



## BRITISH MOUNTAINEERING COUNCIL

177-179 Burton Road  
Manchester M20 2BB  
www.thebmc.co.uk

Tel: 0161 445 6111  
Fax: 0161 445 4500  
Email: office@thebmc.co.uk

### BMC South West Area Gathering

Meeting to be held at the The Dolphin Inn, Dolphin Square, Bovey Tracey, Devon.  
TQ13 9AL @ 8pm on Saturday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2012.

### AGENDA

*If anything to be discussed on this agenda gives rise to a conflict of interest for anyone, please declare it at the start of the meeting.*

1. **Welcome & Apologies For Absence.**
2. **The Previous Meetings Minutes & Any Matters Arising.**
2. **Any Feedback from the Previous Cornish Meeting.**
3. **Review & Discuss All BMC Areas: Ethics, Style & Drilled Equipment (see Appendix A document attached).**
4. **Fixed Gear on the Atlantic Coast – A Policy Proposal by Iain Peters CC (see Appendix B document attached)**
5. **Replacing Fixed Equipment at Long Quarry Point (Torquay) & Berry Head Quarry (Brixham) – A Policy Proposal by South Devon MC (see Appendix C document attached).**
6. **Access & Any Local Issues.**
7. **Any Other Business.**
8. **Next Meeting Date: Thursday the 22<sup>nd</sup> November 7pm @ The Nova Scotia Inn Bristol.**

## **Appendix A Ethics, Style & Drilled Equipment**

### **Ethics, Style & Drilled Equipment – for discussion by BMC Areas**

#### **Background**

This paper was discussed by National Council on 9 June and referred to the BMC Areas for further consideration. It suggests a new form of words to replace the Drilled Equipment Policy as agreed by the AGM in 1992. The paper has been drawn up following discussions at the February 2012 National Council meeting where it was agreed to develop a new organisational policy or position statement on drilled equipment for possible presentation to a future AGM.

#### **BMC Drilled Equipment Policy, May 1992**

The wording of the 1992 policy is as follows:

The BMC's drilled equipment policy is essentially a statement of the organisation's position regarding the placement of drilled equipment. This policy was drafted after wide ranging and high profile consultation and unanimously agreed at the 1992 AGM. The policy could be modified or replaced at a future AGM. The policy is that:

*'The BMC strongly supports the approach to climbing based on leader placed protection which makes use of natural rock features. The BMC believes that care and concern for the crag and mountain environments is of paramount importance.*

*The BMC accepts that in exceptional circumstances, agreed by the BMC, fixed equipment may be utilised for lower-off or abseil points to avoid environmental damage or maintain access.*

*It is the policy of the BMC that the use of bolts and other drilled equipment is only legitimate on certain agreed quarried crags and agreed sections of certain limestone crags. Lists of agreed locations will be maintained by the local area committees.*

*The BMC is firmly opposed to retrospective bolting (i.e. changing the character of a route by placing fixed equipment where none was previously used). Climbs should only be re-equipped on a basis of common consent established at open forums.'*

This policy does not attempt to dictate exactly where bolting should or should not take place. Such a decision inevitably rests with the individual and it is up to the individual to take account of the consensus view when making a judgement. It is vital that the consensus view is publicly agreed and accepted and this where the open meetings come in, and it is within the guidelines agreed at such meetings that the consensus view is encapsulated.

*Ref: BMC  
AGM, 1992*

(Note to the above: the text in Italics is the actual policy; the introductory and closing paragraphs were presumably added shortly after the AGM to help set the context.)

**Climbing has evolved over the past 20 years and attitudes have developed; the 1992 text has been superseded in certain respects but it has never been formally altered or amended.**

## Draft form of words for an updated policy or position statement

Text for discussion:

- The BMC acknowledges that many forms of climbing take place on British crags including traditional climbing using natural protection, sport climbing, scrambling, soloing and bouldering.
- British climbing has a rich history and a well-established code of ethics which has evolved over many years through debate amongst climbers often at BMC Area Meetings. Discussions about the use of drilled equipment (predominantly bolts) have taken place across the country for many years and today there is a generally clear understanding amongst climbers about where bolts can and cannot be placed.
- The Pembrokeshire and Cornish sea cliffs, the mountain crags of Snowdonia and the gritstone edges of the Peak District & Yorkshire are examples of traditional or bolt free climbing areas. There are also many climbing areas, individual crags and sections of crags across the country where sport climbing is the agreed and accepted norm.
- Site specific and regional drilled equipment policies should be debated and agreed by climbers at meetings arranged by the BMC. The Area Meetings provide a structure to facilitate such discussions. Drilled equipment policies should be widely discussed and agreed on a consensus basis. The views of first ascensionists should be respected and given careful consideration in discussions about the future style or equipping of routes.
- The diversity of climbing styles (sport and traditional) and the existence of 'bolt free' areas is a unique and internationally important aspect of British climbing. British climbing is the envy of many other countries where the use of drilled equipment has spread on an ad hoc basis with little regard to the crag environment or the aspirations of future generations of climbers.
- The BMC believes that the well-being of the cliff environment should be the primary concern of climbers in discussions about climbing practices and the use of drilled equipment. It is the responsibility of all climbers to promote and respect agreed drilled equipment policies.

## **Appendix B Fixed Gear On The Atlantic Coast – A Policy Proposal**

### **Introduction**

During the debate at the BMC Open Meeting on the use of drilled and fixed gear on the seacliffs of West Cornwall and The Lizard, I and others raised the question of this policy being extended to cover the stretch of Atlantic coastline from Godrevy Point near Hayle in West Cornwall to Hurlstone Point in Somerset.

That debate has been on-going both at Area meetings and informally amongst local climbers. However the Publications Sub-committee of the CC have asked Mark Kemball and myself to put forward a proposal for a new edition of the North Devon and Cornwall guide, so now seems an appropriate time to discuss this issue in more detail, and hopefully to agree a draft policy statement to be ratified before the publication of the guide in 2013/14.

### **A Little Background**

It is likely that the first pegs placed on this coast were by the FA party on Wreckers' Slab on the Culm in 1959, although Keith Lawder told me that these were the opposite of 'fixed' having been placed by Patey and Deacon behind loose shards of shale or directly into the copious amounts of organic matter masking the cracks. Certainly the original fixed peg below the crux of Mainsail at Brownspear Point lasted until most of the crag fell down.

It was left to the likes of Littlejohn and Darbyshire in the late 60s, early 70s to place pegs for both protection and aid on some of their most iconic routes such as Eroica and Darkinbad. Incidentally both routes had their protection and aid placed by abseil before their FA. In hindsight one could argue that such actions set an unfortunate precedent but it should also be remembered that this pair and others were opening serious routes on extremely remote crags, often on indifferent rock without the benefit of the highly specialized protection we all now use as a matter of course. When other locally based climbers, including myself, started to explore and discover new crags the accepted ethic in many cases was to garden new lines (a euphemism for pre-inspection?), we found that the only meaningful protection on many routes was a piton. Our unwritten rule was to remove any peg that we had placed whilst climbing but to leave those that had been pre-placed.

In some ways, little has changed, certainly as far as new routes in the extreme category on the Culm and Atlantic Coasts. Even with the arrival of sophisticated 'clean' protection devices, pegs are still being placed, although the acceptance of the headpoint approach to new routes at the highest standards has resulted in a move away from fixed gear. There are still undoubtedly grey areas, exemplified by the two major new lines at Dyer's Lookout, both E9+, both extensively cleaned and practiced. One, How The West Was Won, relies on pegs for protection whilst its neighbour, The (much publicized) Walk Of Life has none.

### **A Suggestion**

A draconian blanket ban on placing fixed gear, and the removal of all existing ironmongery is neither desirable at this stage nor practicable. I believe that most climbers will agree that drilled gear has no place on the Atlantic, Culm, Exmoor coast (incl. Baggy) seacliffs, but we still have to try and address the problem of deteriorating and downright dangerous pegs, tapes and stakes.

Many worthwhile starred routes are no longer climbed because the pegs have either rusted away or are severely corroded, and very few visitors will be carrying pegs and a hammer to replace them. It's a catch 22 situation, especially where alternative protection is not readily available. Eroica is a classic example. Once one of the more popular seacliff E2s, it now sees far less ascents at a serious E3+, whereas Crimtyphon at E1/2 with 5 or 6 pegs does get frequent ascents, and the pegs seem to be replaced reasonably regularly.

My proposal, admittedly a compromise, is that, during the course of route checking for the new guide, all those willing to help out should be asked to also check the state of any pegs/stakes/ lower offs (and to confirm whether adequate removable gear is available) so that a reasonably up-to-date and comprehensive list can be compiled. Stu Bradbury has already started this process with his comments on the fixed gear on Smoothlands, so if we can persuade other activists to do the same, via UKC, Javu and other websites, blogs etc., then a

decision can be made about whether pegs are needed on Route X (and need replacing) but surplus to requirements on Route Y.

As an example I give you Wreckers' where at my last count there were at least 6 pegs in various stages of decay, with adequate alternative protection readily available.

We have already discussed and approved the removal of decaying tat from popular lower offs to be replaced by chains and maillons, but as part of the new guidebook work I suggest that we should identify where solid belay and abseil stakes are required (eg. Carn Gowla Black Walls area) and request BMC support for replacements.

To summarize: as a starting point towards a 'cleaner' ND&C coast all unnecessary ironwork should be removed, or, if that's not possible, should be noted in any guide, description or logbook entry. Caveat Emptor!

Popular or newer routes that deserve greater attention where pegs provide essential protection at their original grade should, wherever possible have the gear checked and replaced at reasonably regular intervals.

Right, where did I hide my old peg hammer??!!

**Iain Peters**

**October 2012**

## **Appendix C – Replacing Fixed Gear At Long Quarry Point (Torquay) & Berry Head Quarry (Brixham) – A Policy Proposal by South Devon MC**

### **Background**

Members of the South Devon MC (SDMC) would like approval to update fixed gear at these 2 venues in the Torquay / Brixham area.

These venues are quarried limestone with a distinct lack of 'clean' protection possibilities which largely rely on in-situ pegs for protection and belays. These pegs are generally in an appalling state (and placements cannot be cleaned / renewed) which has meant the venues are falling into disuse and becoming 'no climb' zones. Some notable exceptions exist (e.g. Black Ice).

In the run-up to this meeting there was a lively debate in the SDMC with a lot of members expressing concern about the lack of use of these routes and keen to see them brought back to life. There was unanimous support (amongst those who voiced an opinion) for a minimalist replacement policy; the idea is to swap dodgy old pegs for bolts and ensure safe belays, possibly create a lower off if top-outs had become unstable. We would like to stress this is NOT a proposal to reduce run-outs and where good pegs exist e.g. on Black Ice we should leave them: "We want to allow others to experience the routes with a similar level of risk to those that put them up."

### **Areas Concerned**

The slabs at Long Quarry Point (Routes such as: Grip Type Thynne, 4 pitches E1; Band of Rusty Gold, 4 pitches HVS; Coup de Grace, 3 pitches VS; Magic Carpet Ride, 2 pitches VS; Transference 4 pitches E1; Safari 7 pitches HVS; Ruby in the Dust 2 pitches, VS)

Any stable routes at Berry Head Quarry

### **Proposals**

1. Members of the SDMC propose that at LQP and BHQ all en-route rotten pegs should be replaced by bolts.
2. Members of the SDMC propose that at LQP and BHQ all peg belays should be replaced by bolts (i.e. 2 bolts in the absence of other natural gear).
3. Members of the SDMC propose that at LQP and BHQ any unstable top outs should be avoided by the use of bolt lower offs.

### **Note Added By South West Area Secretary:**

Permission should also be sought by SDMC from the people who put these routes up (Pat Littlejohn & Frank Cannings).