

Craggers



Adventure for all

Annual Report 2015



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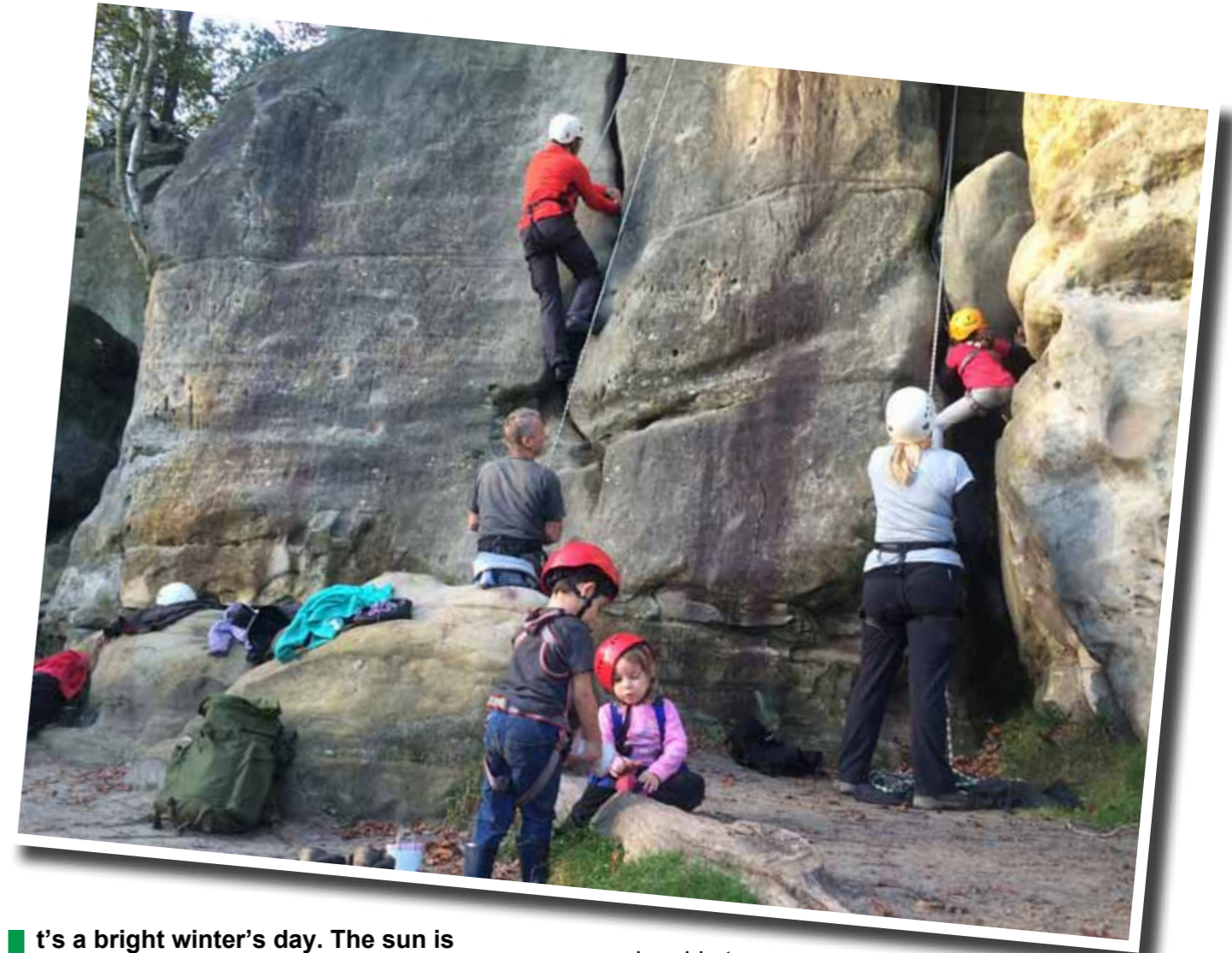


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It's a bright winter's day. The sun is streaming through the window and the extra hours of daylight are coaxing out the spring flowers. But it is cold and I can't help thinking about all the rough sleepers I saw in the city centre yesterday.

There has been a 92% rise in the autumn 2015 rough sleeper count compared to 2014, which is three times the national rise of 30%, and means only Bristol and Westminster have higher numbers. Since the count was carried out in November 2015 at least three homeless people have died on the streets.

Street homelessness is a heartbreaking visual reminder of the increasing level of poverty in the city.

A study for Brighton and Hove City Council by the director of public health shows that one in three children are living in poverty in parts of Brighton.

Meanwhile Council staff have been told they should have "honest and open conversations" with families reliant on benefits, warning them that they might not

be able to afford big enough homes in the city and to consider moving to more affordable areas of the country. It all sounds like ethnic cleansing by bureaucracy rather than bullets.

House prices in Brighton in the third quarter of 2015 were 23% above the previous high in November 2007 and just under 53% higher than the average in the rest of England.

There is a sense of desperation amongst people on benefit or low wages. Could they also end up sleeping in a shop doorway?

Poverty and insecurity tends to make people isolated and withdrawn and these depressing statistics highlights the need for our charity to get out there and engage with increasingly disenfranchised individuals and families.

2015 has been a year where we have had to try to do more with less. We have had far less funding but

there are far more people in need of the support, motivation and potentially life changing experiences we provide.

I hope you will find, as you look at the reports contained within these pages, the enthusiasm of our volunteers and those uplifting moments experienced by our participants.

As always a huge thank you to all our volunteers, to Tudor Trust who's funding ended half way through 2015 and to the BMC.

So far for 2016 we have some funding from Sussex Community Foundation, Brighton and Hove City Council and the BMC. We are waiting to hear about other funding bids which will help us ensure that in the coming year we can provide Adventure for all.

Thank you!

I just wanted to say a MASSIVE THANKYOU to all of the volunteers from Craggers, and the people involved who made the Somerset holiday an amazing experience!!!! Ari and I really enjoyed our time, felt loved and supported, and have come back home feeling refreshed, and with an even greater passion for climbing!

– Mariam n Ari xxxxx

Thank you!

I also wanted to really thank every single person for this trip. That was the best of our three trips with Craggers.

– Helene

► Accounts 2015 – 2016

	2014-2015	2015-2016
Outgoing funds		
Volunteer costs	370.82	879.82
Activity and operational costs	10,928.82	2,373.99
Office and premises (including money to petty cash)	520.00	1,076.00
Equipment	1,866.10	841.75
Volunteer training	3,847.23	2,696.43
Insurance	119.40	123.20
Publicity	96.72	53.74
Memberships	898.90	517.00
Total	18,647.99	8,562.25

Incoming Funds		
Grants	13,500.00	3,873.00
Membership fees	217.00	223.06
Interest	13.90	1.75
Fundraising	1,705.79	697.40
Donations	199.04	466.92
Total	15,635.73	5,262.13

Restricted reserves:	£2,003.59	£3,500.00
Committed reserves:	£6,049.42	£1,910.83
General free reserves:	£2,135.73	£200.00

► SPA training at Plas y Brenin

12th - 13th January

I've just completed my SPA training at Plas y Brenin in Snowdonia. Plas y Brenin is the national training centre for mountaineering, climbing and other outdoor activities. The SPA is the Single Pitch Award – the longstanding benchmark qualification for taking people climbing outdoors.



The training is two days long but although packed with information and very useful, does not in itself constitute a qualification. You need to come back and do an assessment in order to become an SPA holder.

January is in some ways not the most sensible time to be doing an SPA training as the chances of it bucketing down with rain would seem quite high. Indeed the forecast a couple of days in advance was for heavy rain and 30mph wind, which would have made for a less fun SPA. However, a combination of getting lucky with the weather and the instructors' skill in picking locations where the weather wouldn't be so bad meant that we actually had two pretty good days at a couple of different crags with almost no rain at all.

The SPA is an award qualifying you to take people out climbing at straight forward simple crags or outcrops, where you can walk to the bottom of the route and you can always be lowered back down to the ground – places that are a bit like a big outdoor climbing wall. Climbs that you have to be a mountaineer to get to or that will take you hours to climb, hauling the ropes up after you, hundreds of feet in the air, are not covered.

For example in October Craggers went to Dartmoor on a climbing trip and visited Sheep's Tor. This is a

good example of the sort of place covered by the SPA – a single straight forward lump of rock that you can climb up and walk back down to the bottom. I did some trad leading at Sheep's Tor (trad = traditional, meaning climbing natural rock which has not had metal bolts placed all the way up it to attach yourself to), belaying other people up routes and also at another venue I led one multipitch route (multipitch = a route longer than the length of your rope, which you climb by bringing your climbing partner up to an intermediate stance half way up before continuing) and brought people up that too. This made me think more about my knowledge and skills at trad climbing and about doing the SPA qualification.

So now I need to do more trad climbing to practice my skills and also probably get some experience assisting supervising groups at crags. Hopefully some Craggers climbing trips will be able to fulfill some of this and then in the future if I gain the qualification I will be more useful to Craggers by being able to take groups out climbing by myself.

Thank you to Craggers for paying for me to go to Wales and for making it possible for me to do the training course.

► Child Protection Training

25th February

Are your children safe in our hands? Yes, of course they are; apart from anything else all children take part in company with their parent(s)/guardians. But, despite not needing them, all Craggers' main volunteers hold DBS (formally CRB) checks.

Until now these checks had been done under the aegis of other organisations our volunteers have worked with but last year we began the process of getting us all checked under the name of Craggers, through Fair Play for Children.

Along with all responsible organisations we think that it is not enough just to have the DBS checks in place we also need our volunteers to attend regular (at least every three years) training in Child Protection and Safeguarding. Andrew and I recently attended a session run by Safety Net and it updated us on current best practice, reporting procedures etc. The course was delivered using formal presentation, discussion, group work and comprehensive hand outs and was really useful to keep us up to date.

Becci, our Safeguarding Lead, will be attending a longer course to help her in her role.

► Cairngorms trip

March



The view from the summit of Ben MacDui

Cruggers has had an annual trip to Scotland in the winter for a number of years for mountaineering and winter climbing. This year was notable for the absence of Tony, our most experienced member, due to hip and knee operations (too many hills!) For this reason we decided not to try and do any actual roped climbing but to try and do some walking and scrambling (although it has been famously said that there is no such thing as winter walking in Scotland – it's all mountaineering).

We were also hit at short notice by the sudden hospitalisation of Malcolm, one of our aspirant winter mountaineers. But we carried on with the trip in reduced numbers.

What you can achieve in winter in Scotland is very dependent on the weather and the changeable Scottish conditions were especially changeable for us. We had very high winds, snow, torrential rain, and beautiful still days of sunshine in rotation.

On our first day we went up over the top of Cairngorm (seeing the slightly spooky sci-fi weather station on the top) to Loch A'an – the little hidden lake behind the mountain – and then back up by a little snow-filled stream gully.

Apparently climate change is making Scottish winters more windy and the high winds that we experienced had changed the high mountains of the Cairngorms in interesting ways. All the snow had been scoured

off one side of the hills and dumped over the other, so half the landscape was bare of snow, while every hollow and hummock in the lee of the wind was filled with hard snow.

Monday was a very windy day, forecast for 70 or 80mph on the top of the hills, so we stayed low and did a big walk through Rothiemurcas forest to Loch Eilean where a ruined castle sits on an island in the loch. We took a detour to find a good bothy hut I had discovered on my trip to Scotland last year. After reading the graffiti left by lots of teenagers doing Duke of Edinburgh expeditions, we returned back to Glenmore, where we were staying in the youth hostel.

The next day we headed up on a longer walk to the summit of Ben MacDui – Britain's second highest mountain (and until they managed to more accurately measure it in the Nineteenth Century it was thought to be bigger than Ben Nevis). Despite its status, MacDui is less impressive visually than Ben Nevis. Because the whole Cairngorm mountain range is essentially a high-level arctic plateau, many of its highest peaks are basically hills atop this windswept and largely barren plain. However, as we got to the summit, the clouds cleared and we got a 360° panorama of snowy mountains stretching to the horizon.

Wednesday and Thursday were both forecast to be even more windy with gales up to 90 or 100mph on the summits of the mountains, so we decided Wednesday was a rest day and a day off. For Thursday and Friday we had a plan to do a long



The Lairig Ghru

(relatively) low-level walk to a bothy (a basic rustic hut available for use by those going up the hills) and then come back over the tops on what was forecast to be a good day Friday.

However, we had underestimated the wind and after struggling along with heavy rucksacks (including logs for the fire!) at a 45° angle and experiencing difficulty walking along a flat level path without getting blown over we decided to abort the mission for the day.

So Mission: Bothy became a Friday/Saturday plan. Both days were beautiful sunshine and blue skies. We successfully got to the Corrou bothy, walking along the Lairig Ghru – the giant valley that cuts right through the Cairngorm plateau. After we had settled in a bit we started getting a bit cold and decide to walk up the mountain that sits right behind the bothy which is called the Devil's Point. This is apparently because when Queen Victoria rode up Ben MacDui



The bothy

on a pony she asked John Brown "what's that one over there called?" and he tactfully amended the original Gaelic name which means 'Devil's Penis'. So after having perched on the Devil's Penis and watched the sun go down, we settled in for the night at the bothy.

Unfortunately we were maybe too concerned with sorting out the bothy, getting the fire going and getting dinner cooked and then just went to bed. It became evident in the morning that if we had wanted to complete our original plan of walking back over Braeriach (Britain's third highest mountain) we should have left earlier! So perhaps we weren't the slick and efficient, fast-moving mountaineers we would ideally have liked to be – there was probably a bit more faffing than the best Alpinists engage in... It's all a learning experience!

Anyhow, we got to walk in stunning mountain scenery, we went up two or three of the highest and most iconic mountains in the country, saw some beautiful ancient woodland, lots of ptarmigan and black grouse, the odd red squirrel, and evidence of mountain hares and arctic foxes. Not to mention the comedy experience of struggling really hard to walk along a flat level path, which wasn't exactly what we thought we'd be struggling with on a mountaineering trip!

– Andrew



▶ Easter Dorset trip

April



Hedbury quarry

Driving down on Monday, the weather closed in, getting dark, damp, rainy and cold. We were all tired for various reasons so when we arrived spirits were low. But, when we woke up on Tuesday morning the sun was out, the air was mild and the birds were singing. Dorset was transformed and all our spirits rose! However it was rather windy and there were gusts of up to 50 miles an hour.

We packed up our climbing gear and headed out. We walked up hill through fields of new born lamb. I was tempted to take one home but managed to leave it where it was. We arrived at Hedbury quarry and it was deserted but after 5mins a big school trip arrived. It was partially sheltered from the strong wind so Alice quickly lead the grade 1 climb, the easiest there, but it was hard for us. After months of climbing at the wall, being on rock was a tough transition. Alice and I both felt old fear re-emerge that we thought we had faced down. Mariam and Ari climbed part of the way too. They both felt scared which was exacerbated by the extra noise bombarding their senses from the wind and angry crashing sea only a few feet behind us. They both did really well and tried a few times, climbing higher each time, which was really good! Alice and I climbed 'sea view' which is a grade 3 climb. It the climb on the edge of the cliff, closet to the sea and exposed to the winds. As I tried to place the last quick draw to secure the rope at the top, the gusting wind kept on blowing me off! I ended up holding the quick draw to stay on the climb

while secured the rope at the top. This is not my best climbing!!

At about 3pm we were all tired and walked back to the campsite. The wind was so strong that Ari and I were both blown off our feet. I was blown into a bog. We were all tired when we got back but a good sort of tired ness which comes from being in the fresh air. It was the first time Ari had trekked with a back pack so he did really well.

We set alarms for 6am to get the sun in Wednesday morning and we were on the march at 8am. The climbs were empty. We set up the grade 2 climb but the wind and waves were still very frisky which broke everyone's concentration and increased the feelings of fear. Mariam and Ari climbed more than the day before which was a very good effort!

On Thursday we were all very tired indeed and the weather was rainy, so we all just potted about and then went into Swanage for a look around.

The rain continued on Friday morning but stopped at 11am and the sun came out for an hour, so Alice and I went for a walk up to the cliffs behind Swanage in the South West Coast path. It was lovely to see the beautiful Dorset landscape in the sun before we headed home.

Specially thanks on this trip to Ari for a steady production of gorgeous loom bands which he made for us all.

▶ Bird song and sign

7th - 9th May

If you happen to be in the right place, the evening chorus can be as exciting and varied as its dawn counterpart (without the waking up at 0400). And we were in the right place; a large wood near Midhurst in West Sussex. The chorus was spectacular.

For the last few years Bushcraft has become a growing activity within Craggers, first because the subject has become more popular and people, particularly kids, want to take part but also it is perhaps the best way to get people to reconnect with the natural environment, an environment which is rapidly diminishing and becoming more inaccessible. Bushcraft develops a respect for nature and when you have respect and love for something you are more likely to want to protect it. The key, not surprisingly, is knowledge; learn something about plants and you will know what will poison you, what will nourish and heal you and what you can use to make tools etc.

I was aware that I needed to learn more about birds. I could visually identify quite a lot but recognising them by song – well not so good really.

John Ryder and his Woodcraft School are recognised as being some of the very best providers of wilderness skills in this country and fortunately they are close. John had recruited a birdsong expert whose skills complemented perfectly John's tracking skills. After this introduction to the sound of woodland birds at night it was time to find our way back to our tents.

The 0400 alarm was superfluous, the dawn chorus saw to that. The next two days went by in a bit of a blur as we mixed 'classroom' study (bones, diagrams etc) with tracking, identification of feeding and kill sites, birdsong at different times of day and in different environments – we drove out to two very different heathland habitats.

It was an exhausting few days but we learned a lot and I hope that we will be able to enrich Craggers groups trips in the wild with what we have learned.

– Helene

▶ May Bank Holiday Walk

May

Following May Bank holiday tradition, it was a grey start to the day. By the time Brae, Carreg and I had reached the bus stop the mizzle had bejewelled my whiskers. Continuing with bank holiday tradition our bus was 30 minutes late, due to breakdowns and when it eventually arrived we were not allowed to get on as it was full. By the time we arrived at the Rottingdean meeting place we were 15 minutes late.

Grey does not necessarily mean gloomy though and we were certainly quite chipper at the thought of a walk and the weather was definitely starting to improve.

Spring is such a great time of year, with all the birds in hyperactive mode singing for all they are worth and frantically hunting nest materials.

The vegetable life, with its fresh, bright colours, is also gorgeous and we munched our way through Alexanders (peeled and eaten like celery) and Sea Kale (think salty cabbage).

We are looking forward to the next Craggers walk.

► Trip to Somerset

May

After what it seemed to be a very long journey on a minibus, we arrived at the Cerberus Spelaeological Society Hut in Somerset. The place was quite basic but it had all the facilities we needed, a very spacious kitchen and a great garden which we used to have delicious vegan dinners, as a playground and the most adventurous as a campsite. Most days we went to astonishing climbing sites, there were climbing routes for everyone level of expertise.

This was the first time my family and I went on a trip with Craggers, me, my partner Erick, and our daughters, Kira (2 years old) and Yara (7 years old) felt immediately welcomed by everyone, We were constantly motivated by the most experience climbers, Andrew, Tony, Becci and Buster constantly supported us and showed us how to do things right, We all felt we were always in good hands , we all had great support, they show a never ending patience and good will to help us in everything the group needed, They also encouraged us to push our limits. The instructors were amazing, They even taught me and supported me to lead an easy but not less scary route.

Tony constantly tried to push people to undertake new challenges and in my case I felt really motivated by that. I even learned how to abseil down once I was at the top of a 25 mts high route. Buster did an amazing job, teaching me all the steps I needed to do in order to take me down to safe ground, he was calm, in control at all moments and showed a great knowledge and expertise not only as a climber but also as an instructor, God, I can't believe he is only 17! The afternoons were busy, all the children playing, Yara, Kira, Juline and Ari got on really well together and played endless hours in the garden, we decided to cook together so that was also a nice time to share with the group. One day we took the day off climbing and went to Cheddar Gorge, visited the caves, the museum and took a bus ride along the gorge, that was for the children one of the highlights of the trip. I think I can only say thank you to Craggers for giving me and my family access to this incredible experience that we couldn't have had otherwise.

– Jirshari



Cheddar gorge

Somerset
We stayed near Shepton Mallet, and stayed in a ramshackle climbers and cavers bunk house. We climbed everyday mostly in nearby limestone quarries. We had a chance meeting with a local man who keeps the climbs in a good state. This and the access we had to the strange man-made landscapes gave me an awareness of and the feeling of being part of a climbing community. Left wishing I had explored the area more or more specifically visited the local village pubs.

► Preston park walk

5th July

Malcolm and I met up by the Rotunda Cafe. While we waited to see if anyone else turned up, we could see the newts moving around in the pond. I really like newts and it is great to spot them thriving, as they are a protected and declining species in this country. There were common ones and crested ones.

Our walk took us across the central path of the park heading north. The rain had not long stopped and everything smelt lovely. Some of the bowls pitches have been turned into wild flower meadows; they have many different flowering species, different colours, all about knee height which give the impression of walking through a rainbow ocean.

We went right up to the old Preston Church. In the graveyard I saw a baby robin foraging about, it's breast still speckled and not yet red. Then through the back of the Preston Manor house into the formal gardens. The plants there are very different, more exotic, not the same as the main park area. We had a look at the pet cemetery; Malcolm pointed this out as I had never seen it before and I particularly noted the grave of George the Pavilion Cat, who had a book written about him.

We walked by the Preston twins, which are the oldest Elm trees in the country. Then we headed back to the rotunda.

We were only out about an hour, but it made me feel really good. I find even a short walk 'blows the cobwebs' out of my mind and lifts my mood!

Becci.

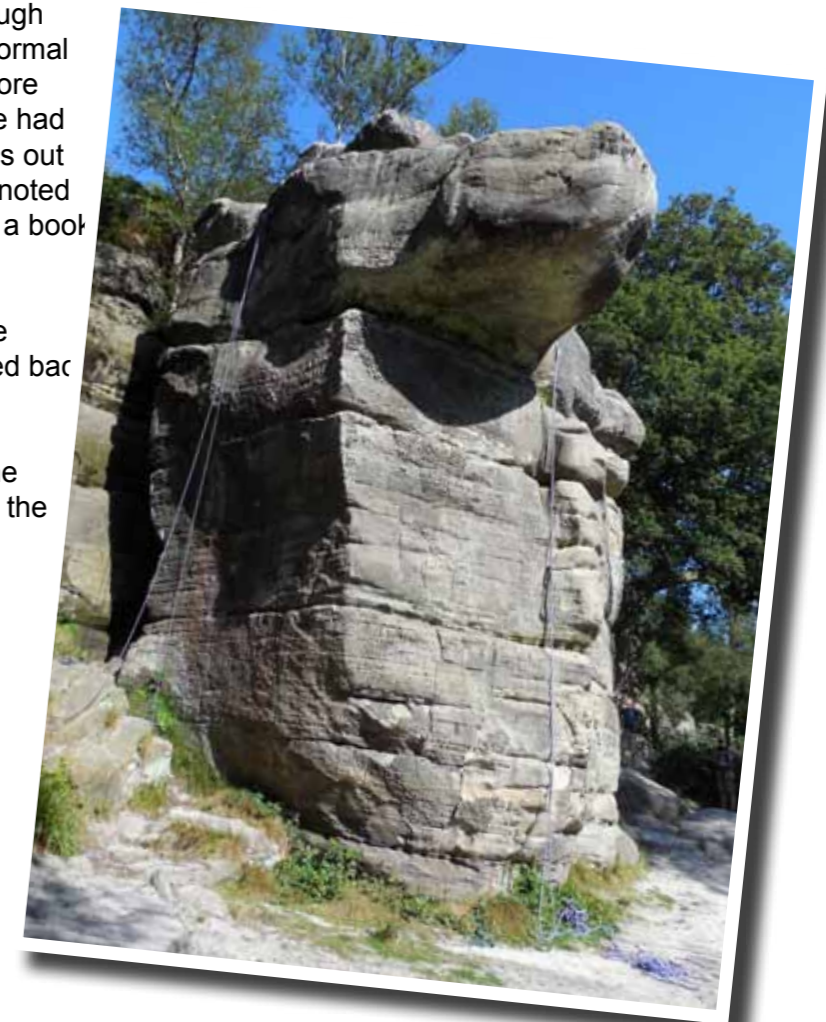
► Harrison's Rocks trip

17th August

A beautiful sunny day, Dan, Helene and Juline went one night before to camp in the woods, Tony, Becci, Andrew, Yara, Kira and I arrived at noon. After we all met, the experienced instructors set up some nice routes and we started climbing.

The children got to climb some routes but mostly entertained themselves in nature, playing in little caves and going up and down all over the place. The adults could climb quite a lot that day, as usual I found quite stimulating and challenging. It was a very nice and entertaining day out. A beautiful setting, fantastic company and an amazing activity. The children loved it and so did I.

– Jirshari



► Storms and midges: The Peak District trip

20th - 27th August

The air swirling around the base of the crag became noticeably colder and above us the sky was an impressionistic canvas with bold, board, black, brush strokes curving down to the horizon to denote curtains of rain. A constant rumble of thunder rolled up and down the valley; we could feel its vibrations through the sticky rubber soles of our shoes.

The massed ranks of dark clouds which encircled us held their position like well disciplined troops and I thought it might be possible to make the ascent. I swiftly tied on to the end of the rope. A crack defined the route and I wedged a foot into it. I left the ground and jammed a hand in and made a fist – it held my weight and I could feel the crystalline structure of the gritstone removing a chunk of flesh.

Thunder continued to rumble and lightning cracked the sky. I was a couple of metres away from the top when gobstopper sized raid drops started to bounce off my helmet. "There's a good hold." Andrew shouted above the meteorological din. At one time maybe, I thought as I slapped around, now though it's all wet sand. I hauled myself over the lip with a big smile on my face.

Two days earlier, a group of adults and children had boarded the train in Brighton, destination Derbyshire. For the first time in its sixteen year existence this was the first time Craggers had not run at least one Adventure Camp, we had not been able to raise the money. Instead we decided to put on a very much smaller Peak District trip with participants contributing a little towards the cost.

In keeping with tradition the train from London to Sheffield was delayed so we missed out connections and arrived late at Hathersage. Hefting vast amounts of kit along footpaths to the campsite was hard work but we were fortunate to be able to put up our tents in the dry. The site is surrounded by trees and a stream marks its boundary. As the sun gives way to moonlight, bats swoop and owls hoot.

Midges are strange creatures; they don't like sunshine or rain or the cold or the breeze or altitude and even our smallest bat, the tiny pipistrelle can



eat 3,000 a night so how do they manage to cause so much misery. They descended on the campsite. Little Carreg was crying so much that the warden lent him a midge head net and a bottle of repellent. They were not the only small creatures to be a nuisance; one of the tents had been pitched on top of a mouse hole and the less than timorous wee beastie nibbled its way through the groundsheet. Mice also munched bread, tomatoes and even the rubberised handle of a knife.

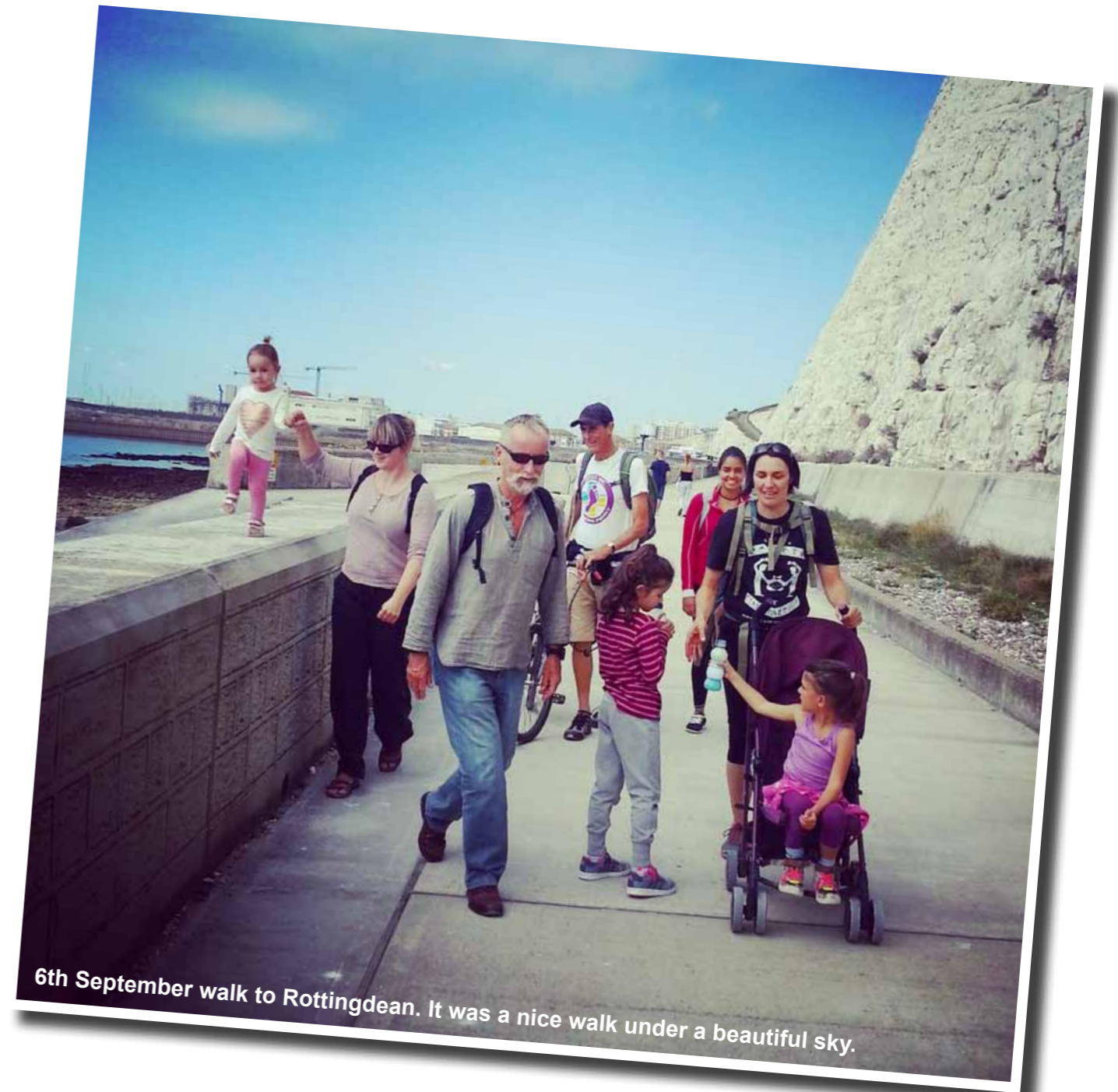
The kids had a great time making friend with other kids and various dogs, they ran around and explored the area, skittering over boulders pushing there way through head high bracken and surprising us all with their climbing ability.

We had a great time and did some fantastic climbs. The storms and midges were a minor distraction which made everything else even more fun.

I will pack a midge net next time though.

Stanage

We camped in North Lees a half hours walk to the fantastic climbs at Stanage. We were not far from the strikingly peaceful small town of Hathersage- lanes with a few houses would quickly end in open fields and views of the surrounding hills. I spent most evenings enjoying walks.



6th September walk to Rottingdean. It was a nice walk under a beautiful sky.

► We've all gone nuts (and berries)

Wild food walks: 26th and 30th September

The muddy recce to Wilmington Wood, Abbot's Wood and Nate Wood went well (we managed to pick huge amounts of fat sloe berries) and we felt that we would have plenty of wild food to talk about.

Autumn is great for a forager; the fungi has emerged and the nuts, fruits and berries have ripened.

It came as a shock on the Saturday when people started to turn up – 21 had booked and Craggers brought another 10. So we had to adopt a different teaching style, rather than walk and talk, which wouldn't work with so many people. We stopped from time to time and talked about the different plants in the immediate area.

It was the first time I have used Latin alongside English or local names for trees, plants and fungi. I am new to this but very quickly the precision of the Genus and species names makes the connections between different plants more logical.

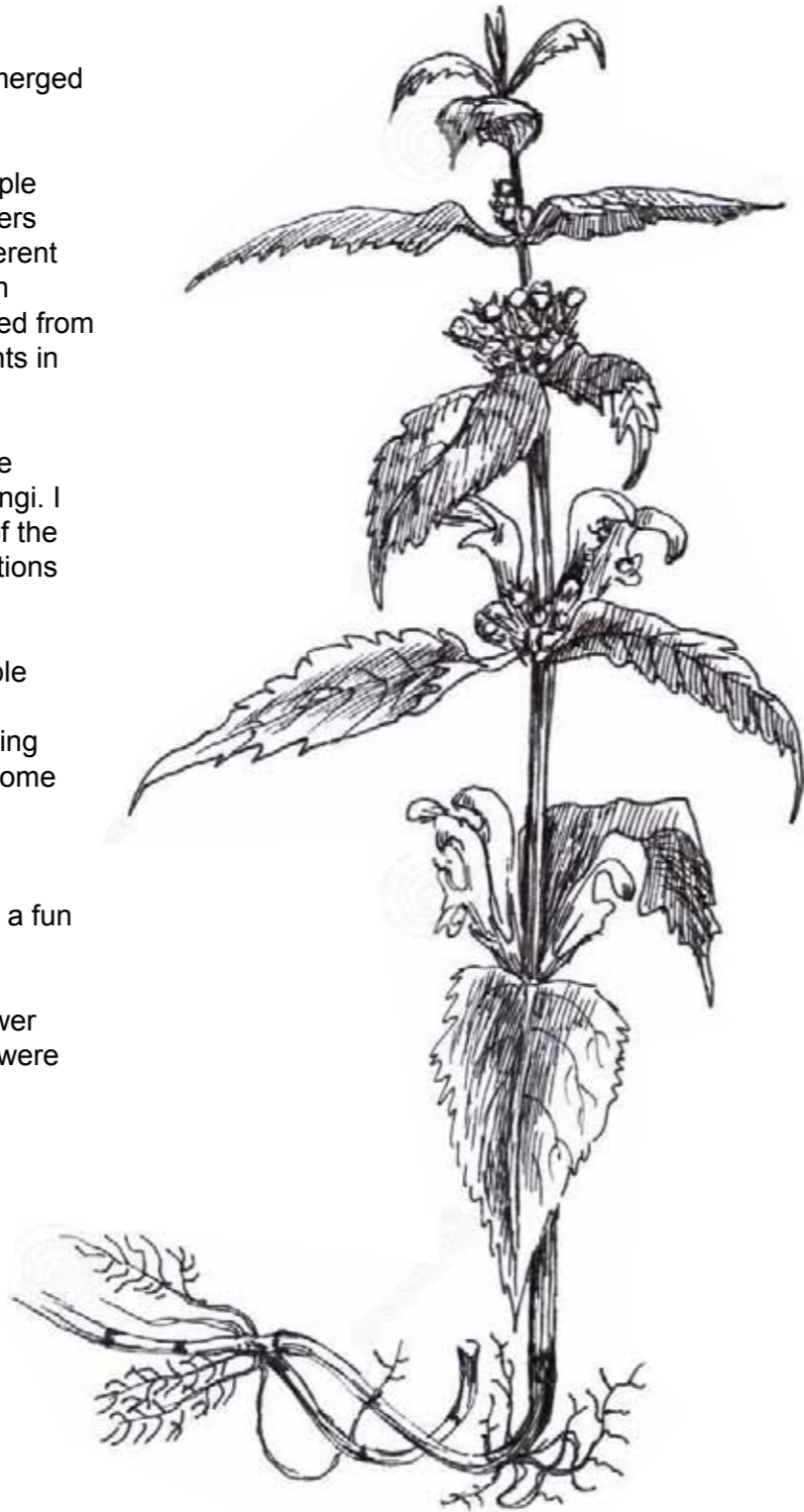
It would be boring to list the more than 30 edible species we discovered but there were some standouts in fungi and as important as identifying edible mushrooms we were able to point out some of the most deadly poisonous of British fungi.

As well as edible plants, we also talked about medicinal uses and craft/practical uses. It was a fun three hours and we had some great feedback.

Wednesday the 30th., being midweek, had fewer people, which was great in many ways as we were able to cover more things.

It was interesting how, in just one week, fungi particularly, had emerged, fruited and disappeared.

Please get out there while the trees are in their vibrant autumn glory, the blackberries are bursting with flavour and the woods are at their most mysterious and magical.



31st October – 1st November

► Autumn Weekend Adventure at Blackland Farm

On the morning of Saturday 31st October a group of eight of us including three children traveled by minibus from Brighton to Blackland Farm.

benefit of being out of the city and in the countryside environment, even for a short visit.

– Becci

We had booked to use the fixed accommodation of Herons House for 1 night so we could do some activities and enjoy the countryside. The weather was sunny, and when we arrived we had a walk and collected nettles. Then over lunch Tony showed us how to start making cordage which we continued in the evening after supper. Then we had a session using the abseil tower. We had a session on the zip wire. Everyone had a go including the youngest child who was three years old.

It was a very misty, damp but mild autumn day when we woke on Sunday. We went for a walk around the woods. It was beautiful and mysterious and we saw deer. We all had a lovely time, we had many different experiences in a short time. We all felt the





We were warned. The Met Office had issued a severe weather warning for Sussex, with gale force winds and temperatures well below zero forecast.

Despite this, 11 people thought that it sounded like a great way to spend the weekend. Five children aged between three and eight years old and their parents were up for a walk and an overnight bivi.

It was raining as we scurried down to the bus stop and arrived just in time to dive onto a bus hauling our huge rucksacks inside and counting the children. The driver looked harassed and told us that he was the last bus to get through before the road was closed in response to an accident. A short while into our journey we received a message that two of our group had missed the bus, which meant that they would not be joining us.

We were deposited at Friston Pond and I watched as a, wind driven, dustbin lid skipped across the road and into the pond. The rain had stopped by the time we reached the footpath and the kids ran, excitedly, through the trees. We took turns navigating the route until, at the top of a hill, we came to a broad, flat ride. Out of the wind and bathed in sunshine it seemed like the ideal place for lunch.

It was only a short walk to where we had decided to spend the night and we had given ourselves plenty

of time to practice set ups before the early sunset caught up with us.

The wind had become a gentle breeze by the time we walked through the tall grey columns of a beech wood, looking for the perfect campsite. Beneath our feet was a soft, brown, paisley patterned, carpet of leaves. A scattering of young sycamores which had found their way in were attempting to compete for vital sunlight with the towering beeches.

While the adults practiced knots the kids ran around the forest playing a succession of extemporised woodland games. When we had finished setting up it was time for an early dinner as the sun dissolved in the west. We were rewarded for not using our head torches by the magnificent show put on by the stars twinkling against a cloudless backdrop and an incredibly bright, haloed, half moon.

Using bashas rather than tents we could snuggle down into our sleeping bags and gaze up, looking past the black branches scrimshawed on the sky and enjoy the show.

There were lots of ooh's and aaah's as a perfect sunrise illuminated our frosty forest. We had breakfast and packed up slowly, reluctant to leave the beautiful wood, as the kids played. The views across the Downs were fantastic. We stopped for lunch before eventually heading down to Seven Sisters visitor centre to catch the bus back.

► Craggers winter walk, Stanmer park

6th December

At 2pm on a wintry Sunday afternoon, a group of about 10 adults and children met in front of the majestic old Stanmer House in Stanmer Park near Brighton. We were all wrapped up warmly and had wellie boots on. We walked up around the back of the house, across the open park land to the ancient orchard and in to the woods. Despite the drizzle, and grey cloud our mood was bright as we walked along discussing festive plans. We were all glad to meet up and get some fresh air and exercise on a dark winter day. The trees were bare but we noticed there were many tightly closed buds waiting for the longer days that are coming.



Unseasonal Greetings

'twixt Solstice and New Year
As days stretch towards Spring
I went for a walk. And a single bumblebee
Buzzed among daffodils and dandelions and dog violets
Prim, pied wagtails bustled
And a woodpecker played hide and seek
Corkscrewing up and around an old elm

After walking we retired inside the 'big' house for a hot drink near an open fire. It was all very jolly and festive with evergreen decorations and fairy lights.

Before we left we managed to meet with a couple of other group members and see the well next to the church. This was very exciting, especially for the children because they got to chuck water down it and time how long it took to hit the bottom. It was a long time, 6 seconds I think, because the well is very deep.

As it got dark about 4pm we all went home, glad we had got out in nature and spent time with each other and exchanged best wishes of the festive season.

Sunglasses on to walk to the sea
At the Meridian Monument I sloped down
Between white walls of chalk, to the Undercliff
Where an invisible line enters the sea
Dividing the world by zero
Wind snatches at my coat
And buffets the rock pipits
Waves crash into the sea wall
In orchestral crescendo
Sending up champagne spume
High above my head to hang silent
Before plashing down
On my side of the barrier



This is to certify that,

Unemployed Climbers Club (Craggers)

Membership No. 910487

is affiliated to the British
Mountaineering Council for the year
2016

The British Mountaineering Council is the representative body that exists to protect the freedoms and promote the interests of climbers, hillwalkers and mountaineers, including ski-mountaineers.

By continuing membership with the BMC, Unemployed Climbers Club (Craggers) is supporting:

- 1 The BMC's vital Access and Conservation work throughout England and Wales
- 1 Supporting the BMC's work in representing climbers and hill walkers interests to the government
- 1 Helping to ensure that the BMC can continue developing its safety, training and technical work and services

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