

CLUBS

Not So Trad – Southern Lesbian & Gay Climbers

Whilst taking his annual 'working holiday' to the glorious Fair Head in Northern Ireland, Martin Kocsis was joined by Roslyn McKendry and Helen King for a few days. It was only then that he learnt of the emergence of a new club from London. Never one to miss an opportunity to reduce his workload, he asked them to write about themselves...and they did! **Gill Dibben** takes up the story.



After I persuaded a friend to teach me the basics of climbing at an indoor wall in London, I had learned just that...the basics. I spent a few months top-roping with a fellow novice climber but neither of us knew where to go with our climbing. He got bored and hung up his harness. I started searching for new climbing partners. Joining a club was an obvious answer.

I spent a few anxious evenings in pubs around London chatting to members of various clubs...small talk with strangers is not exactly my comfort zone! Most of them seemed so experienced and the people I spoke to often had friendships going back years. "Do you lead?" asked one, quickly losing interest as I replied "No, but I'd like to learn..." I tried to recall the names of the few climbs I had seconded, desperate to make some impression. Breaking into the world of climbing clubs was going to be tricky.

Scanning through the club pages of a back issue of *Climber* magazine I spotted a notice for a lesbian and gay climbing club in London. Contact Craig, it said. Oh well, I'll give it a go... The following Monday night was 'beginners and new members nights', where the focus was on people like me. By the end of the night I'd met a few people, done a few climbs, and we all had experiences to share in the pub.

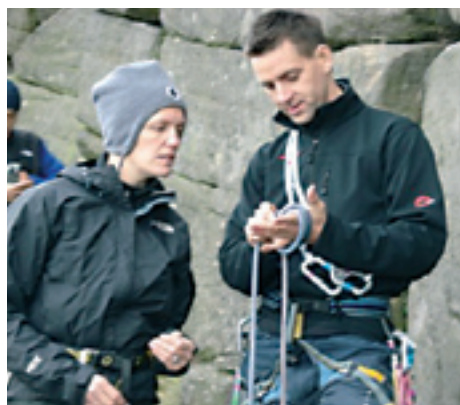


Not So Trad - Southern Lesbian & Gay Climbers, is largely London-based but has members spread across the south of England. It is a very friendly group of climbers of all ages, grades and aspirations and supports members through the different stages. Our members are starting-out, seconding, leading, training, working through the grades (and trying to place the pink Hex on every lead!) The group is mixed. Our president is Craig, our membership co-ordinators are Roslyn and Phillipe, and there is a core group of very committed, very welcoming, members.

Although originally affiliated with the Gay Outdoors Club, we felt that a closer association with the BMC was an important part of our development. We wanted to support BMC activities and campaigns, and we wanted lesbian and gay climbers to be 'visible' within the larger institution of the BMC. So at the beginning of this year we established our own independent club and affiliated with the BMC.

Our main club meet is Monday nights at The Castle Climbing Centre in North London and is followed by a swift pint in the very friendly local pub (excellent Thai food on offer!) Further indoor climbing is arranged *ad hoc* throughout the week – you can never get enough climbing!

Our members enjoy all styles of climbing: trad, sport, alpinism and bouldering. We have a programme of weekend and longer outdoor trips each year to venues such as Portland, Wales, the Lake District, Cornwall, the Peak District as well as international trips. We are constantly exploring new areas – a trip to Skye with an attempt at a full traverse of the Cuillin Ridge happened earlier this year, Yorkshire in August, and Ireland for 2009. On weekday evenings throughout the



summer we have occasional after work trips to the sandstone outcrops of Kent, attempting to latch a few slopers before a quick pint in the pub and the last train home. We even have occasional non-climbing social events, such as barbeques, trips to the cinema, and suchlike.

But what about the name I hear you ask? Well, we are into trad climbing but as lesbians and gay men perhaps we are 'Not So Trad'?

President – in charge of us all, Craig.

Secretary – who makes sure we fulfil all our club duties, Andy.

Treasurer – bling officer, Martin.

Membership co-ordinators – "A non-member is just someone who hasn't joined yet", Roslyn and Phillipe.

Membership database – keeper of the names, Hannah.

Social secretary – responsible for making sure we do something other than climb now and again, Loic.

Education and safety – for those who want to know it all, Patrick.

Access and Conservation – to remind us to be kind to the places where we play, Sam.

Website and Publicity – that'll be me (and Harry, the brains behind it all!).

Oh, and don't forget to check out our fabulous new website at www.notsotrad.org

And, yes, I do lead.

For more information on the club email

Roslyn at roslyn@notsotrad.org,

Phillipe at phillipe@notsotrad.org, or visit

www.notsotrad.org

If you would like to see your club featured here then get in touch at climbercomments@warnersgroup.co.uk or go to climber.co.uk and while you're there take advantage of posting your club details **FREE** of charge!