

# Rock Climbing & Bouldering *in Snowdonia*



Glenda Huxter on Grey Arete HVS, Glyder Fawr (Photo: Ray Wood)



[www.snowdonia-active.com](http://www.snowdonia-active.com)

“ *The climbing scene in North Wales is renowned across the world...* ”

## Introduction

Snowdonia is blessed with some of the most celebrated and varied rock climbing in the world. The dramatic landscape, with its steep mountain ridges and magnificent sea cliffs has proved to be an enduring and irresistible magnet for those seeking the adventure and thrill of the climbing experience.

The choice of crags within such a tight geographical area is unrivalled in the UK; the full spectrum of climbing experience is available to the visitor, all in less than an hour's drive from any of the central villages. From classic mountain routes to world class sport climbs, from wild sea cliff adventures to test-piece boulder problems, the crags of Snowdonia have defined the aspirations of passionate climbers for over a century.

The climbing scene in North Wales is renowned across the world; the vibrant mix of cutting edge activists and colourful characters certainly adds to the allure and charm of the area. During the winter months there are often slide shows and lectures in Llanberis, Capel Curig and Bangor, and the Llanberis Mountain Film Festival, held each year in February, attracts both the media and the international climbing glitterati. At a less glamorous but more practical level the Snowdonia area supports a broad spectrum of outdoor orientated businesses: instructors, guides, climbing shops, photographers, writers, accommodation providers, cafes and climbing hardware manufacturers such as DMM.

## History

Ever since the Victorian pioneers began their explorations in the late nineteenth century, each generation of climbers, has been drawn back by the magic of Snowdonia.

Initially the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel provided a base for the visiting climbers, but later in the 1920's and 30's, the Climbers Club Helyg hut in the Ogwen Valley became the hub of the burgeoning scene. Early climbing sorties were generally focused upon the Ogwen Valley and the foreboding ramparts of Lliwedd with an over-riding emphasis upon preparation and training for Alpine trips. Yet as innovative equipment developments arrived and the standard of mountaineering skills increased, a shift was made towards the challenges of the steeper and more technical crags of the Llanberis Pass and Clogwyn Du'r Arddu. Gifted climbers such as John Menlove Edwards, Colin Kirkus and later, after the 2nd World War, Joe Brown and Don Whillans pushed standards upwards and established many of the classic routes that have remained popular to this day.

Snowdonia has always had a strong link with developments in international mountaineering, and successive Everest expeditions have used Snowdonia as a training base. The successful 1953 Everest expedition even signed their names on the ceiling of the Everest room in the Pen-y-Gwryd Hotel.

The 1960's and 70's brought yet more escalation of standards and the development of the dramatic sea cliffs of Gogarth on Ynys Môn. Pete Crew and Martin Boysen led the growing pack of active climbers through the 1960's, yet towards the end of the 1970's systematic training methods had arrived and a new face came to dominate the





*Martin Crook on Dream of White Horses HVS, Wen Zawn (Photo: Ray Wood)*

“ *The North Wales climbing scene today has a healthy and diverse mix of styles that reflects the wonderful and varied range of climbing venues both up in the mountain valleys and out along the coastal fringe of Snowdonia.* ”

development of hard and serious new routes. John Redhead typified the new breed of full-time climbers, and he produced a series of outstandingly technical and bold new routes on crags all over the area throughout the following decade.

The 1980's certainly saw rapid advances in technique and climbing standards. Out on the bolted limestone crags of Llandudno, the continental 'sport climbing' ethic arrived. The new breed of super routes (such as Ben Moon's Statement of Youth, French 8a) mixed ground-breaking physical difficulty with the relative safety of bolted protection. Elsewhere the traditional bold North Wales style continued to feature, with a wave of radical development in the disused Llanberis slate quarries. Gogarth witnessed a latter day renaissance in the late 1980's and early 1990's. The enthusiasm for adventurous sea cliff climbing also spread southwards to the Llyn Peninsula, which experienced a major revival around the same time.

The 90's will be best remembered for the emergence of 2 refined subcultures of the climbing game: 'headpointing' & 'bouldering'. Johnny Dawes' headpoint ascent of the Indian Face (E9 6c) on Clogwyn Du'r Arddu in 1986 foretold of a future trend that really took hold during the 1990's. This method of extended pre-ascent preparation and top rope practice certainly gave birth to a range of extremely difficult and serious routes.

In the mid 1990's the growing international popularity of bouldering penetrated the North Wales scene, and an energetic surge of discovery and crag development quickly established the area as a premier destination for all boulderers.

Despite the attraction of the big numbers associated with headpointing, in recent years there has been a drift back to the traditional art of 'on sight' climbing. The North Wales climbing scene today has a healthy and diverse mix of styles that reflects the wonderful and varied range of climbing venues both up in the mountain valleys and out along the coastal fringe of Snowdonia.

## Rock Climbing and Bouldering Definitions

Over the last 20 years rock climbing has become increasingly diverse, with new styles and disciplines emerging as the sport evolves. Each discipline has its own character, techniques, and code of ethics, yet all aspire to the same end: namely to ascend a piece of rock in a specific style.

### Trad Climbing

North-West Wales is blessed with a broad mix of climbing styles, however the dominant ethic has always been traditional. 'Trad climbing' as it is known encompasses a number of sub disciplines and variations on the theme: on sight / headpointing / top roping. Nonetheless, the emphasis is always upon the use of 'natural' protection that exploits the existing cracks and breaks in the rock surface. multi pitch trad routes do require much more refined rope work and route finding skills than single pitch / outcrop style routes.

### Sport Climbing

Sport climbing is a form of roped climbing where bolts are used for protection. Bolts are 'in-situ' (i.e. permanently fixed into the rock) and positioned relatively close together, allowing you to climb safely at your limit, perhaps with frequent falls arrested by your belayer. Much of the risk associated with traditional climbing is removed by the presence of the bolts. Unfortunately there is a dearth of easier grade routes of this nature in North Wales. The routes tend to be single pitch, but there are some multi pitch sport routes on the Llandudno Ormes.

Sport climbers will normally attempt to 'flash' or 'on sight' a route (essentially making a successful first try), but failing that the 'redpoint' method is adopted, whereby the route is practiced in sections (sometimes for days on end!) before a single, no falls lead is made.





Climbing & abseiling instruction, Lion Rock  
(Photo: Surf Lines)



[www.snowdonia-active.com](http://www.snowdonia-active.com)

“ The bouldering crags of Snowdonia are rapidly gaining in popularity. The quality and quantity of bouldering on offer is very impressive.

## Soloing/Deep Water Soloing

All rock climbs can potentially be climbed by an unroped and unprotected 'solo' climber, assuming that they are sufficiently skilled and cool headed to cope with the difficulties. In reality, only easier or mid grade climbs tend to attract solo ascents, and even then it is best left to experienced climbers operating well within their grade. Remember, if a hold breaks unexpectedly, a ground fall is likely to cause serious injury and could be fatal.

Deep water soloing is essentially soloing above deep water (usually the sea), where a fall would land you in the water. There are only a limited number of suitable venues for this in the area. Again, this is a potentially serious activity best left to experienced climbers.

## Bouldering

Bouldering is an increasingly popular sub-sport of climbing. In many respects it is the purest form of climbing, in that it focuses upon the simple act of climbing boulders or small faces, usually less than 15 feet high. Ropes are not used, but the boulderer will protect rocky landings with carefully placed portable pads. Boulderers tend to follow circuits of 15 to 25 problems, or they may warm up on a mini circuit, before laying siege to a single hard problem at the limit of their ability.

## Indoor Climbing Walls

Artificial indoor climbing walls have become increasingly popular over the last 10 years. For many young climbers they offer a safe entry point into the wider sport of rock climbing. They do provide a good learning environment, yet they are also very popular with experienced climbers wishing to maintain fitness, or to train for improved performance on outdoor climbs. The roped sections are very well bolted and the bouldering walls are protected by crash pad landings. In bad weather most climbers will make a beeline for the nearest indoor wall.

## Aid Climbing

This is a very specialist aspect of the sport, where exceptionally blank or overhanging sections of rock are climbed by weighting and pulling directly upon the protection.

## Grades

The grading system for climbs in the UK runs in ascendance from Moderate, Difficult, Very Difficult, Severe, Very Severe, through to the upper range of Extremely Severe that is subdivided into numbered E grades (E1 to E10). Traditional grades have evolved over the last century as standards have risen. This does help to explain how a 'Very Difficult' route is considered to be a low grade suitable for a beginner.

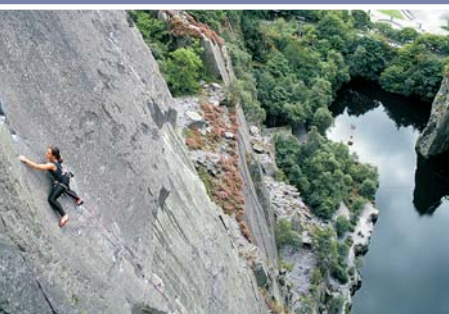
Sport climbs use the French system which can be equated approximately to the British grade. For example, French 6a would be similar to a well protected E1.

In North Wales the difficulty of a boulder problem is described by the American 'V' grade system that runs from V0- to V15.

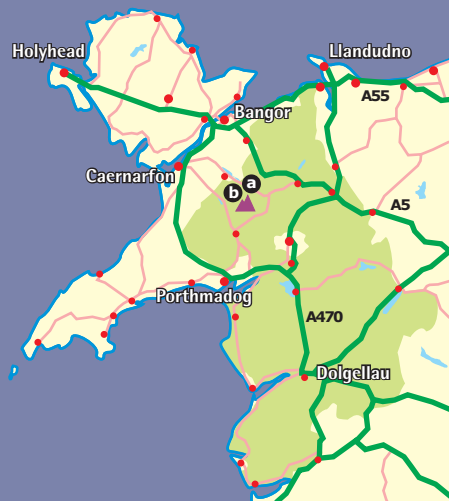
## Advice for beginners

If you have never experienced rock climbing before, it is definitely worth considering doing an instruction course. As with all Outdoor activities, the skills and knowledge required for rock climbing are best learnt in a safe and controlled environment, under the supervision of trained instructors or experienced enthusiasts. Most indoor climbing walls offer appropriate starter courses for beginners. In the Snowdonia area there are also numerous activity providers and outdoor centres where you can receive an introduction to the activity. (See the Directory at [www.snowdonia-active.com](http://www.snowdonia-active.com) for more details of local providers.)





Helen Davies, Comes the Dervish E3 5c, Vivian Quarries, (Photo: Pete Bursnall)



Much of the climbing in North-West Wales involves multi-pitch skills. If your current level of experience extends no further than the single pitch Pennine outcrops, then you might wish to consider a skills upgrade course. Another option is to join one of the many climbing clubs, and take advantage of in-house schooling from more experienced club members. Many of these clubs also own bunkhouses and climbing huts in Snowdonia.

To some extent a total beginner could just turn up and have a go at bouldering in Snowdonia. It is certainly the safest and least equipment orientated activity within the range of different rock climbing disciplines. That said, there is still an element of risk (if you fall off, you will always hit the ground) and perhaps a better starting point for a total novice would be the climbing wall or a formal instruction course.

## Seasonal advice

There is a logical split between the mountain and coastal areas in North Wales that fits well with the shift of the seasons. Although it is possible to climb on most of the mountain crags throughout the year, the winter months yield fewer days when conditions are favourable for climbing. The difference in weather conditions and temperature between the mountains and the coast is often dramatic. Even if it is really tipping it down (or snowing) in the Llanberis Pass, a visit to Tremadog, the Llandudno Ormes, Gogarth or the Llyn Peninsula will often lead you to a dry and sunny crag.

In summary, the best tactic is to go to the mountains when you can, and to the coast when you can't. And thus, with a bit of luck and the odd smart decision, you should find dry rock and good conditions every time you go out.

## Regional breakdown

What follows is a break down of the main climbing areas in the region, as they are described in the definitive range of guide books.

- **Llanberis (a)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Iwan Arfon Jones, 2004

The mecca for many climbers, the Llanberis Pass is undoubtedly one of the finest and most atmospheric places to climb in the whole of the UK, with many classic and famous climbs.

The sunny roadside crags on the North side of this tight mountain valley are very popular, although they do require multi-pitch competence and the ability to ascend and descend steep scree/loose approaches.

The shadowy south side is generally better suited to the summer months, as the rock can be slow to dry, with the obvious exception of the nose on Dinas Mot. These crags offer big and occasionally serious routes in magnificent situations.

- **Llanberis Slate** - Current guide book: Slate, Iwan Arfon Jones, 1999

The Dinorwig Quarries spawned a unique subculture to the game of climbing during the 1980's when the clean slabby walls of this huge complex of quarries were developed by the climbers of Llanberis. The climbing style is an acquired taste, but once you've gotten used to the tiny holds and spaced protection, it can be quite an addictive medium upon to which to climb. Be warned though, there is little on offer for the lower grade climber.

- **Clogwyn Du'r Arddu (b)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Nick Dixon, 2004

The cathedral of Welsh climbing, Cloggy as it is affectionately referred to, is a very impressive and exposed cliff (some 600 feet high).

Situated beneath the summit of Snowdon at an altitude of 2200 feet, the rock climbing season is usually limited to the summer months. Steeped in history, this dramatic and imposing cliff holds a special place in the hearts of many British climbers. The crag does deserve respect and multi-pitch competence is an essential attribute for all who wish to climb here.



Mid-grade climbing on Castell Helen, Gogarth, (Photo: Adrian Trendel)



• **Ogwen and Carneddau (c)** - Current guide: Climbers Club, Iwan Arfon Jones, 1993

The Ogwen Valley is often cited as the best place for a novice climber to take his/her first tentative steps into the world of climbing. Indeed the Tryfan Bach slab is a popular starting point for many, but even this is considerably more involved than the average single pitch grit outcrop in the Pennines.

It is true that the Ogwen Valley is blessed with many outstanding lower grade routes on the famous Idwal Slabs or East face of Tryfan, but typically they are multi-pitch affairs with a strong mountaineering slant. Indeed there is much potential for long summer day link ups, echoing the Alpine experience.

The Carneddau lies to the north of the Glyderau range. Amongst this wild and expansive range of mountains, a number of high and remote crags offer peace and solitude away from the hustle and bustle of the Idwal circus. The routes on Llech Ddu & Craig yr Ysfa are of a similar ilk and quality to the Cloggy classics over on Snowdon.

• **Crafnant** - Current guide book: Mynydd Climbing Club, currently out of print

This quiet backwater valley has a couple of superb crags featuring good quality mid - hard grade routes on clean open rock.

• **Cwm Silyn and Cwellyn (d)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Bob Wightman, Paul Jenkinson, 2003)

Although this area lies adjacent to the Snowdon massif, it is a much quieter option; even in summer many of the crags will be deserted. The area offers the typical mountain crag experience, with classic venues such as Cwm Silyn giving big routes and plenty of exposure.

• **Liwedd (e)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Kelvin Neal, 1998

This magnificent crag located upon the Snowdon Horseshoe ridge is in fact the biggest cliff to be found in both Wales and England. At 1000 feet high it features a host of mountaineering style routes, often in the lower grades, but always with an air of seriousness and commitment.

• **Meirionnydd (f)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Martin Crocker John Sumner, Terry Taylor and Elfyn Jones, 2002

The southern part of the National Park has a vast range of diverse and occasionally esoteric climbing opportunities. In general the crags are quieter and less frequented than the popular northern areas. If you are looking for peace and solitude, then this is the area to visit. Aside from the traditional mountain climbs in Cwm Cywarch & on Cadair Idris, and the friendly classics of the Moelwyns, a variety of interesting small crags can be found. There is even some bolted slate quarries for those looking for sport routes.

• **Tremadog (g)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Iwan Arfon Jones, Dave Ferguson, Pat Littlejohn, 2000

One of the most reliable areas in North Wales for good weather, Tremadog features easy access crags with excellent rock quality. There is a high concentration of high quality routes (throughout the spectrum of grades) and the sunny aspect of the main crags ensures the enduring popularity of this excellent area.

• **Gogarth (h)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, Andy Newton et al, reprinted 2002. A new edition is currently being worked on.

For many climbers this is the jewel in the crown of the North Wales climbing scene. The sea cliffs of Holyhead Mountain and The Range at Rhoscolyn offer a vast array of adventurous and sometimes serious routes that are often reached by abseil approach. Aside from the Holyhead Mountain crag, there are few routes in the lower grades. As with the Llyn Peninsula crags, Gogarth does suit the more experienced climber, many of the routes are tidal and loose rock is often part of the 'experience'.





Adam Wainwright, Jawbreaker V5, Porth Ysgo  
(Photo: Ray Wood)



- **Llyn (i)** - Current guide book: Climbers Club, I. A. Jones, D. Ferguson, P. Littlejohn, 2002  
Like Tremadog and Gogarth, the Llyn Peninsula is a useful bad weather alternative when the mountains are lashed with rain. This time though the crags are best suited to the experienced traditional climber. Many of the approaches are quite committing and the terrain on the crags requires high levels of skill and competence.

- **North Wales Limestone (j)** - Current guide book: Rockfax, Alan James, 1997  
The limestone crags of the Llandudno area feature many bolted sport routes, as well as some traditional routes. In general there is a lack of easier sport routes (i.e. less than Fr 6a), although Castle Inn Quarry (located in a pub car park) is a friendly option for those lacking the experience or skills required for the Marine Drive routes.

There are two selective guides that give coverage to rock climbs throughout the region.

**Rock Climbing in Snowdonia** - Constable, Paul Williams, 1996. Although now somewhat outdated (last revised 1990), this selected guide remains a popular option for first time visitors and can be a valuable source of information if one of the definitive guides is out of print for any length of time.

**Scrambles & Easy Climbs in Snowdonia** - Grey Stone Books, J Sparks, T. Hutton, J Rawson 2005. A selected guide describing big mountaineering days out on the crags and ridges of Snowdonia.

## Principle Bouldering areas

The bouldering crags of Snowdonia are rapidly gaining in popularity. The quality and quantity of bouldering on offer is very impressive. The full spectrum of difficulty and style can be found here throughout the year: whether you are looking for a steady circuit of mid grade problems or a hardcore test-piece. As with the main rock climbing crags, the seasonal trend of 'summer in the mountains' and 'winter on the coast' prevails. However, most boulderers do prefer colder conditions and the better friction that this brings (5-10 degrees centigrade is often quoted as being optimum).

- **Llanberis Pass (B1)**

The famous rugged mountain valley contains the highest concentration of problems in the whole area, with numerous classic problems throughout the grade range. For most visitors, this craggy, boulder-strewn place represents the starting point of their acquaintance with bouldering in North Wales. The Cromlech Boulders will always be popular; the roadside access, the sheer density of problems throughout the grades serve to ensure regular attendance from locals and visitors alike. The Wavelength hillside above Ynys Ettws is without doubt one of the best places to boulder in the whole of North Wales. The quality of the problems and the atmospheric position combined, make for a heady brew of bouldering pleasure. There is also a wealth of esoteric micro crags hidden throughout the length of this remarkable valley that await the attention of the curious bouldering connoisseur.

- **Ogwen Valley (B2)**

Similarly grand and certainly as imposing as its famous neighbour the Llanberis Pass, the Ogwen Valley contains many fine bouldering venues, and some of the finest problems in the entire North Wales area. From the Braichmelyn and Caseg boulders in the Bethesda circuit, past the Sheep Pen Boulders (which is an invaluable suntrap during the winter months) and across to Milestone Buttress and Caseg Fraith there is a raft of classic modern boulder problems.

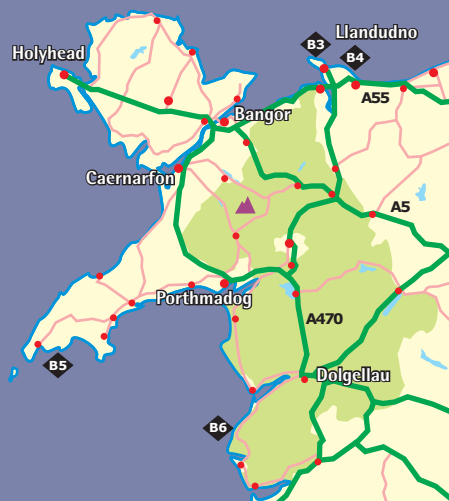
## Outlying Crags

Peripheral to the two main mountain valleys of the Pass and the Ogwen Valley there is a whole network of interesting and attractive bouldering crags. Here the discerning boulderer can find both solitude and technical interest, and in the case of Carreg Hylldrem, steep dry rock whatever the weather.





Mark Katz, Mr Whippy V7, Marine Drive, Llandudno (Photo: Simon Pantan)



The Cwm Dyli Boulders are ideally positioned in the meadow below Craig Aderyn at the base of the Snowdon horseshoe; a very beautiful and secluded spot with many excellent problems. Back along the valley and close to Plas y Brenin is the RAC Boulders: a delightful sunny place that is worth visiting throughout the year. A healthy brace of low and mid grade problems above decent, friendly landings, coupled with the roadside access ensures the enduring popularity of this much-cherished venue.

### Coastal Crags

By virtue of its position at the gateway to the Marine Drive in Llandudno, Parisella's Cave (B3) is often the first port of call for first time visitors to the area. However, the nature of the climbing is particularly uncompromising; some of the hardest problems in Wales can be found in the main cave! It does stay dry in the rain though.

Angel Bay (B4) is perhaps a friendlier option. This tidal limestone bay situated on the Little Orme is home to a stack of classic problems throughout the grade range (V0-V11), although it is best to visit on a windy day with favourable tidal conditions.

The Porth Ysgo (B5) boulders, located at the bottom end of the Lley Peninsula, close to the surfing mecca Hell's Mouth is a charming venue blessed with over 100 problems on rough, clean gabbro boulders, bordered by the sea. The superb climbing is complimented by the tranquil location and abundance of sunbathing opportunities.

Finally, if you are planning a trip to the South of the National Park, then consider a trip to Cae Du (B6), an excellent easy/mid grade venue located just north of Tywyn.

The current guide book is *North Wales Bouldering/Bowldro Gogledd Cymru* (Northern Soul, Simon Pantan 2004). This bilingual book is the definitive guide to the bouldering crags in North Wales.

### Specialist publications:

**Rock Climbing Essential Skills & Techniques** by Libby Peter, Published by Mountain Leader Training UK (MLTUK) - The official handbook of the Mountain Instructor and Single Pitch Award Schemes.

**Climber** - The most popular British climbing magazine, with regular features on the Snowdonia area and up to date news, comment and stunning photography. Also features monthly contributions from North Wales based climbers, Jim Perrin, Simon Pantan and Ray Wood.

**Climb** - A recently launched UK magazine giving topical coverage of mountaineering and rock climbing worldwide. Entertaining gear coverage from the ever irreverent Andy Kirkpatrick and top quality photography give the magazine a vibrant, modern edge.

**Friction** - Also recently launched, this promising new A5 sized UK climbing magazine has an emphasis on bouldering, sport climbing & competitions, all done with a youthful, punky touch.

### Videos:

There are number of climbing and bouldering videos that feature action from the North Wales crags. For a start check out **Stone Monkey, Stick It! , Between the Rain and Amateur Hardcore.**

### Useful websites:

[www.northwalesbouldering.com](http://www.northwalesbouldering.com) - The definitive North Wales bouldering site, with all the latest news, first ascents, new areas, photo gallery, topos etc.

[www.climbers-club.co.uk](http://www.climbers-club.co.uk) - The leading UK rock climbing and mountaineering club and principle publisher of North Wales climbing guides.

[www.cordee.co.uk](http://www.cordee.co.uk) - The specialist distributor and book publisher. Rock climbing, mountaineering, trekking, skiing and travel: all the latest maps, instructional/'how to climb' books, guides and videos, with an online sales facility.





Nathan Davies at The Beacon (Photo: Ray Wood)

“ Over the last 20 years rock climbing has become increasingly diverse, with new styles and disciplines emerging as the sport evolves.

[www.midwalesclimbing.co.uk](http://www.midwalesclimbing.co.uk) - Doctor Terry Taylor's superb site dedicated to climbing in the Meirionnydd and mid Wales area. Lots of pretty pictures, topos and information from the enthusiastic host.

[www.planetfear.com](http://www.planetfear.com) - Another climbing site with regular news, features and a relatively busy forum.

[www.rockfax.com](http://www.rockfax.com) - On line sales of the North Wales Limestone guide and a downloadable up date for the guide. Lots of other climbing guides to areas in the UK and abroad. This site also hosts the extremely popular 'Rocktalk' forum.

[www.snowfire.co.uk](http://www.snowfire.co.uk) - Alex Messenger's photo gallery site including a stunning selection of North Wales climbing shots.

[www.thebmc.co.uk](http://www.thebmc.co.uk) - The British Mountaineering Council site. Check out the Regional Access Database for the latest access agreement changes for crags in Snowdonia or the affiliated club database. The BMC also publishes its own magazine (Summit) which is distributed to all members and affiliated clubs.

[www.ukbouldering.com](http://www.ukbouldering.com) - Irreverent and busy website illuminating the British bouldering scene. Lots of inspiring images, articles and a buzzing forum.

[www.ukclimbing.com](http://www.ukclimbing.com) - Popular sister site to Rockfax with an impressive database of crags, climbing walls etc. an extensive picture gallery and a news/feature section.

## Access and Conservation notes

Although the vast majority of crags in North-West Wales have well established access agreements, you should never take this for granted. Before visiting a climbing venue make sure you have checked the most up to date guidebook giving coverage to the area. It is also recommended that reference is made to the British Mountaineering Council Regional Access Database ([www.thebmc.org](http://www.thebmc.org)) which provides dynamic updates of any changes to access arrangements throughout Wales (and England).

Most of the crags in the area lie on private land and good relations with landowners are essential for maintaining access agreements. Please bear this in mind wherever you are climbing.

As well as being blessed with superb and varied rock climbing, Snowdonia is also blessed with a wide range of rock types, landscape and wildlife. From rare arctic-alpine plants on high altitude north facing cliffs on Snowdon, the Glyderau and Carneddau, to large colonies of seabirds on the coastal cliffs at Gogarth and the Llyn peninsula. Much of the region and its landforms have been influenced and moulded by ice during the last glacial advance, producing the cliffs, crags and large boulders essential not only for our sport, but also for the botanical wealth of the area. The rock types do vary however, and this, coupled with the location and frequency with which a particular cliff is climbed on, will result in very different experiences from an environmental as well as a climbing viewpoint. Some of the less frequented, higher cliffs can have large amounts of dripping rocks covered in vegetation; important for conservation but frightening to someone used to clean, bolted sports climbs!

Fortunately, the rock types providing the best material for plants of conservation interest are not generally the same as those which are most attractive to climbers. Vegetation can be a nuisance to climbers, but to a botanist it is an obvious delight, particularly on cliffs and crags some of the few places in the UK where natural habitats have managed to survive away from grazing animals, particularly sheep. This is why steep ground, including rock-faces, is so important for conservation and why all climbers are asked to keep any removal of vegetation, or 'gardening' to a minimum.

The consequences of climbing activities may appear insignificant in relation to the numerous and more substantial pressures on the countryside, but the fact that we undertake our sport in these special areas can dramatically magnify any impact we have.





Julie Christian on Tennis Shoe S, Idwal Slabs  
(Photo: Adrian Trendel)

“*Snowdonia has always had a strong link with developments in international mountaineering, and successive Everest expeditions have used Snowdonia as a training base.*”

Many of the crags in Snowdonia are within nationally or internationally important sites for conservation, designated for varied reasons including their vegetation, birdlife or geology. If uncommon or rare birds are found nesting close to climbing routes, climbers and conservationists usually work together to resolve any problems and may agree a temporary seasonal climbing restriction if considered necessary. As happens in many other parts of the country, this will be removed if nesting at the location ceases.

Certain cliffs at Gogarth, the limestone cliffs at Llandudno and Craig yr Aderyn south of Cadair Idris, for example, have such restrictions, details of which can be found in the conservation and access notes included in most guidebooks to climbing in Snowdonia. These notes give more details about the wildlife interest of each area covered and any restrictions currently in place and so are extremely useful in ensuring that you can enjoy your climbing without damaging the environment.

The BMC hold information on a number of sites and have produced a booklet called 'Tread Lightly' which gives information on the upland environment and how we can care for it. This is available from the BMC and should soon be on their website. There is a plethora of books written about Snowdonia and its wildlife, the titles of which can be obtained from a web search or from any good bookshop. More detailed information about particular conservation and species issues is available from organisations such as:-

The Countryside Council for Wales in Bangor. Tel: 01248 672500.  
[www.ccw.gov.uk](http://www.ccw.gov.uk)

The Royal Society for the Protection of Wales in Bangor. Tel: 01248 363800.  
[www.rspb.org.uk](http://www.rspb.org.uk)

The North Wales Wildlife Trust. Tel: 01248 351541.  
[www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/northwales](http://www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/northwales)

## Access and Conservation Trust (ACT)

ACT is a charitable trust, established by the British Mountaineering Council, the Mountaineering Council of Scotland and the Mountaineering Council of Ireland. The trust aims to promote sustainable access to cliffs, mountains and open countryside by facilitating education and conservation projects that safeguard the access needs of climbers, hill-walkers and mountaineers. Check out the [www.accesstrust.org.uk](http://www.accesstrust.org.uk) website for more details of local initiatives such as the CHIPs project.

## Countryside Code:

### Respect – Protect – Enjoy

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep your dog under close control
- Consider other people





*Hanging out on Main Cliff, Gogarth,  
(Photo: Adrian Trendel)*

“ if you have never experienced rock climbing before, it's definitely worth considering doing an instruction course. As with all outdoor activities, the skills and knowledge required for rock climbing are best learnt in a safe and controlled environment

## Snowdonia-Active website

[www.snowdonia-active.com](http://www.snowdonia-active.com) provides a whole host of information about local activity providers, instructors and guides, accommodation and campsites, outdoor shops and cafes. Check out the Directory, a geographically specific database covering outdoor orientated businesses in the North-West Wales area. The site is host to a whole range of downloadable activity and area guides written by field experts. It also has links to numerous weather forecasting websites.

## Public Transport

Although the Snowdonia area is well served with a modern road network there are many alternatives to travelling by private car. The Snowdonia National Park, the Llŷn Peninsula & Anglesey are criss-crossed with a network of local & regional buses, and rail links. In the northern part of the National Park the special Sherpa bus service connects the most popular walking & climbing areas to adjacent towns and villages.

## UK Public Transport Information

<http://www.traveline.org.uk> gives links to public transport providers. Click on the map for information about coach, bus, rail, air & ferry services for North Wales & beyond.

## Disclaimer

*The writer and publishers of this leaflet accept no responsibility for the way in which readers use the information contained therein. The descriptions and recommendations are for guidance only and must be subject to discriminating judgement by the reader. Advice and training should be sought before utilising any equipment or techniques mentioned within the text or shown in any of the photographic images.*

*Climbing and bouldering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.*

## COPYRIGHT NOTICE

© 2006 Eryri-Bywiol Cyf trading as Snowdonia Active ('the publisher')  
All Rights Reserved. Email: [admin@snowdonia-active.com](mailto:admin@snowdonia-active.com)

## Author Bio: Simon Panton

*A keen climber since the early 80's, Simon has worked in the Outdoor scene for many years, firstly in the climbing wall manufacturing industry then in outdoor retail. He is the author of the North Wales Bouldering guide and is currently working on the soon to be published North Wales Rock guide, as well as operating as a regular writer for Climber magazine. In addition he is website editor for [www.northwalesbouldering.com](http://www.northwalesbouldering.com) and [www.groundupclimbing.com](http://www.groundupclimbing.com). Simon is also a co-director of V12 Outdoor in Llanberis and has organised and performed at numerous climbing culture events.*