

**Meeting Minutes**  
**BMC NE Area, Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> September 2014 7:30 pm**  
*Durham Climbing Centre, St. John's Road, Durham DH7 8TZ*

John Punshon opened the meeting and welcomed all present. Particular thanks were expressed to the Durham Climbing Centre for hosting the meeting and providing excellent refreshments.

**In attendance:**

John Punshon (Chair)  
Mark Anstiss (Temporary Secretary) (Wanneys CC)  
John Herron (Secretary)  
Mark Goodings (NE Walls Officer)  
Paul Mitcheson (NE Hillwalking Officer) (MTLA)  
John Vaughn (NE Access Officer, North) (NMC)  
Niall Grimes (BMC Guidebook coordinator)  
James Higgins (Wanneys CC)  
Richard Alderton  
Liam Dervey  
Phillip Powell (FRCC)  
Bob McAdam (NMC, CC, FRCC)  
Bob Tridgett  
Gordon Hull  
Mike Murdon (Durham Mountain Sports)

**Apologies for Absence:**

Alan Hinkes (NE National Council Representative)  
John Dalrymple (NMC)  
Ian Walton (NE Youth Officer)

**Actions: JP, JV**

**1. Declaration of AOB**

John Herron who temporarily stood down as NE Area Secretary in November 2013 indicated that he is able to return to the post from the next meeting. There were no objections from anyone present.

## **2. Debrief from 2014 NE Climbing and Walking Festival – Wooler, Northumberland**

Jon Punshon gave a brief overview of the festival that was held on 12-13<sup>th</sup> July earlier this year.

The purpose of the festival was to encourage existing BMC members (and members of the general public, interested in climbing and hill walking) from the North East and beyond to get involved in a weekend of social events and outdoor activities both for their own sake and to promote increased interaction within the community of hill walkers and climbers in the North East. There was a particular focus on encouraging youth (<23) participation.

Accommodation at Highburn house campsite was free for BMC members.

£90 was raised for the festival's nominated charity, Northumberland Mountain Rescue.

Things got going at the Angel Inn in Wooler on Friday evening with a pub quiz and a talk given by the NE Mountain Rescue Service.

There were no formally organised activities for Saturday and Sunday daytimes, although local climbers were on hand to offer advice on suitable venues for climbing and hill walking. The weather just held out and plenty of climbing was enjoyed on the local crags. Paul Mitcheson led a well-attended walking excursion in the nearby Cheviots.

On Saturday evening the focus was again at The Angel with a free buffet and an excellent and well-received slideshow given by Dave Turnbull entitled "From Bowden to Patagonia".

JP expressed mild disappointment that the attendance at the festival was only between 50 and 60 people which he felt was small given the number of active climbers and hill walkers in the North East. However Niall Grimes indicated that these numbers compared favourably to similar BMC events held in other areas. It was also pointed out that the festival clearly had a national appeal as one party made the long journey from Wales to attend.

There was much discussion at the meeting about whether to hold the festival again in 2015. The consensus from the meeting was yes we should. After further discussion a consensus was reached that given the obvious suitability of the location of this year's festival and the success of the Angel Inn as a venue for the evening activities, next year's festival would return to Wooler / the Angel Inn.

A few ideas were mooted about what might be done differently including possibly making Friday evening slightly lower key with a greater emphasis on the Saturday evening.

Some of those present at the meeting felt that the festival had not been particularly well advertised and it was decided that a concerted effort should be made to ensure sufficient detail is confirmed so that the festival can be advertised confidently in the March 2015 edition of Summit magazine.

A provisional date for next year's festival is 11-12<sup>th</sup> July.

**Action:** John Punshon to establish a steering group for next year's festival.

### 3. Wooler Outdoor Week

Paul Mitcheson added to the discussions above some detail about the inaugural Wooler Outdoor Week (WOW) that took place 22-25<sup>th</sup> May this year. The purpose of WOW was to encourage both locals as well as tourists, to come and try the wide range of outdoor activities that are available in the area. Although WOW was deemed to be a success it is noteworthy that the original intention of an event held over 8 days had to be trimmed to 4 days due to lack of funding. PM reported that the organisers of next year's WOW were very receptive to the idea of combining their event with next year's festival. This proposal met with widespread approval from those present.

### 4. BMC Lecture Series 2014

Sherpa Adventure Gear is running a series of lectures this autumn with two of their athletes - Kenton Cool and Neil Gresham. These lectures will be hosted by BMC affiliated clubs and will take place between 29 October and 8 November 2014, with some of the dates including masterclasses too.

These events were advertised by the BMC and the communications from the BMC appeared to suggest they were open to all. However there has been some confusion as to what the costs of the North East lecture and masterclass are.

The NMC are hosting the lecture and attendance is open to all, however entry is free to NMC members whereas the masterclass is only open to NMC members. This arrangement has led to BMC members enquiring as to why the NMC membership are entitled to free entry and exclusive access to the masterclass, since these events had been advertised as "BMC events".

**Action:** John Vaughn offered to find out exactly what the nature of the arrangement between the NMC, Sherpa Adventure Gear and BMC is.

### 5. National Council Updates

No National Council Representatives from the north east attended that last national meeting. Mark Anstiss briefly ran through a summary of the BMC's activities over the last three months (appended to these minutes).

Niall Grimes reported that a significant proportion of the BMCs effort and resources will be focussed on hill walkers over the next 18 months.

### 6. Regional updates

#### a. Access

##### *North*

Simonside Hills – In past years climbers have occasionally been challenged when approaching and climbing on Simonside crag, signs are occasionally posted on the footpaths although not necessarily on the forestry tracks leading up the hill. John Vaughn has investigated the situation on Simonside and John's findings were detailed in the minutes of the last meeting.

JV reported that prior to next spring he will be in communication with the Land Manager at Simonside to see if in future the dates of proposed closures can be communicated sufficiently in advance to allow the BMC Regional Access Database (RAD) to be updated accordingly.

JV also reported that he will be investigating the renewal of BMC signage at the access points Bowden and Kyloe crags.

*South* – Jim Adler was not present

Since taking over from Peter Hay in February JA has not attended an area meeting and has not been in contact with JP. JP indicated that he will contact JA to ascertain whether he intends to continue in his position.

**b. Youth**

Ian Walton was not present.

**c. Walls**

Mark Goodings reported that a lot of winter programmes are about to start at walls across the North East such as the winter bouldering leagues. However there will be no BMC leading ladder this year.

**d. Hillwalking** – Paul Mitcheson reported that a gate on a public right of way near Tosson Row had been found padlocked – he is investigating.

In spring 2015 (dates TBC) the MLTA in association with the National Farmers Union will be organising a course on safety around cattle – further details to come.

**7. Crag Lough Clean up No.3**

The restoration of Crag Lough will continue on Saturday 13<sup>th</sup> September. The event is being led by Mark Anstiss; unfortunately a BMC representative will not be able to attend. The format will be the same as previous years; meet on Saturday morning at 9:30 at Steel Rigg car park and clean routes all day followed by a free barbeque courtesy of the BMC at Winshields camp site. Debrief and drinks in the Twice Brewed Inn will surely follow. All attendees are encouraged to stay on Sunday 14<sup>th</sup> to enjoy the very fine climbing at the crag. There will be plenty of gardening tools and gloves available for volunteers to use on the Saturday.

More details can be found on the BMC communities site.

**8. Forthcoming events**

Mark Goodings reported that the Britrock Film Tour will be coming to the Tyneside cinema on 16<sup>th</sup> October featuring various short films that come “right from the heart of the UK adventure, with liberal splashes of the inimitable British spirit”.

**9. AOB**

None other than that described in **1** above.

Next meeting will be at Newcastle Climbing Centre, St Marks Church, Byker, Newcastle upon Tyne

Date and time TBC

**Action:** Jon Punshon to confirm date and time for next meeting.

## **A summary of some of the key BMC activities for the period June - August 2014**

### **Access & Conservation**

- Published a further reminder on the BMC website about access arrangements for climbing in Cheddar Gorge, including the need for third party liability insurance cover, following a number of incidents in which climbers have recently been caught climbing in areas outside of the access agreement, or climbing without insurance.
- Held a Westminster reception for leading outdoor organisations to encourage parliamentarians to factor the benefits of outdoor recreation into their manifestos and policies ahead of the next general election.
- Publicised the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust's public appeal for funds to restore the footpaths on the Roaches over the next 3 years.
- The BMC Access & Conservation Trust (ACT) contributed £7,000 to help repair a path on the popular route to Dale Head in the Lake District.
- BMC Cheddar Gorge Climbing Warden and activist Martin Crocker accompanied Their Royal Highnesses the Earl and Countess of Wessex on a tour of Cheddar Gorge.
- Produced press release in response to Snowdonia National Park Authority's plans to remove 'false paths' from Snowdon and its warning to families with children to stay away from summits.
- Promoted the BMC access conference on challenge events in the uplands, to be held in Cumbria in October.

### **Clubs & Huts**

- Published the results of the 2014 BMC Club Survey.
- Co-ordinated a series of lectures and masterclasses by Sherpa athletes Neil Gresham and Kenton Cool, to be hosted this autumn by eight BMC affiliated clubs for club and non-club members.

### **Competition Climbing**

- Held the third and final round of the BMC Paraclimbing Series at Manchester Climbing Centre.
- GB Junior Lead Team Captain Molly Thompson-Smith won her first gold medal at the European Youth Cup in Imst, Austria.
- Held the British Bouldering Championships at The Climbing Works in Sheffield.
- Held the BMC Youth Climbing Series Final at the EICA Ratho.
- Held the BMC Open Youth Event at White Spider Climbing (lead climbing) and The Arch Climbing Wall (bouldering) in London.
- Shauna Coxsey finished second overall in the 2014 IFSC Boulder World Cup.

### **Safety & Skills**

- Supplied lower-off simulators to a number of climbing walls around the country to enable indoor climbers to practice lowering off an outdoor sport route; more walls will be supplied with simulators in the coming months.
- Published a range of walking and climbing skills articles on the BMC website including: overcoming a fear of heights; tips for climbing your first trad routes and moving on to multi-pitch adventures; how to speed up on alpine climbs; and how to go deep water soloing.

### **Technical**

- Published a warning on the BMC website about the dangers of worn perma-draws.
- Hosted the UIAA Safety Commission meeting in Bristol, the first time the commission has met in the UK since 1996.
- Published advice on the BMC website about choosing a camping stove.
- Published a free-to-download booklet to help climbers and mountaineers choose, use and maintain ropes.

### **Youth & Equity**

- Promoted the availability of funding to support the development of BME walking and climbing leaders.
- Held a Safeguarding and Protecting Children training course in Sheffield.

### **BMC Organisation**

- Launched the new media centre on the BMC website to help journalists cover stories on climbing, hill walking or mountaineering and issues affecting mountain areas.
- All members of the Executive committee attended a two-day 'Board skills in sport' training course, delivered by the Sport and Recreation Alliance and the Institute of Directors.

### **Membership**

- Promoted opportunities for volunteering with the BMC during Volunteers Week.
- Launched a new app enabling all members to download every issue of Summit magazine for free, and published a special alpine edition for members to download.
- With the support of local BMC volunteers, held a series of climbing and walking festivals to celebrate the BMC's 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary and to bring together members; these included the Stanage Festival, the Cornish Climbing Festival, the Northumberland Climbing & Hill Walking Festival, and the Bristol Climbing Festival.

### **Heritage**

- Mountain Heritage Trust launched its first exhibition in its new residency at Keswick Museum and Art Gallery.
- Publicised a day of preservation workshops for clubs and individuals, to be run by MHT archivist Maxine Willett at the BMC office on 18 September.