

Rachel Carr

Climbing Report

April 2011 to February 2012

Background

I first went climbing with one of my mum's friends when I was 11. I enjoyed it so joined EICA:Ratho's Rocksters club in Nov 2007. I was asked to join the BRYCS group in February 2008 and entered my first YCS the following month. I came second in the round and 4th in the series. Just as well, as I flew off on holiday the same day as the finals. After that my parents were always careful not to book a holiday over a climbing competition. After that Summer I joined the newly formed Quickdraw Climbing Club and started regular training with Neil McGeachy.

In December 2008 I entered my first Youth Open/GB team selection event. I came fourth in my group; it wasn't enough to get selected but I was really pleased with my performance. The YCS in 2009 was a tight competition between me and my club mate Eleanor Hopkins. Over the 3 rounds we had one first each and shared the other. The only way they could separate us at the end was that I had topped a route in the second round. The YCS final in London was also close. Eleanor and I were in separate groups so we didn't know what each other had scored until they announced the podium places. I was first, Eleanor second and Nikki Addison from Scotland North, third.

In December 2009 I was selected for the GB Youth Team.

In March 2011 I was awarded a competition bursary by the Mountaineering Council of Scotland. These are some of the events in which I have participated since.

Siurana

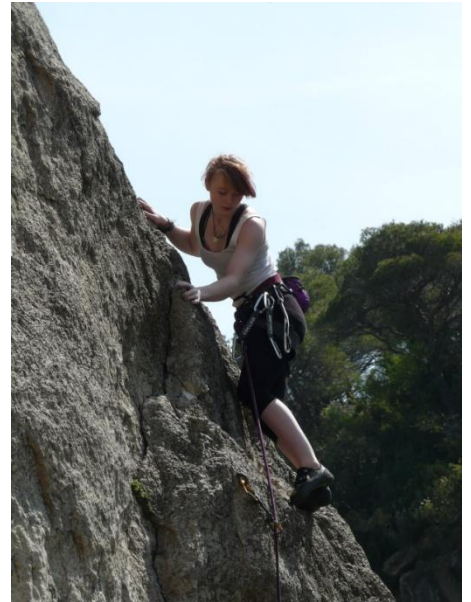
8th to 22nd April 2011

When we first went out to Siurana in Spain I wasn't sure if I would enjoy it as I'm not a big fan of outdoor routes, and after I fell off and twisted my ankle the second day I didn't think it would get good at all.

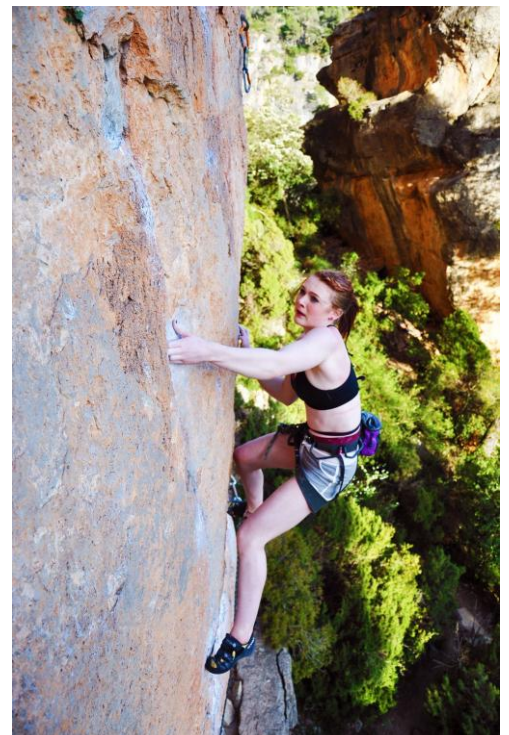
When my ankle felt better after 2 days I decided just to aim to complete as many on-sites as I could manage. For the first day back I climbed nothing over 7a and I managed to climb 8 routes. Geek (Neil McGeachy) had set me a target of doing 20 routes over the course of the 2 weeks, and to try to make at least one a project route. The second day back after my injury we set out towards the harder routes to try harder on-sights. I got another 10 routes in. I got used to the long run outs so that when I got onto the harder routes they wouldn't come as much of a shock. I put in the clips to try and get a good technique for doing it on my projects.

After completing 18 out of the 20 target routes I decided to start looking for a project for the next week. I tried 4 difficult routes: 3 7c's and 1 7b+. I managed to narrow these down to 2 routes: a 7c called 'The Elephants Trunk' and a 7c called 'Papagora'. Geek thought it would be better if I went for Papagora.

I worked on Papagora over that week, with appropriate rest days in between of course, and finally managed on my first go of the 2nd last day to complete the crux for the first time and then later that day the entire route for the first time. I was done. I had reached my goal for the trip and was ready to head home. I was happy with the trip and couldn't wait to go on another climbing trip to somewhere different.



Info: The "McGeek Squad" training camp at Siurana, Spain was supported by MCofS



Leading Ladder - Cardiff

30th April 2011

Going into the leading ladder wasn't too much fun as I had had 2 sessions since I'd been back from Spain and both sessions were terrible; I felt like I couldn't climb. I got there and for a warm up we all had a short session on hard boulders to get our muscles ready for hard moves.

When they opened the routes I was one of the first to get on them. I went for our easiest route which was a 7a and I was psyched but when I got to a section I used the wrong hold for a clip and fell off. I got back on it after a bit of recovery and did it almost easily. I was a bit annoyed that I fell of the first time.

I saw the list for the 7b, our second route, and realised it was getting long so I put my name down for it. I got on that and fell off at the crux near the top. I then tried it twice more and after failing 3 times decided to try the other routes. I had over an hour's wait for the routes, and when I finally got on there was a climber on the route next to me when there shouldn't have been. I had to come off but was given a second shot from default. I had to get back on straight away but I was still boxed from the previous shot so I fell off again. I was pretty angry about that so I decided just to stop because there wasn't much point in climbing anything else.

I finished 4th overall which wasn't too bad as a result, but there were only 6 people in my category so it was bad for the comp.



Scottish Youth Climbing Championships

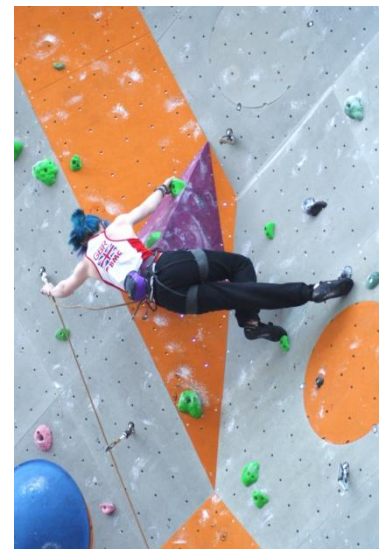
28th May 2011

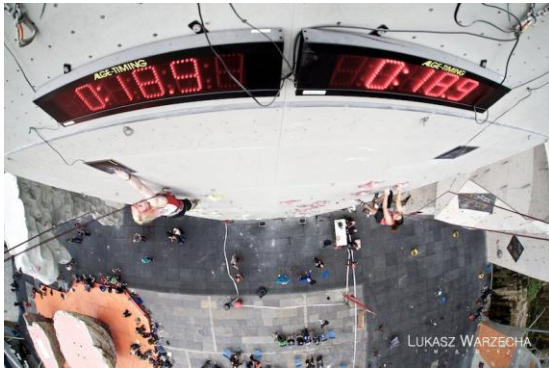


I went into the Scottish finals really psyched to compete as I have won this before and knew my competition very well. After seeing our routes I was slightly less fired up but still ready and when I heard we were on boulders first I couldn't wait to begin. I got on the first one and finished it without even feeling the holds properly. I did the same on the second. The third was a bit more difficult and I was on it first. I spent 5 minutes planning it out thoroughly. When I got on I realised I had little to worry about, the holds were small and quite sloppy but they were my specialty. The only bit that I struggled on was getting my balance right as that was crucial for the sequence. I managed it on my first go and it turns out I was the only one to actually complete it. That got me really excited for the routes. I got on the first one and found it as

easy as the boulders. I struggled more on the second route, although I really shouldn't have, I got the sequence wrong and therefore fell off the route, but I still managed to get the highest up. I did manage to do it first go after the comp. The third route was surprisingly easy compared to the second and I managed it with ease.

Then we went on to do the finals, where I was the last person out of isolation. I got on the route and fell over half way. The second I reached the ground I was swarmed by my friends who told me I had got the furthest on the route and therefore won. I was overwhelmed with happiness after a brilliant day.





British Speed Climbing Championships

16th October 2011

19.05 seconds. 20 holds. 24 moves. That's all it takes.

There are 3 main types of competition climbing, for non-climbers there's only one. They seem to think that everything is about how fast you got up the wall instead of how high. So if you win you're often asked questions like "how fast were you?" which I would respond to by saying the words I know so well "it's not about speed!" which before today, it hadn't been because before, I was never good enough to even come close to winning.

This was the first official British Speed Climbing Competition and I decided to enter for fun. The comp was held at my local wall, which was good for me because it gave me the advantage of being able to train on it every day. I'd been training for about a month. Doing the same climb over and over again until I knew the moves and I knew how to through my body. How to forget about technique and just give everything you've got into catching every hold you need to. I had already got a fastest time of 24.38 seconds, but when the day came it was a lot more stressful. It wasn't just me and the wall, there were distractions, other people on the wall, the pressure of getting the best time I could. It was harder than I'd ever expected.

The British Male record holder for speed climbing told us how the comp would run. Taking it all in was difficult and it just made me even more nervous. The category was under 16 girls so there were more people than I expected. 12 names were called for my category, and everything suddenly seemed much harder. First we had a practise run to warm up and get used to the moves. There were two qualifier attempts where you were climbing with someone else, but you weren't racing them, just the clock. We had to get one of the four fastest times to get through to the next round. There were only four going through to the semis in my category and that's when it got really complicated. The fastest would race the slowest, and then the 2nd and 3rd fastest would race. Next would be the small finals, the two that lost the semis would race for third and then the final would be the two fastest racing for first and that would decide it.

On my practice shot I took it slow so I wouldn't get too tired. I was also trying to trick my competitor into thinking I was slow so they would subconsciously climb slower than usual. The first timed climb I really went for it, I managed 23 seconds which was faster than usual but I still found it too slow. On the second one I pushed twice as hard and lost 2 seconds of my time getting 21.2. I qualified in first. The competition was running fast so there wasn't much time to rest between climbs and because I was fastest in the qualifiers I was climbing first against Flo, a climber from down south. I climbed just faster than her because I didn't want to waste more energy than I had to. I was keeping one eye on her and one on the climb, seeing her equal with me for most of the climb until I made a move missing out three holds and getting at least a foot higher than her. That's all it took. I won. I was in the final.

There was about 5 minutes before the final, I was up against Carmel, I didn't know her but I had been watching her from the start, she was the one that I knew I would have to battle for first. She and I had been 1 second apart with our best times and I knew what I needed to do to win. We both stood tied in at the bottom of the route facing the wall. I was going through the moves over and over again in my head.

Left, right, match, foot up, jump, left, left, right, jump. Every move had to be perfect, no slips, no wrong holds, perfect. I was breathing deeply, rubbing chalk onto my hands. The announcer began, “on your marks”. I stepped to the wall, placed my 2 hands on the holds, one foot on the first foot hold, the other placed on the sensor. I leant back ready to pounce, like a cheetah hunting, one leg bent, the other on its toes, arms slightly bent so I could pull up hard.

Now it was just seconds till the timer would begin. The announcer said the final words “Ready-attention” a loud ‘beep’ signalled my body to unleash. I moved precisely and as fast as possible up the wall. Pulling powerfully between moves and focusing all my energy on this one moment. My eyes locking on to holds as my brain sent my hands racing towards them, my feet scrambling up the wall following behind. The whole way up I could see Carmel out the corner of my eye, I think that’s what made me push even more. We were equal almost the whole way up, it’s as if there was a mirror and she was my reflection, until I suddenly had a burst of energy and before I knew it I was there, at the top. I made the final leap and slapped the pad. I had done it! Not only had I just won the under 16 girls’ speed climbing but it turns out I set the new girls’ British record. I was the fastest girl in Britain, with my fastest time ever. My muscles were aching, I could barely breathe, I was ready to collapse, but none of that mattered because the only thing I could feel in that very moment, when my feet touched back down to solid ground, was the feeling of self-belief.

19.05 seconds. 20 holds. 24 moves. That’s all it takes.

[This was an essay I did for my English class titled ‘Achievement’. It has also been used on the GB team blog site and in the BMC e-magazine Psyched]

Scottish Youth Bouldering Championships - Aberdeen

24th September 2011

This was the first year the MCofS had supported the SYBC since its originator Scott Muir was forced to close his Aviemore climbing wall and cancel the 2010 event. Transition Extreme at Aberdeen had run the competition under its own recognisance in 2010, but as I was part of the GB team I was advised not to take part which was a shame as I love to boulder.



The groups were the same as the YCS so I was competing in the 14-16 category. There were 15 boulder problems to compete over the qualifying round using various styles. You collected points dependent on how many attempts you took to reach the top and could also collect bonus holds which were part of the way up to the top.

I topped 12 problems in my first go, one on my second go, but there were 2 that just defied me so I saved my energy for the finals which I qualified for in first place. The final was one problem on which you had 5 minutes and as many attempts as you liked. You were scored on how far along you managed before falling off. Rebekah Drummond and I both gained 47 points but as I had qualified ahead of her I took the title.



European Youth Cup 2011

Edinburgh 21st May and Kranj 26th November



The whole team turned out for the Edinburgh round of the 2011 European Youth Cup. I was competing in Youth B alongside fellow team mates Tara Hayes and Molly Thompson-Smith and 27 other competitors. My first climb left me in 17th spot but a nightmare start to the second climb brought me off earlier than I should have so I finished in 23rd. I was extremely

disappointed and annoyed with myself as I had been training hard for the event and let my nerves get the better off me.

I got another chance to compete in the EYC at the final round in Kranj in Slovenia. Kranj was a great trip, I got to compete against world champions and see my fellow team mates gain top 10 and even top 3 in the finals.

The comp started with me climbing early on, the route I was doing looked very technical so I planned what holds I was going to use in my warm up. I used small crimps and technical moves so I was fully prepared. I go on the route after watching 3 of my team mates climb it and managed to get fairly high up, I had reached the hold that most people had reached so I was ranked in the middle. I felt a tweak in my arm but decided to continue with the next route.

This time I was near the end. I watched most of my competitors reaching high up on the route so was a little nervous, but I kept focused and got ready to climb. When I was warming up I felt the tweak in my arm again and talked to my coach. He told me not too push it. So I got on the wall and climbed as high as I could, I got about half way and my arm began to hurt so I decided to push a bit more but hang mostly on the other arm. When I felt it was my breaking point I jumped for a hold, caught it and swung and fell.

I unfortunately didn't do well but my friend and team mate Molly Thompson-Smith managed to make it into the final along with Ed Hamer. I think the best part of the trip was getting to see my friends and climb with amazing climbers from all over Europe.

Alien Rock Bouldering League

November 11 to Feb 12

This was the first year I decided to compete in the Alien Rock Bouldering League (4 rounds between Nov 2011 and Feb 2012). You have to be over 14 and last year I was afraid to take time out of my lead training but this year I've found bouldering has helped build my strength so thought it wouldn't interfere.

There are 30 problems and you get points for each top dependent on how many attempts it takes to get there. Climbers are responsible for their own scores. I don't generally climb at Alien Rock but the Bouldering comp is a good opportunity to experience different route setters and to pitch myself against older climbers who maybe consider themselves 'boulder specialists'. In rounds 1, 2 and 3 I finished second which was a bit surprising as I hadn't seen anyone else appearing to regularly reach the top on their first attempt. A bit of questionable scoring? There is one more round to go and I am currently sitting 2nd overall.



The Climbing Academy (TCA) Glasgow Redpoint Bouldering

4th February

I missed the Flash Bouldering comp at TCA in December as I was at the GB Team Selection event so I was really looking forward to their 'Redpoint' competition. There were 25 problems, you got as many attempts as you wanted and each hold was scored. Top three climbers in the Youth (14-17) and Senior (18 – 39) went through to a final climb off.



I found the routes were testing and really fun to do. I loved the layout of the comp and the fact we could actually work the qualifiers. I liked the way it didn't matter how many attempts you took on each problem it just mattered how high you got. I decided to go round all the qualifiers with my friend, Megan who wasn't quite at my level as she is a year younger but it still helped to see the way she climbed some of the problems to give me an idea of what to do.

I qualified in first place and topped all of the problems to take the first place.

I feel that the final routes were far too easy as I topped them all first go, I'd have preferred it if there was more of a challenge, or if we got to try the Seniors' more difficult problems.

Irish Bouldering Championships

18th February

When the Irish came and took part in the Youth Open Competition at Sunderland in Dec 2011 they invited us to come and take part in their Bouldering Championships so my three friend and I did just that. We ferried over to Belfast where we were picked up by one of our friends on the Northern Ireland team who put us up then drove us down to Dublin. There were 20 problems to complete and I finished first in the Junior category and qualified for the Senior female final. That involved 5 different problems with 5 minutes to attempt to top. I topped the first three on my first attempt but on the fourth my foot slipped so I took two shots to top it. The final problem I reached the bonus hold but could get not further. Because of that second attempt I was second overall.

