then alpine trekking hut to hut can be a brilliant and less intense way to understand the geography, geology and flora of the region. Understanding how the mountains all fit together can be fascinating. Two of the most well known routes are the Tour of Mont Blanc and the Walkers Haute Route.

**The Tour of Mont Blanc** is typically a journey of ten to twelve days covering around 170km (105 miles) around the Mont Blanc massive. There are 10 or 12 passes depending on the actual route taken (there are some variations) The height gain or loss is around 10,000m or 32,000 feet. Starting in Les Houches near Chamonix the route meanders over majestic passes where unprecedented views of the high mountains are enjoyed. Each valley entered has character of its own moving through in an anticlockwise direction to Italy and then in to Switzerland before arriving back in France.



Top picture: Cabane de Mont Fort Refuge high above Verbier with great views of Mont Blanc and the Grand Combin.

1. Glad you have an ice axe? fancy using a Stave like in the earliest days of Alpine exploration? 2. Looking down the Vallon de la Blanche from below the Col de la Seigne. 3. Plenty of options from the Refuge des Mottets. 4. The Peuterey Ridge and the mighty Mont Blanc from Refuge de Bertone. 5. The view from the Alpe sup. de l'Arpe Vieille towards the Aiguille de Tre La Tete. 6. Early morning descent from the Col de la Croix Bonhomme. 7. Towards Martigny from the Bovine Path. 8. Ascending towards the Chalet de Lac Blanc, with the Dru and the Mer de Glace in the distance.



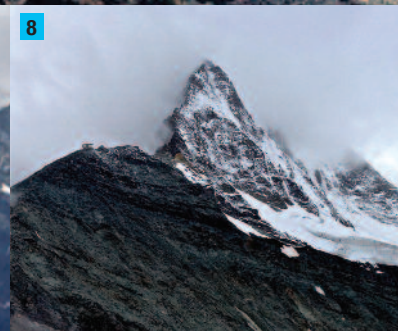
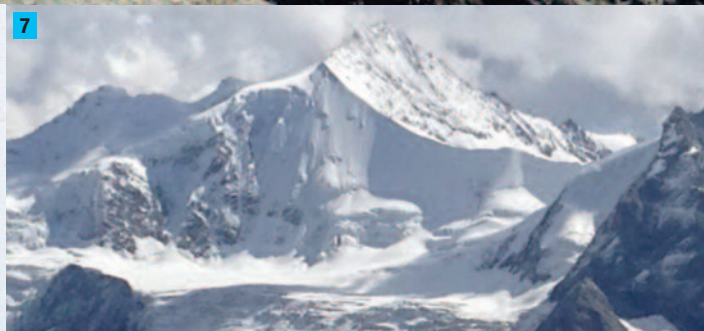
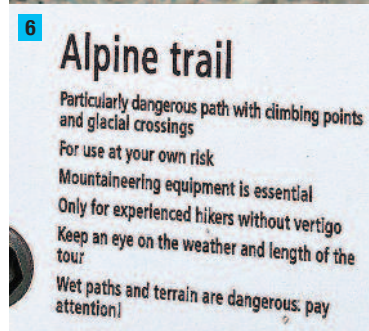
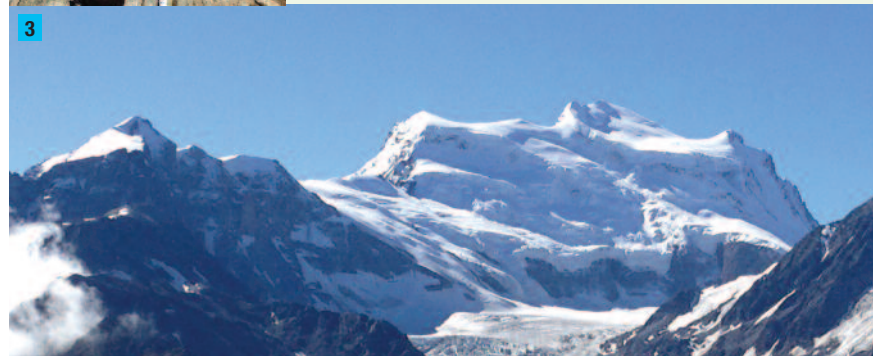


The Walkers Haute Route is an altogether harder proposition crossing the Alps from Chamonix to Zermatt - Mont Blanc to the Matterhorn. 14 days of trekking culminates in a trip of over 180km and crosses 11 passes with a height gain of more than 12,000m and a loss of more than 10,000m. However for all that hard work one has some of the most beautiful views of the best collection of 4000m Peaks in all the Alps.



These include the Mont Blanc massive, the huge Grand Combin, Mont Blanc de Cheilion, Dent Blanche, Pigne de Arolla, Weisshorn, Dom, Taschorn, Breithorn and finally the Matterhorn.

1. The Fenetre d'Arpette.
2. The Trient Glacier.
3. The Grand Combin.
4. Looking up Lac des Dix towards Mont Blanc de Cheilion.
5. The Dix Refuge with the Dent Blanche and the top of the Matterhorn visible in the distance (still a week away!).
6. Warning sign below the le Grand Desert.
7. The magnificent Grand Cornier from the Corne de Sorebois.
8. Made it! A moody looking and very wintry Matterhorn.



**Europaweg high path** There is the opportunity to take the final two days along the Europaweg, a tortuous high level path high above the Mattertal valley. Suspension bridges, tunnels, incomplete fixed ropes, landslides and stonefall risk add to the fun as you enjoy wonderful views down to Tasch and across the valley to the Weisshorn, before the Matterhorn comes in to view at the end of the valley above Zermatt.



Paul Hearn



# How to make a karabiner

**I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to take a tour of the DMM factory with the NW regional group of the Mountain Training Association.**

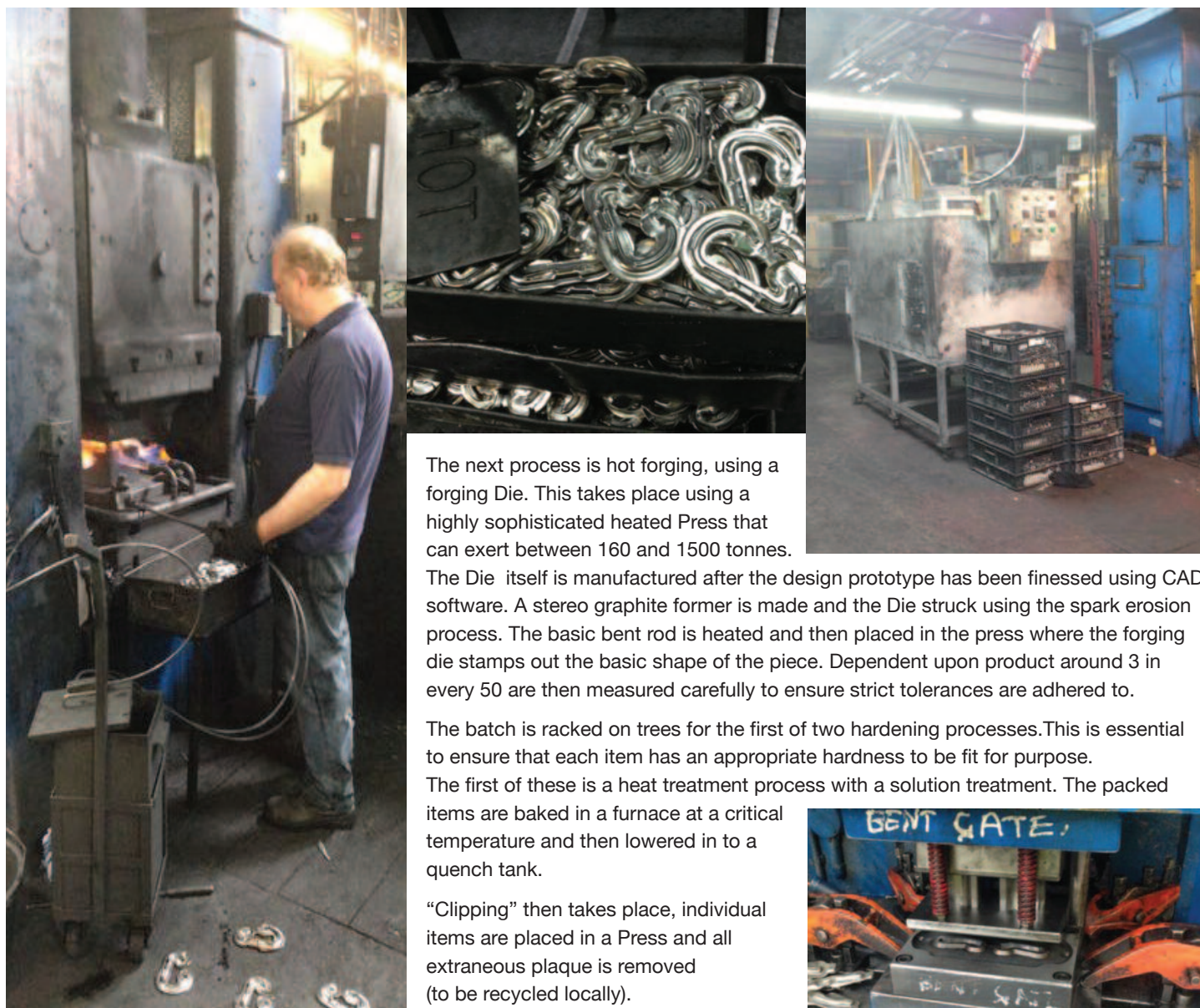
*(For further details of the MTA see the inset panel on page 16).*

DMM was established in Llanberis in 1981 by the four founders, and now is the only equipment manufacturer of its type in the UK. It has over 150 employees. All design of its innovative products is carried out in-house and prototypes are rigorously tested and refined before being released to the market. A massive investment in plant, software and in-house staff training has been made to become one of the best and most innovative manufacturers of mountaineering equipment in the world. As well as their own line of products, DMM also produce products for several well known premium international brands of equipment.

Let's take a pictorial trip through the factory and see the many processes that a typical krab goes through from aluminium bar to finished item.



7075 aluminium rod and extrusions are sourced from the EU, chosen for strength and ductility. Once cut to size the rods destined to become karabiners are cleaned and dried and then bent to shape using a tool unique to each model. A 3 metre bar can make up to 30 karabiners. Batch card tracing and testing is used throughout the factory facilitating complete control of each batch and process.



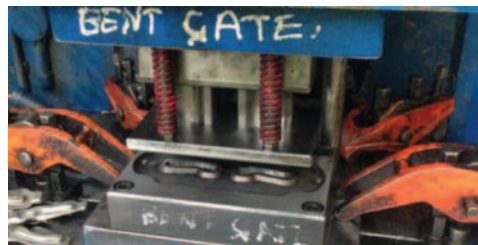
The next process is hot forging, using a forging Die. This takes place using a highly sophisticated heated Press that can exert between 160 and 1500 tonnes.

The Die itself is manufactured after the design prototype has been finessed using CAD software. A stereo graphite former is made and the Die struck using the spark erosion process. The basic bent rod is heated and then placed in the press where the forging die stamps out the basic shape of the piece. Dependent upon product around 3 in every 50 are then measured carefully to ensure strict tolerances are adhered to.

The batch is racked on trees for the first of two hardening processes. This is essential to ensure that each item has an appropriate hardness to be fit for purpose.

The first of these is a heat treatment process with a solution treatment. The packed items are baked in a furnace at a critical temperature and then lowered in to a quench tank.

"Clipping" then takes place, individual items are placed in a Press and all extraneous plaque is removed (to be recycled locally).







A second hardening process then takes place in an artificial aging oven, baking items for up to 9 hours. The components are rigorously tested to ensure each batch has the correct hardness - this is recorded on the batch card. Items then are "Rumbled" a technique whereby ceramic chips and sand in a vibrating bin polish and smooth the aluminium to a fine finish. This can take up to 20 hours. Drilling then takes place to accommodate the hinge gate. The items are then anodised, this is the only process undertaken outside of the factory by a specialist firm in Manchester.



Inspection for any flaws are made upon return and the product is ready for final assembly. Gates are pinned and rivetted. Assembly is by hand (no machine has been developed that can perform the task as well) ensuring every item is perfect and working correctly. A final inspection (up to 36,000 items per week!) is made on every individual item before having a unique traceable batch code laser marked on to its surface. The batch card that followed the product through the process can now be signed off subject to stringent testing to destruction. A number of items from each batch are tested (for instance using a computer controlled strain gauge) to ensure that all items exceed their rated strength. (DMM use the 3 Sigma testing process to ensure all products achieve their rated strength.

Items that cannot be forged are manufactured using sophisticated 3D software driven CNC machines. Many products require both forging and machining in their production. Extremely high tolerances are maintained. Items such as belay plates. Ice axe headpieces and pulley sections require sophisticated machining to achieve form and function.

We had the opportunity to take in some of our own gear to test, and I had one of my old Simond krabs from the mid 70's tested to destruction - rated at 25 Kn it actually broke at the eye at 30 Kn - the aluminium actually increasing its hardness over time!



I would like to thank Paul Poole ([www.paulpoolemountaineering.co.uk](http://www.paulpoolemountaineering.co.uk)) for arranging the tour and all the staff at DMM. They welcomed us and made us feel "at home". No question was too stupid, and given we were interrupting a busy hot factory on a Friday morning, they proved to be consummate professionals. Every one of them passionate and proud of the products they were making. Go to their site to find out more about DMM and their Climbing gear at <http://dmmclimbing.com/>

Paul Hearn



# Environmentally friendly outdoor gear

Two years ago I bought a lovely waterproof, lightweight, breathable, multi-functional, you name it, funky blue Mountain Hardware jacket. Recently, I wore this on a walk with my family through Dovedale in the Peak District on a completely dry, though slightly blustery, day. For large parts of the walk I carried my four year old son, Max, on my shoulders who had fun bouncing up and down and we all had a great day. A few days later though, my heart stopped for a few seconds when I saw the inner lining of the jacket ripped apart between the hood and the shoulders. After regaining thinking capability, I had to admit to myself that the damage had probably been caused by the rubbing of Max's bouncing on that walk in the Peaks which somehow reminded me of an article I had read in the German Alpine Club magazine, Alpenverein (Panorama) in 2013 about the ecological impact of our beloved outdoor jackets.

It should come as no surprise that a lot of chemistry is needed to make jackets waterproof, breathable, stretchy and so on. Yet one is hardly aware that some of the fluorides used to achieve all this can be highly toxic, hardly degradable and therefore accumulate in the environment as well as in animal and human bodies. The most critical ingredient is Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) which most waterproof gear and sprays used to be based on and which experiments have shown impedes animals' reproduction and encourages growth of tumours. (Data is from the German Office for Environmental Protection and tests carried out by Greenpeace). There is no evidence yet that the same is happening to humans but it cannot be good that such a substance can be found in drinking water and even umbilical cords of newborn babies.

No one, of course, argues for a ban on outdoor jackets and it is recognised that the industry has been changing. Gore-Tex moved away from producing with PFOA to make outdoor garments in 2013 and an even more toxic substance, Perfluorooctanesulfate (PFOS), is nowadays rarely used. Meanwhile new technologies like Sympatex or Dermizax have been developed and use recyclable or degradable materials. Yet, many current jackets and sprays still contain PFOA; the more waterproof the higher the concentration which can be 2-5 times more than the recommended limits.

The point is really to think about the use of those jackets to reduce the ecological impact of their production and further waterproofing carried out at home. They are made for bad weather in the mountains and on the bike and that is where they should be used. Every other use just gets them unnecessarily dirty or reduces their waterproofing; requiring washing, waterproofing with a spray and eventually a new jacket long before one should have been needed. So, a thoughtful use of outdoor jackets will help your purse too.

André Knirsch



## The Mountain Training Association

The aim of Mountain Training is to educate and train people in walking, climbing and mountaineering. It has developed a range of nationally recognised mountain leadership, instruction and coaching awards as well as skills courses. Once you have registered for an award, you can join the Association as a trainee and start taking advantage of these great membership benefits:



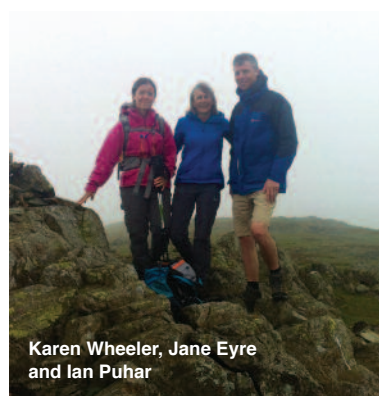
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| ■ Workshops and regional events  | ■ On-line resources                                       |
| ■ Quarterly magazine – The Professional Mountaineer                      | ■ Access to MTA forum and Facebook Group                  |
| ■ Discounts with outdoor manufacturers and suppliers                     | ■ Monthly Paramo garment prize draw                       |
| ■ Access to a Regional Group for informal training and networking events | ■ Monthly e-newsletter with industry updates & news items |

Once you have passed an assessment and become an award holder, you become a Full Member and you can make the most of the following additional benefits:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| ■ Continuing Professional Development (CPD) training opportunities | ■ Listing and profile within the 'Find a Leader' facility |
| ■ Facility to record your CPD on-line                              | ■ Use of MTA logo to promote you and your business        |
| ■ Specially negotiated rates for civil liability insurance         | ■ Use of a membership badge.                              |

For more information visit [www.mountain-training.org](http://www.mountain-training.org)

## Club Shorts



Karen Wheeler, Jane Eyre  
and Ian Puhar

**Congratulations** to Jane Eyre who completed her final Wainwright, Grey Friar, at the Lakes meet in August 2015. There are 214 in total. Jane's favourite Alfred Wainwright quote is 'Tramping the fells cleans the mind and does the soul good too.'

**Congratulations** also to Janette Nicholson who won the Ordnance Survey Snap on the Map photographic competition 2015 for the area of her roots in Scotland with a picture of a cairn at the top of Tinto Hill in Lanarkshire. There were over 13,000 entries for all of Great Britain. Janette received a free copy of the map with her photo credited as well as a free year's subscription to OS online mapping service, OS getamap.





# SIDE EFFECTS of one route too many

**Deborah:** It was a perfect weekend in September 2013. Barry, Olivia, Dave and I were in the Wye Valley climbing at the limestone crag, Shorncliffe. The weather was warm, dry and we were having a great time. We were camping near Chepstow and it was a big walk-in to the climb, about an hour from the campsite, and then up a steep slope through woods. By 5pm I had led 2VSs, an HVS and an E1 which, for me, was pretty incredible.

The sun was going down and I felt on top form. I just looked at the cliff and thought "I can do that, another E1." Dave and I checked out the first couple of moves together and he said, "It's up to you".

As soon as I put my hands on the route, Side Effects E1 5b, I thought, "God, I'm tired." Dave had already gone up and put in the first piece of gear. The first two moves were ok and the gear was good, solid and reliable.

Then the route changed, the holds were smaller and I was on the corner of an arête. The next piece of gear was a tiny nut, which I wedged in sideways. I kept going, thinking it will get better. The next bit of gear was a tiny cam which I placed blind. I reached up around the corner to where I thought the next hold must be, and there was nothing there.

If I had been less tired and calmer, I might have found something but I couldn't see what to do. I knew I was in trouble. I tried to reverse the move and that's when I fell. I remember thinking the rope will go tight, the rope will go tight.....

**Olivia:** The two pieces of gear had come out. Deborah fell about 10 metres, hit her head on a rock and flipped over onto the ground. Dave was belaying but there was nothing he could have done to prevent it. Barry was top roping me round the corner and he lowered me down and I ran over.

**Deborah:** I didn't know where I was for about 15 minutes. I wasn't in any pain at all.

**Olivia:** She just kept saying she wasn't very comfortable!

**Deborah:** Then I'd remember, "Oh yeah, I was up there."

**Olivia:** She kept trying to get up but I just wouldn't let her move.

**Deborah:** But I really was quite uncomfortable.

**Olivia:** We went round the same conversation several times. I guess she was concussed but Dave said she hadn't lost consciousness for more than a moment.

**Deborah:** There was no way Olivia was going to let me get up.

**Olivia:** In the meantime, we'd phoned 999 for an ambulance. However, I think it would have been better if we'd called 112 for mountain rescue as we spent quite a lot of time trying to explain our exact location. The operator decided that, as we were a mile along a footpath, it would be impossible to get an ambulance there. A helicopter was scrambled and it was really weird as we could hear it over the phone but we couldn't see it. They couldn't see us and lower anyone down so, in the end, we were transferred to mountain rescue and the fire brigade. The all terrain paramedics pitched up in a transit van and the fire crew in a Vauxhall Estate.

**Deborah:** My helmet had saved me but it had cut into my forehead above the bridge of my nose. There was blood everywhere.

**Olivia:** Just as well I have the best first aid kit ever. I used some steri strips to pull the sides of the cut together.

**Deborah:** By the time the doctors looked at that, because nobody was really interested in the cut in A&E as it was my neck they were worried about, they decided they couldn't do any better and the dressing stayed there. She'd also used a tampon to soak up some of the blood, so I went to hospital with a tampon on my head!

**Olivia:** We had also wrapped her up in a gold foil blanket which the paramedics ended up keeping as they liked it better than the standard issue silver ones.

Getting her out was quite a feat as we were up such a steep slope. Deborah was strapped onto a rigid stretcher and passed down hand to hand by a human chain. The fire crew had set up a guide rope between the trees so everyone had something to hang on to. Once we all got down, Deborah was laid across the back seat of the Vauxhall.

**Deborah:** With my head hanging out at one end and my feet at the other. They couldn't shut the doors so a paramedic was crouched in the foot well holding onto my head.

**Olivia:** The driver had to reverse a mile down the footpath to the road which was pretty impressive.

**Deborah:** I was taken to Bristol Frenchay Hospital and had an X-ray and a number of scans. I had a fracture of my numbers 6 and 7 vertebrae. They said they'd prefer not to operate. I fully agreed once I realised an operation would have meant going through my throat. Instead, I wore a neck brace for 10 weeks, knowing that if that didn't work, an operation would be the only option. I was lucky. I've regained most of the movement in my neck and I'm back climbing. I just can't rotate my neck fully to the right.

**Olivia:** Deborah's helmet saved her from anything worse than a severe whip lash injury and now we all, always, wear our helmets. Before, we had always been a bit, well, let's see how it goes.

**Deborah:** I think I'm a bit less bold now. Now I know what falling is like, I'm less willing to risk getting into that kind of situation.

**Olivia:** But I can see your confidence coming back.

**Deborah:** I started back on easy stuff at first and it took a year to get back to climbing HVS. I haven't done another E1 yet. Of course I wish I'd said no and turned away from that last route on that day, because I'd done enough. But, part of the pleasure of climbing is pushing yourself. You do feel afraid but you calm yourself down, think about where to place your hands and feet, and when you finish the route, there's a real high.

**Olivia:** I don't think the accident's changed me. I love climbing but I've never pushed myself like Deborah. You can climb at all sorts of levels but what I think we all get out of it is a real bond of trust and friendship.

**Deborah Cole and Olivia Brook were talking to Jacqui Deakin.**





# My first year

**My introduction to the HMC started with a chance conversation in my local gym with club member, Jen Ben Tsion.**

**She did a good sell because I joined shortly afterwards and within a couple of weeks, I had completed my induction at the Hatfield Climbing Wall. Since my induction I have climbed at Hatfield twice; I must be more into the outdoor than the indoor climbing activity. The club weekend trips away have, therefore, been the highlights for me this year having been to Snowdonia and the Peak District twice and once to the Lake District.**

The weekend events have been fantastic. I love walking and scrambling in the hills and mountains. It just makes you feel more alive. I'm only a novice, but every time I climb, I feel that I make progress in some small way, helped by the advice and encouragement of other club members. One memorable highlight was the scrambling up the north ridge of Tryfan on a beautiful, late summer day with Rebecca and Paula, sitting on top with Karen watching those brave enough to make the famous leap between Adam and Eve, which local folklore says will earn you the freedom of the mountain. Sadly I lacked the intestinal fortitude to do likewise.

Another highlight was the rock climb on a remote crag in Snowdonia led by Dave Hall. Dave said that it involved a half hour walk in. After an hour we were still wading through chest high bracken on no discernible path. It was all worth it though, as we got in a great climb with not another soul in sight. This was my first experience of 'seconding', pairing up with Tony and benefiting from his expertise. Climbing on the crags of Stanage Edge was right up there too.

One of the best aspects of mountaineering is the social scene and the camaraderie, sitting in a country pub enjoying great company and conversation and downing lovely real ale (and the odd Jager-bomb).

I have found that mountaineering is a pursuit that can be expensive. I got started by buying the basic climbing kit for about £200 including climbing shoes, harness, safety helmet, belay device and a karabiner. I have not yet bought a rope so I am grateful to be able to use essential equipment like this belonging to other generous people in the club. I have also had to buy some basic camping gear including a small tent for £29. It is tiny. So tiny in fact that someone thought it should have "Wendy House" written on the side. Nevertheless, it has done the job required and didn't leak in the rain when other tents did.

In terms of the future, there is so much I want to do, like walking and climbing the Cuillin Ridge or ski touring in the Alps. The great thing is that you can do it all with the HMC. In the meantime, I intend to improve my climbing on the indoor walls and keep learning about techniques and how to use my equipment safely. It's been a great journey so far in this club and I can't wait for the next episode.



Adrian Bently





# Some great bits of Kit (that you won't find in the usual High Street Outdoor shops)

How many Outdoor shops you have been in to and found the same brands cropping up time after time? Just because they feature regularly does not necessarily mean there are not better or cheaper products that will do a similar job. Here are four great bits of Kit that you won't find in the High Street:

## Downmat by Exped £125.00 - £165.00

Thermarest seem to have cornered the market here, but the Exped range of inflatable mats offer a serious challenge. However good your sleeping bag (even with the best quality duck down, max fill, and box wall construction) when the down is compressed under your weight insulation is lost and the cold ground starts sucking body heat away from you.

Exped offer a range of sizes and weight of mat filled with good quality down in the baffles providing unparalleled comfort and insulation. The model reviewed here is the DownMat UL 7 This is the ultra light version of the DownMat with

identically high insulating properties but unmatched packed size and weight. Quick inflation with the innovative Schnozzel Pumpbag (awful name but effective pump) This allows the mat to be inflated easily and without introducing condensation in to the baffles thus ruining the down over time. The small size mat weighs in at only 500g with 170g 700 fill power goose down. It is rated down to -25 degrees celsius and packs in to a stuff sac 26 cm by 12 cm dia.

I can't recommend it enough for the warmth and comfort it offers.

More info: <http://www.exped.com/international/en/product-category/mats/downmat-ul-7-m-granite-grey>



## Brukit by Alpkit- £35.00

Outdoor liquid heating systems - 'integral stoves' whatever you want to call them usually consist of a teflon coated aluminium pan with an insulating neoprene sleeve and lid, a heat exchanger and a burner. Screw a gas canister on it and off you go!

Boiling 0.8 litres of liquid in around three and a half minutes. Rivals such as Jetboil and MSR systems start at around £90-£100. The Brewkit is £35.00 including shipping – what's not to like?

See a comparison review at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBJjTy-\\_eY](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qBJjTy-_eY)

For more info: <https://www.alpkit.com/products/brukit>



## Led Lenser® SEO 7R approx £50.00

This is a serious headtorch. Although only small and lightweight (93g) the power is astonishing – 220 lumen brightness with a range of 130 meters – this is ideal for night nav having an average burn cycle of between 5 and 20 hours between charging dependent on use. The built in Lithium-ion battery is rechargeable from a micro usb plug.

The variable focus beam can be adjusted for range and intensity. It also has an automatic dipping function, such that changing from looking ahead to looking down to read a map a sensor recognises the reflected light and automatically dims the intensity to prevent dazzling. Brilliant!

More info [www.ledlenser.com](http://www.ledlenser.com) (approx £50)

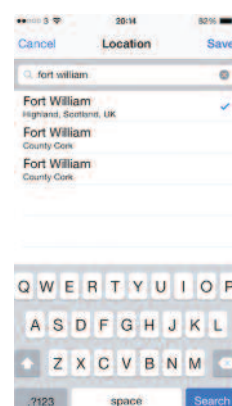
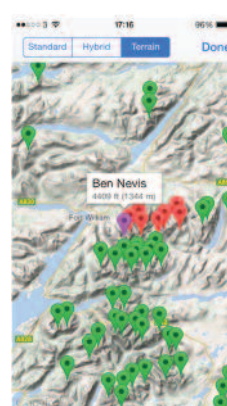
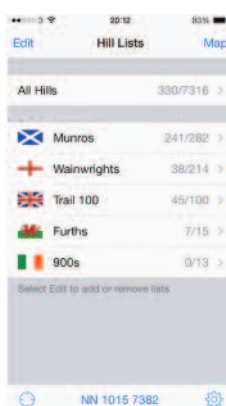


## Hill Lists by Graham Haley £1.49

This is a super useful iphone/ipad app which is basically a collection of all the available databases of UK and Ireland hill statistics (in all around 4,668 hills). These include

Munros, Corbetts, Welsh and English Furths, as well as more exotically named ranges such as Grahams, Birketts, Marilys and Binnions! Each peak has height, position, grid ref, etc. It's all there including a Google driven map showing location and the ability to log the peaks you have bagged.

In addition a really quick useful feature is a link to the relevant MWIS forecast. Route descriptions and plans are made easy for unfamiliar areas with links to external sites such as [walkhighlands.co.uk](http://walkhighlands.co.uk) & [hill-bagging.co.uk](http://hill-bagging.co.uk)







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