



Ned Feehally on *Careless Torque*, Stanage.
Photo: John Coe field

PEAK AREA NEWSLETTER



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Rocking Chair

Rob Greenwood



A few years back five peregrine chicks ‘disappeared’ from a nest at The Roaches in Staffordshire. It was believed they were likely stolen for illegal falconry practices, something that – at the time – I recall silencing the room. Does this practice still occur in the modern day and age?!

Sadly, it does, and only last year our own access rep Adam Long witnessed a red kite shot out of the sky within the northern boundary of the Peak District National Park. Around the same time three juvenile hen harriers – the first to have fledged within

the Peak for three years – disappeared under suspicious circumstances.

So why is this of interest to BMC members? Because the Peak District means a lot to us all and the wildlife within it is a major contributing factor to that – just look at the voluntary restrictions we put in place for the peregrine, raven and ring ouzel.

With that in mind, we’ve got something of a ‘wildlife crime’ theme to our upcoming meeting, with Derbyshire Constabulary’s Wildlife Crime Officer and the RSPB Investigations Team along to tell us more about what they’re doing and what we can do to help.

Be prepared to have your eyes opened, because you’re likely in for a shock!

Next meeting: Wednesday 20 March, 7.30 p.m.
The Maynard, Grindleford, S32 2HE



Monitoring the ring ouzels in the Burbage Valley.
Photo: John Coefield.

Access News

Ring Ouzels

Kim Leyland

It's nearly that time of year when the familiar 'peep-peep-peep' rings out across the gritstone edges once more – yes, the ring ouzels are due back at the end of March, or possibly earlier given the rather unseasonal weather at the time of writing – one was sighted in Portland, Dorset on 25 February!.

As with recent years, a band of intrepid nest monitoring volunteers will be on hand to locate, sign and monitor nests in popular climbing and walking areas around the Eastern Edges so that the birds can raise their young in (relative) peace.

New volunteers are always welcome. If you would like to help out, please get in touch with me (kleyland@btinternet.com) for more information. No previous experience is required as training will be provided.

Don't forget to check the BMC's **Regional Access Database (RAD)** as the bird nesting season gets underway – ravens are one of the earliest breeders and can have eggs from mid-February, so some restrictions may already be in place. Keep an eye out for signs at the crags too.

Horseshoe Quarry

Colin and Kym West

As well as ensuring access to Horseshoe and improving the quarry for climbing, the BMC also looks after conservation issues, based on a plan drawn up when the BMC took over the site. Recent work has involved cutting trees near the pond (did you know there was a pond?) to let light in, raking the pond, mowing and raking the meadow areas, cutting back scrub on the species rich grassland, and some additional tree felling.

Several volunteers have helped with this including Duncan Frish for meadow raking and Peak Park Conservation Volunteers

organised by Dave Cramp for tree work. Expert advice came from the usual suspects – Rebekah Newman and Henry Folkard.

Conservation at Horseshoe is important, not just for its own sake but because it demonstrates that the BMC takes this aspect seriously. This shows that access to climbing areas needs not compromise the environment and climbers can contribute to the conservation.

Next time you visit Horseshoe, you could see if the great crested newts in the pond are busy, the orchids and other flowers are in bloom, identify the various ferns, and spot the many species of butterflies which thrive in the diverse environment.

There is little to report on the access side. Climbers should be aware that the recent rebolting only applies to the BMC-owned areas. They should be extra careful with both the state of the bolts and loose rock in other areas of the quarry. Access is allowed on foot to the quarry but not for bikes, motorised or otherwise.

See the **BMC RAD** for access details.

Stanage

Louise Hawson

The last meeting of the Stanage Forum Steering Group discussed proposals for the Long Causeway to be designated a 'Miles Without Stiles' route, meaning that it will be promoted and maintained as a route for those with mobility challenges to access the top of the edge and experience the wildness of the moors. There are a number of questions to answer before the route can be designated, but the steering group supported the idea in principle. For more information see:

www.peakdistrict.gov.uk/visiting/miles-without-stiles

We continue to try to find ways to improve the roadside parking at High

Neb/Dennis Knoll that are acceptable to the planners. MWS designation could mean some improvements to the tarmacked area, but for us it's the verge parking that's more of a concern.

Options are being considered for future use of the various buildings on the North Lees estate, including the farm, Cattiside Cottage, the Cruck Barn, North Lees Hall and the toilet block, as well as the campsite. The BMC has always strongly emphasised the need to keep the estate together, and take an approach that recognises the unique opportunity to demonstrate how upland conservation, farming and recreation can work together to make something that is more than the sum of its parts. We hope the national park authority is going to take the opportunity to think more broadly than its own finances and create a legacy for future generations.

Still no information on enforcement of fines for non-payment of parking fees at Hollin Bank (Plantation). All relevant signage regarding charges and enforcement should be in place. Money from parking fees goes into the upkeep of the estate, so please continue to pay to park there, and avoid parking on the roadside around the car park as it's causing concern for residents and emergency services.

Those of you that venture over the back of Stanage on to White Moss may notice new gully blocking there, similar to what you might see on Kinder and Bleaklow. The purpose is to rewet the moors, providing habitat for breeding birds, and to reduce the risk of moorland fires in dry weather.

Sheffield Moors Partnership

Henry Folkard

SMP has commissioned an independent review of the achievements of the partnership since its inception in 2013. Initially this involves collecting thoughts from key stakeholders on progress to date and on the way ahead – challenges, priorities, opportunities, governance and what individual stakeholders can contribute.

The review is being conducted by a consultant who is very well known to us – Matthew Crony. Matt used to work for the national park and was the architect of the Stanage Forum. I have been interviewed as part of that process, and what I, and others, said in interview, along with our answers to a questionnaire, will form the basis of his report. I am not sure when that is due, but I know the timescale is tight, so there may be something more in time for the area meeting after this.

I will have a copy of the questionnaire and my response at the meeting if anyone wants to see it.

Instruction on National Trust land

At the last meeting I mentioned I would be meeting with the National Trust and the local Mountain Training co-ordinator to talk through issues about activities for which a fee was charged that take place on National Trust land. This is a vexatious subject, and a country-wide one. The meeting has duly been arranged, and is scheduled for 7 March, so I should be able to report back at the area meeting.

Staden Quarry

And this just in ... most of Staden/Cowdale Quarry has been bought by Nestlé who intend to safeguard the site so as not to compromise the purity of the spring water, which they intend to bottle. There have been no discussions about climbing at this juncture.

Winnats Rally: 27 April

Planning is well underway for the major Winnats rally on 27 April. The event is hosted by the chairman of the Peak District National Park Authority, is sponsored by the BMC, Ramblers and a private donation, and facilitated by the National Trust.

It is a commemoration of the big rallies that took place in Winnats and Cave Dale in the 1930s, attended it is said by 10,000 people and that – together with the Kinder Mass Trespass and wider public pressure – did so much to achieve the freedom of access we now enjoy – but must continue to safeguard – and the 1949 Act that saw the establishment of national parks. It forms this year's Spirit of Kinder celebration, and over and above that chimes with the National Trust's theme for the year – Peoples' Landscapes – and the 75th anniversary of the establishment of the BMC, and all in sight of the Great Ridge for which Mend Our Mountains has been successfully raising funds.

Key speakers include Lynn Robinson, president of the BMC, Lord David Blunkett from the Sheffield Ramblers, Sue Hayman, Shadow Secretary of State, Ruth George, the local MP who hosted the Mend Our Mountains launch and ... I hope to know who else by the time of the area meeting. Music will be provided by Sheffield's Clarion band.

Sundry other things are planned too, while local schools and the national park's junior rangers are also involved and an organisation called INSTAR has been commissioned by the National Trust to work with them.

Winnats will be closed to traffic from 1.30 p.m. for the event, probably till about 4 p.m., which will be set up in the morning a little way above the cattle grid at the bottom of the pass.

If you would like to help with making it all happen on the day, please let me know as we may need some volunteers to support the National Trust.



Goyt Valley.
Photo: Austin Knott.

Hill Walking News

Peter Judd and Austin Knott

It doesn't seem long since we were compiling some notes for the last newsletter. Time flies, perhaps exacerbated by the unseasonably warm weather that (as these notes are being written) we've been enjoying. This time out the notes concentrate on some up and coming events that you can join in with over the next few months – before the June newsletter – when hopefully we'll be enjoying some seasonally warm weather.

Pre-AGM walk: 30 March

You'll be aware that the BMC's AGM is being held in our area soon, in Buxton on Sunday 31 March. There will undoubtedly be more about that elsewhere, with reminders filling your inbox detailing how to attend or vote by proxy. The hill walking reps have been asked to put on a walk on Saturday 30 March. With the help of some other

members we've been out and reccied a cracking route from Buxton up through Corbar Woods, over part of Combs Moss (Buxton's mini Kinder) and then returning through the glorious Goyt Valley.

It's a wonderful walk and we gather at 10 a.m. at Buxton Railway Station for a 10.15 a.m. start. The walk features plenty of variety packed into a nine to ten-mile mini-adventure; and not too much ascent (500 metres) for a walk of this nature and length. It would be really wonderful to see you on the walk. More details here:

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?id=4069>

And if you have any further questions, please contact Peter or Austin (contact details on page 16).

Black Dog Outdoors: 12 April

The eagle-eyed of you may have also seen some social media advertising of an inaugural walk taking place in the Peak District on Friday 12 April. The reason it caught our attention is that it carried a BMC

logo. It's not being organised by this area or its volunteers, but by an organisation called Black Dog Outdoors. The walk is aimed at those affected by poor mental health as an introduction to hiking. We have no further details but if you're interested, or you know someone who may be, please email: info@blackdogoutdoors.co.uk

Pick and Play: 12 May

The unique Pick and Play Peak Park clean-up event, organised by Castleton-based outdoor activities business Peak Mountaineering, invites volunteers to help clear up part of our national park and in return Peak Mountaineering use their instructional expertise to offer a range of outdoor activities for participants to take part in – for free! BMC Peak area volunteers have been among those helping provide the 'reward' activities in recent years and a number of BMC members also have taken part. Last year saw over 140 people take part removing a HUGE amount of rubbish from around Surprise View, Millstone and the Burbage Valley. This year's event takes place on Sunday 12 May. If you fancy it, or if you have family or friends who you think might like to join in and then benefit from the climbing/abseiling/navigation training/local interest walk-type rewards, then keep an eye on the Peak area Facebook page or Peak Mountaineering's own website for announcements nearer the time. Maybe see you there?

National News

The BMC's Hill Walking Implementation (working) Group met again recently and were lucky enough to have both the BMC's new Chair of the Board, Gareth Pierce, and also President Lynn Robinson join us for some of our meeting, helping to reinforce the message that the Board is taking a keen interest in, and is serious about advancing, the BMC's hill walking work, despite the

many other challenges the BMC faces presently.

John Cousins, CEO of Mountain Training UK, came along too, allowing us to explore in detail the relationship between the BMC and MTUK and note some of the opportunities to better communicate what's on offer and get more for our members in the area of skills enhancement out of that relationship.

We also heard that our Access Officer for Policy, Cath Flitcroft, has been very busy briefing MPs about opportunities to amend the coming Agriculture Bill to enhance incentives and provision for public access. She has also made a very significant contribution, on members' behalf, to the government-instituted but independent 'Landscapes Review' that is looking closely at the future of England's national parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs).

Our Hill Walking Officer, Carey Davies, brought us up to date about Mend our Mountains, Make One Million, which is entering its final fundraising phase in March. Soon work will be starting on many of the repair projects. There may yet be one last public push to help our local projects up that last little bit to hit their targets. And thoughts are already turning to what next?

And finally ...

May we urge all BMC hill walkers to keep a lookout for opportunities to speak up for the kind of BMC they want when the Organisational Development Group starts to shape the BMC's vision and strategy for 2020 onwards. The first such opportunity comes on the day of the BMC AGM, on Sunday 31 March, when, before the AGM itself, at 9.30 to 11 a.m., there is to be a 'Members open discussion – fit for the future' billed as 'a review of the BMC's vision, mission & core values' – come and have your say.



Wax-jacket-wearing gentleman climber Ben Bransby and his pedigree sandwich thieves.
Photo: John Coefield.

Climbing News & Gossip

Dave Parry

We have just endured the most bizarre February in living memory. Last winter was long, cold, damp and miserable, but this year we've seen temps in the Peak in excess of 16 or 17 degrees – shorts and T-shirt weather. One upside to the impending climate apocalypse that this represents is that it has been generally quite dry, so plenty of potential for folk to get out.

One crag which benefits from a dry spell is Wimberry. As I'm sure most of you will have seen already, the best Bachar-ladder merchant the Vatican has ever produced, Jim Pope, made a quick and potentially harrowing repeat of Sam Whittaker's famously fragile *Appointment with Death* recently. The fourth ascent of such a prized line would be newsworthy in itself. But Jim's ascent was further notable because when high up the route, the pebble under Jim's right foot – one of only two points of

contact at that point – broke. At this point he's well into 'all bets are off' possible groundfall territory. A 'potential Desmond' as it might have been described in Peak guidebooks gone by. There's some footage of this on Jim's Instagram account (@jimpopeonarope) and it's well worth a watch.

People always moan that trad grit hasn't really moved on much in the last 20 years – plenty of folk are content to headpoint well-travelled routes such as *Gaia* or *End of the Affair* to say they've done E8. However, it's exciting that Jim clearly has some appetite for hard gritstone routes beyond the well-trodden paths. Potentially pound-for-pound one of the strongest climbers to ever apply themselves to hard gritstone trad, if he gets on any of the remaining hard projects he has the capacity to move things forwards, so we could see something really hard and game-changing being done. Bearing in mind Jim is still young and has time on his side here. Just as long as he can stay off the snappy pebbles for a while. But you know, papal infallibility and all that.

From gut-wrenching scenes on high green scrittley grit to gut-wrenching scenes on very, very low green scrittley grit, and wax-jacket-wearing country-gent-at-large Ben Bransby reports a right-hand finish to *Heartland* at Gardom's via a mantel finish. If I was being charitable I would euphemistically say this is one for the connoisseur and leave it at that. But since Ben's dogs ate my sandwich out of my bag at the crag the other week – including the clingfilm – I'm going to properly stick the boot in and say this looks terrible and nobody with a shred of self-respect would give this a second glance. There, that'll learn them hounds.

Better looking is Ben's recent line on the left side of the *Jumpers* arête at Chatsworth. Weighing in at a highball but safe-ish Font 7a this sit-starts and stays mainly left of the original above a better landing, with a brief unavoidable excursion to the half-height jugs on the arête. Looks good, which is fortunate, to avoid further sandwich-related retribution.

Also in the Chatsworth vicinity, non-dog-owning mantel alchemist Jon Fullwood has added a left-hand line on the *Dobb Egg* prow at Dobb Edge. *Wondermule* is a Font 7a+ and climbs the prow using the left arête only – and is hence slightly eliminate, but based on Jon's video (see Instagram) it looks pretty independent. Also at Chatsworth Jon has done a quality Font 7a+ highball called *Grow A Pear* which can be found about 50 metres right of *Desperot* on the same wall as an old route called *Some Jerk on TV*.

On the repeat front, a few harder-but-not-especially-newsworthy routes have been done in the more comfortable recent temperatures conducive to route climbing. But a repeat that caught this sandwich-deprived editor's eye was Mari Augusta Salvesen's repeat of the classic roof offwidth horrorshow that is *Ray's Roof* at Baldstones. Highly likely to be the first female ascent

of this E7, although the Norwegian has got form at this grade on grit having previously done *Master's Edge*. Amazing to think *Ray's Roof* was originally given E4 in 1970. Jesus Christ.

To a more mainstream venue, none less than the Peak's undisputed premier bouldering buttress, and Chris Taylor – a guy who has never deprived me of bread-based sustenance while at the crag – reports a new linkup on the Remergence block. Chris has done the reverse of *Blind Ali* into *Submergence* at Font 7c+. This is a pretty obvious linkup, and one that has not gone unnoticed by Remergence aficionados such as myself. It also opens up the possibility of linking into the sloper eliminate finishes on the arête problem, the true goal for any fan of local eliminates (aren't we all?). Bring a kneepad.

Over at Rivelin there's a new variation on the modern classic *Master Kush*, which will further delight fans of locals' eliminates. The aforementioned variation climbs *Master Kush* to the crux throw for the slopy lip, then aschews the big holds on the flake on the upper slab, and instead matches the lip and drapes left for a few moves before heading up via a couple of crimps. Quite good if you've got the blinkers for it. Grade: harder than the original, so presumably either harder Font 7c+ or possibly even 8a? This one's by yours truly so go easy on the downgrades, alright.

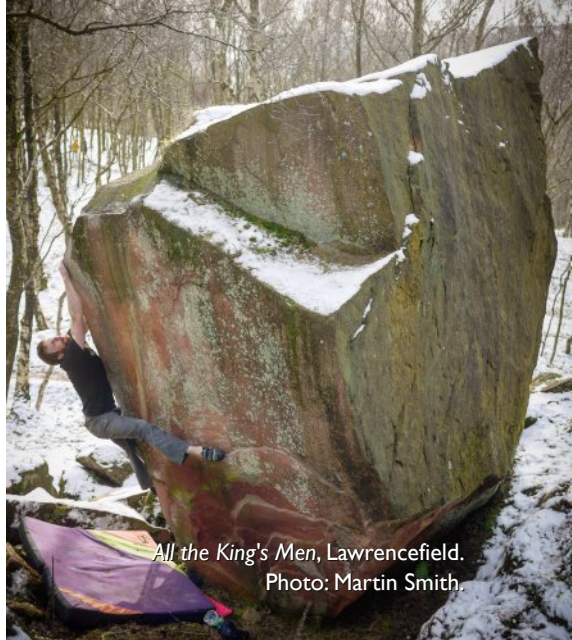
Back at the king among crags, Burbage North, Rachel Briggs has been busy over the last few months unearthing a few interesting-looking bits and bobs. Including but not limited to a low handrail-type rising traverse Font 6a near Tiny Slab area (probably not one for the big lads) and a 6a+ arête over towards the woods (again, people who unlike me have been overindulging on portable carb-rich crag rations might not like this one). Rachel

documents her stuff on her Instagram account [@newascents](#) – you fire up the old modem and surf on down there to find photos.

Limited limestone news as you would expect at this time of year, but one bit of news which missed previous newsletters is from Ally Smith who has put up a new F8b+ at the Cornice in Cheedale. *Bullheart* links *Jug Jockey* with *Dreadnot*. A good one to dog? Another bit of old news missing from previous reports is that Pete and Dom Bridgewood both repeated *Parallel Lines* at Hen Cloud without the side runners at E8, a rarely repeated undertaking.

Another bold looking addition is from Mark Rankine who has completed his highball project at Wharncliffe. *Flattening of Emotions* is the striking hanging groove sort of thing next to *Bedrock* in the Cascade area. It is around Font 7c and further adds to the crag's recent list of developments (many by Jon Fullwood). Mark had worked this line on a top rope first, and I don't blame him; from my memory of this it's pretty damn high and insecure looking. You'd probably want a nice relaxing bit of food to reward yourself after an ascent like that, perhaps a laminar combination of baked dough surrounding a central flat filling perhaps? Also, Mark has sorted the landing out on the old 1980s legbreaker *Anzio Breakout* (direct to the even older *Puttrell's Progress*) at the 'popular' end of the crag, giving a highball Font 6b+ campus session for those keen for some quality esoterica.

Just time before I pass out from malnutrition to report on Ned Feehally's recent activities at the popular dogwalking areas around Surprise View. Firstly, *Ned Belly* is a Font 7c on the prominent egg-shaped boulder down below Owlter Tor (south side of the road, not Over Owlter Tor). Taking a strict line with wide moves on sidepulls, only the right-hand plinth is 'in' at the start.



Higher quality is *All the King's Men*, which has been a relatively popular Font 7b+ addition to Lawrencefield, and is a sit-start to the crag-facing arête of the freestanding boulder you pass on your way to Pool Wall. I say popular, this was the scene of a recent canine-based baked-goods larceny, so be on your guard.

Finally, fans of high breadknife crimping – the type of knife you would use to cut two slices of lovely fresh home-made bread before you head out to the crag – will like *Two-Legged Limp* (Font 7c+) in Tegness Quarry. Head for the north-most bay of the quarry if you have strong fingers, good skin and are a ... wait for it ... gluten for punishment.

Get in touch

Send your Peak area news, gossip or article ideas to me at: peakarea@gmail.com

Whither the BMC

Simon Lee

Climbers and upland hill walkers are very fortunate to have a strong and single national representative body to champion and promote our interests in the BMC. Obviously, that doesn't stop us moaning about it from time to time but overall the good very much outweighs the less good.

I thought it might be timely before our next AGM to take stock of where our national body is currently and the direction it may be heading. I should add that the views expressed are very much my own.

Over the last eight years I have gained a few different perspectives on the organisation. At first, I was as an attendee of Peak area meetings. I then became one of the area's National Council representatives involved in policy making. Then from January 2017 until June 2018 I was employed by the BMC office as Commercial Manager looking at new ways to make or save money for the BMC against a background of declining grant money from Sport England.

Two years of upheaval

My employment as Commercial Manager coincided with a period of significant upheaval starting with the tabling of a motion of no confidence by a group of members in April 2017. Although this was defeated, it led to the resignation of the then president Rehan Siddiqui. This was followed by the formation of the independent Organisational Review Group (ORG) which undertook a root and branch review of the organisation and published 41 recommendations for constitutional, operational and cultural change in March 2018. These recommendations are now being followed through internally in a systematic way by the Organisational Development Group (ODG)

which is primarily comprised of dedicated volunteers. The changes may not be happening quickly, but the indications are good that the resulting improvements will be comprehensive and enduring.

What is the purpose of the BMC?

Before diving into the detail let's step back a second and consider the more basic question of the purpose of an organisation and how you can evaluate how good it is. For some, this would include such things as how inclusive and representative it is, but these are means rather than ends. More fundamentally an organisation can be evaluated on how well it gathers and deploys resources (i.e. people and money) to meet its objectives and goals. However, the goals and objectives are not very clear at the BMC. For most organisations I have previously dealt with the goal was predominantly profit, which makes things more straightforward. In the BMC's case the overarching goal is somewhat harder to pin down as it is to protect and further the interests of all those engaged in climbing and upland hill walking – both members and non-members.

This goal can manifest itself in many and diverse ways and so is hard to measure unless the objectives are more precisely determined. Everyone will have their own opinion on where priorities should lie. Also, while a primary purpose of the BMC is to serve its current membership, there is a certain tension here with its dual role of also holding itself out to be a national body representing all climbers and hill walkers of which the majority are not members. Usually, what is good for members is good for all hillwalkers and climbers and so the two largely go hand in hand – but not always. Sometimes the more inward-looking

protection of interests and priorities of members can hold back the development of the organisation.

A complicated organisation

The initial hook for me joining the BMC was to support the access and environment agenda. Continued access to our many playgrounds is an obvious and tangible benefit to climbers and hill walkers and unsurprisingly this is highlighted at every turn by the BMC's industrious marketing department. Local access issues are the mainstay of the Peak area local meetings and long may that continue. However, it is only one part of what the BMC does.

When I started my employment at the BMC office I considered myself reasonably well informed having served on National Council. However, I was taken aback by how many activities I was entirely unaware of. The BMC is interconnected with the climbing sector in more ways than you can imagine. Furthermore, many of the staff's activities represent just the tip of an iceberg with a supporting (and supported) network of committees, allied organisations, government bodies, participating climbing centres and commercial organisations all working with and through the BMC office.

And what of the outputs? A phantasmagoria of reports, brochures, online content, a magazine, insurance services, support to climbing clubs, quality assurance of training awards, festivals, competitions, lectures, international representation, technical advice and standards, guidebooks, parliamentary lobbying and more. Individually all worthy stuff and certainly in the interests of climbers and hill walkers, but in my view somewhat disjointed and lacking a common vision and accountability, not to mention value for money assessment. Without an overarching strategy it is hard to tie things together in a cohesive way and determine priorities for resources. The

ODG work should help progress towards achieving a meaningful strategy that the organisation buys into – but we are some off this yet.

Politics and the BMC

When I first joined as commercial manager I had a thought-provoking exchange with Ed Douglas (author, journalist and former BMC vice-president). I was grappling with trying to understand the organisation. He described the BMC primarily as a political organisation, which puzzled me at the time. At a management meeting a few weeks later we debated how to liven up the AGM in April to ensure there was a quorum of members attending – little guessing that this would soon be solved by a motion of no confidence being tabled against the Board. The extent of how political the BMC was revealed itself to me as the organisation lurched into a constitutional crisis from which it is now starting to emerge.

However, as time went on I began to understand what I think Ed meant. Being described as political is normally pejorative for good reasons, but political power and influence can also be a force for good. The BMC is the de facto national representative body through which other less well-resourced organisations such as Mountain Training England want to work with by, for example, presenting a 'whole industry' combined bid for Sport England money. Another example is the Mend Our Mountains campaign which improves our relationships with national park authorities by campaigning against cuts in government funding to national parks as well as directly funding projects that they can no longer afford and which simultaneously improve our playgrounds.

Hopefully, I have illustrated how the BMC can be externally political in a beneficial way, as the more powerful and influential the

BMC is, the more potential it possesses to further the interests of climbers and hillwalkers. The dexterous management of relationships with other bodies and organisations is a key function of the BMC in its gathering and management of resources to good ends.

The broad church

Apart from being externally political the organisation is also internally political as well. The BMC is often described as a broad church implying this is a wholly good thing. However, to continue the religious metaphor, it is a mixed blessing. There are many types of divisions within the BMC pulling the organisation in different directions with boundaries being tested and the question arising of whether we are better apart or together. The Alpine Club was very specifically put to the test on this question when a motion to disaffiliate from the BMC was tabled in December. The answer was that AC members resoundingly believed that the club was better together with over 90% voting to remain part of the BMC.

One area where some form of partial split is likely to occur is competition climbing. Indoor competition climbing is still a fledgling sport that may be transformed by the Olympics in terms of gaining mainstream appeal. The BMC is the recognised longstanding national governing body of indoor competition climbing. However, arguably for it to flourish it may be better for supporters of competition climbing (and its opponents!) if it is managed at arm's-length as a subsidiary body which independently seeks government or commercial sponsorship to support it. Cycling, for example, has two wholly separate bodies, namely Cycling UK which covers recreational cycling, and British Cycling which is the competition governing body.

There are other areas of contention that were identified and addressed in the Organisational Review report. These form projects which the BMC's Organisational Development Group is beavering away on behind the scenes to address.

A changing landscape

Another factor to consider is how much the outdoor sector 'landscape' has changed. While I am not qualified to talk about hill walking (geocaching anyone!), climbing has changed vastly since I led my first route in 1983. Back then there was just mountaineering, ice climbing and outcrop climbing. Bouldering was just messing about, and sport climbing, competition climbing and dedicated indoor centres were in their infancy. Alongside the development of different branches of the sport there has been a generational shift from amateur adventurism towards the sport becoming increasingly professional, commercial and mainstream. Top climbers are now 'athletes' and 'influencers', climbing will feature in the Olympics next year, and Free Solo has won an Oscar. Indoor climbing has become mainstream and as an activity is viewed as little different from going to the gym; 60% of dedicated indoor wall users never climb outside. The increasing professionalisation of the sport should also be reflected by an increasing professionalisation within our national body.

Remaining relevant

While the BMC has generally sought to move with the times, not all its members have and some of the kickback at the BMC is linked to the wider changes in the sport. From an organisational standpoint whether these developments are good or bad is irrelevant as it is vital that a national representative body represents how the sport is now, not how you would wish it to

be. To do otherwise means failing in the purpose of being representative, and with increasing irrelevance to new generations of climbers comes an inevitable decline in membership and influence.

Decisions, decisions

I am cautiously optimistic that the processes and momentum in train will modernise the culture, operations and practices of the BMC. However, it is not a given. The BMC has not been an organisation that is inherently dynamic or strategic to say the least. I experienced at close quarters how new initiatives become bogged down and meet resistance. After a few such setbacks the temptation at all levels can become to continue to muddle along and say yes to everything and everyone for an easy life, and this culture becomes entrenched.

The new constitution for the BMC has improved the problematic governance framework for decision-making that has in my opinion hamstrung the organisation over the years. The big decisions now ultimately rest with the Board rather than being split with National Council. However, good leadership and strategic thinking is needed to use that power to transform the BMC from a broadly good but muddled organisation to a better and more focused one. That starts with setting clear goals and objectives so priorities in the allocation of resources can be determined rather than being pulled here, there and everywhere by lobbying and reaction to events.

The membership and National Council and ODG teams have a big part to play in supplying ideas and advice, but the Board gets to determine what the actual strategy is and sell it back. The Chief Executive Officer (CEO) has a significant role to play here. This post has traditionally been viewed as a more passive role as a servant of the Board to carry out the Board's wishes. To quote

former National Council member Andy Say: 'The CEO is the hewer of wood and the carrier of water. We employ him to do our bidding.' I emphatically disagree with this viewpoint and believe the role should be proactive as is typical of a CEO in most organisations. The CEO being at the hub of all things is the one best placed to devise a practical strategy, especially bearing in mind that the rest of the Board are volunteers. Furthermore, the CEO can also directly draw ideas from the salaried staff at the front line.

Conclusion

Returning to my point on how you judge an organisation, I would like to see the BMC Board of Directors proceed to set clear objectives and goals rather than wordy ones that play lip service to all and sundry. The Board supported by the office and working with National Council can then garner broad backing for this strategy from the membership (bearing in mind that there will be winners and losers) to gain 'buy-in' before putting it into action. How well that strategy is then executed comes back to how effectively the people running the organisation control the gathering and deployment of resources (i.e. people and money) to meet those goals and objectives.



Photo: Tony Robinson/NT.

National Trust Update: March 2019

Luke Barley

Letting the Dove flow

The Dove is a great river for wildlife, but the installation of weirs and bank revetments at the start of the 20th century constrained its flow and mean that it's not quite achieving its potential. We've just been given a grant to escalate our restoration work and let the river run free.

The River Dove in Dovedale is great for wildlife with a healthy population of wild brown trout, other fish species like grayling and bullhead, birds like dippers and kingfishers, and a rich invertebrate fauna on which the species higher up the food chain depend. It's also an iconic fly-fishing stream that features heavily in the 17th-century classic *The Compleat Angler* by Izaak Walton; the best-selling book of all time, according to some sources. Fly-fishing is an incredibly important part of the valley's heritage but the trend at the start of the 20th century

for stocking rivers with farmed trout has led to a reduction in habitat value – as well as the level of challenge for anglers. Over 100 weirs were built and the banks reveted to canalise the river and create a series of deep, still stew ponds. These were stocked with fish and kept clear of fallen trees and other vegetation to keep the fishing easy and ensure anglers caught something!

Unfortunately the slow water behind the weirs allows silt to settle, blanketing the gravels where invertebrates live and where trout spawn; bank revetments stop the river meandering and further reduce the natural variety in habitat, which is at its richest when the river can determine its own course and there's a range of flow types from deep still pools to shallow silty beaches, with lots of exposed gravels in between with fast, shallow water running across them. The artificial modifications

mean that the river is in 'unfavourable condition' in terms of Dovedale's designation as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. We've therefore been working closely with Natural England, the Environment Agency, the park, the Wild Trout Trust and some of the fishing clubs to restore the river to its natural state, as far as possible. We're fortunate that Leek and District Fly-fishing Association and the Beresford Fishery now prefer the challenge of fishing for wild trout and have stopped stocking the river; and they're interested in improving habitat as much as we are.

Over the past three years we've worked together to breach or remove a handful of weirs each year, usually by groups of volunteers and anglers using bars and picks to prise the stone apart. We carried out a full heritage assessment to ensure that none of the weirs earmarked for removal have any cultural significance; the occasional one is older and related to previous management for agriculture, like sheep dipping. The river reverts almost immediately to its natural state once the work is complete, dropping down the bank above the weir and running fast across the river bed, revealing hidden riffles and rapids and beginning to wash away the silt. It's been particularly gratifying to see trout making their redds in the freshly exposed gravels, pushing apart stony hollows in which to spawn; keep an eye out for bright patches of stone about a metre round from November onwards and you might be lucky enough to see this.

The work to the weirs will continue slowly but surely for the next few years, as we're purposefully taking it steady to keep everyone on board and to ensure the habitat is responding as we hope. We've just received funding, however, to make significant progress in renaturalising the river further by removing some of the

bank revetments. Natural England will pay – through the Water Environment Grant – for contractors to break apart some of the artificial walls which will allow the river to determine its own path, creating meanders and reintroducing the variation in its flow which benefits wildlife so much. Obviously we have a major footpath by the river through much of Dovedale, and an important access track on the other bank, so we've worked hard to identify those locations where we can let the river do its thing without affecting the ability of visitors to enjoy the valley. The Environment Agency also contributes financially to the project and the second strand of work will be the installation of 'large woody material' in the river. This is a fancy term for fallen trees, which create habitat themselves by making places for fish to shelter and as invertebrates use the decaying wood, and also add further variation to the form of the river by altering its flow.

The work to remove some of the revetments should begin this summer with tree work to follow during winter, so keep an eye open if you're in the valley. The river will start to look wilder and should be even richer in wildlife as the Dove is freed to forge its own path once more.

For more information about the National Trust's work in the Peak District, please email: [**peakdistrict@nationaltrust.org.uk**](mailto:peakdistrict@nationaltrust.org.uk)

Peak Area Meetings: 2019

All meetings are held at The Maynard,
Grindleford, S32 2HE.

20 March, 7.30 p.m.

12 June, 7.30 p.m.

11 September, 7.30 p.m.

27 November, 7.30 p.m.

Forthcoming Events

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/peak>

Sheffield Adventure Film Festival 22-24 March, Showroom Cinema, Sheffield

ShAFF is back, and this year it's presented by the BMC. Loads on, as usual, including the Women in Adventure film competition and the BMC's 75th birthday bash. BMC members get 15% off all tickets.

www.shaff.co.uk

BMC AGM and Peak Area Hill Walk 30-31 March, Buxton

Things kick off at 9.30 a.m. with a discussion of the BMC's vision, mission and values; the AGM starts at noon. The day before you can join Peter and other helpers for a circular walk from Buxton; more info on page 5.

www.thebmc.co.uk/agm2019

Winnats Rally

27 April, Winnats Pass

More info on page 4. Get involved.

BMC Peak Area Contacts

Peak Area Chair: Rob Greenwood.

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Secretary: Becky Hammond.

becky@bmcvolunteers.org.uk

Peak Area Reps (your voice on the BMC National Council):

David Brown and Alison Cairns.

<http://community.thebmc.co.uk/peak>

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Peak Area Hill Walking Reps:

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Peak Area Newsletter Editorial:

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The British Mountaineering Council (BMC) is the representative body that exists to protect the freedoms and promote the interests of climbers, hill walkers and mountaineers, including ski-mountaineers. Find out more: www.thebmc.co.uk/bmc-governance