

The Climbing Family MacSkill's



Main Photo: Ruairidh, Ellen and Jimmy enjoying some winter walking

Inset: Ellen and Ruairidh with the Tripple Echo Team

Above: Diane MacSkill with Ellen and Ruairidh on Bynack Mor

The MacSkill family from Inverness were featured on The Adventure Show on BBC Scotland in September 2008.

Development Officer Kevin Howett found out why:

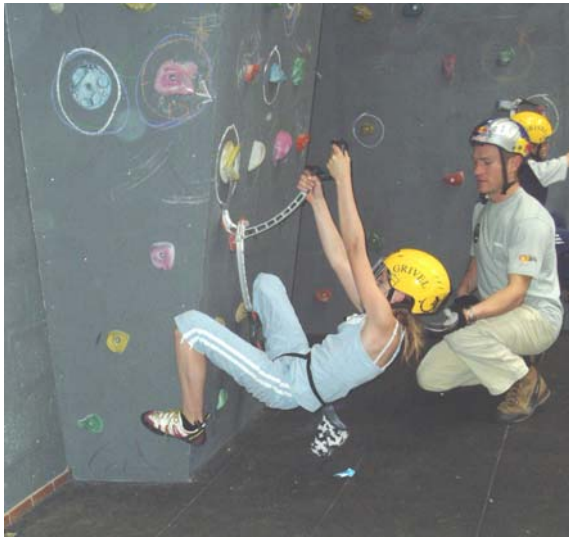
Ruairidh MacSkill (aged 10) and Ellen MacSkill (aged 15) both started climbing at the Inverness Climbing Wall. They started competing in the annual MCoS Youth Climbing Series (YCS), with Ellen only having climbed for a couple of months before she entered the YCS for the first time. She has competed consistently for the past eight years and loves it; achieving a British 8th position this year. Ellen is the current Scottish Champion retaining her title from last year. This was a hard won battle against Jessica McCaskey from Scotland South involving two climb-offs on the big roof at Extreme-Dream, Aviemore. She also won the 2006 Mixed Master Competition at the Ice Factor in Kinlochleven which was featured for the first time on the Adventure Show.

Ruairidh started climbing aged 6 and did his first competition when he was 8 when he came 11th. The following year in 2007 he became Scottish & British Champion in the 7-9 age category. This year he has placed 4th in Scotland and 17th in Britain in the 11-13 age category. He also competed in the 2006 Mixed Masters with his sister and came 5th.

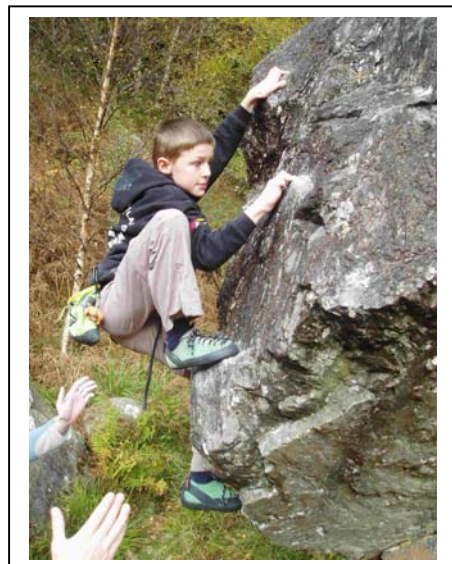
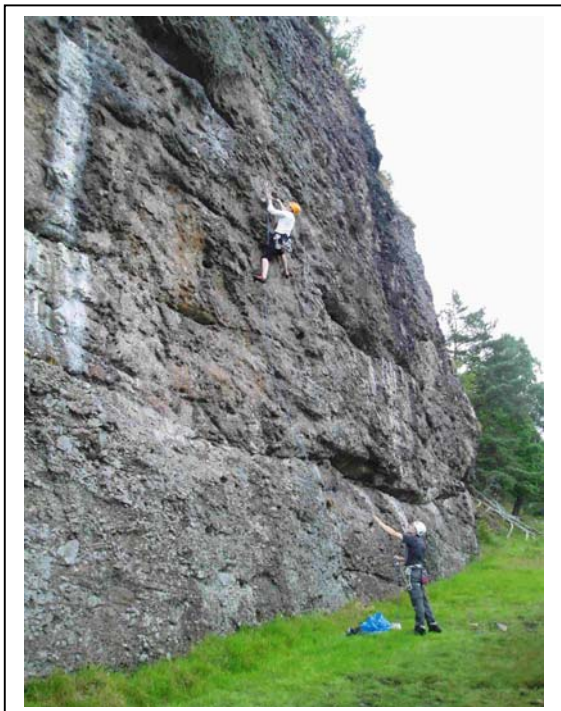
Dad (Dougie) and Mum (Diane) were not climbers and although they did a bit with the children, did not take it seriously until last winter when Scott Muir started a kids training programme at Extreme Dream climbing wall in Aviemore. They decided to join in. Their climbing quickly improved and this gave them the incentive to try taking the kids outdoors.

North West activist Paul Tattersal 'showed them the ropes' for sport climbing on the crags around Gairloch, although their first crag experience involved being eaten alive by midges: a bit of a change to indoor climbing. But they have been bitten by the bug and Ellen is competently climbing 6a+ outdoors now.

Climbing as a family they have now been bouldering at Fontainebleau in France, sport climbing on local crags such as the newly developed Creag Bheag near Golspie, and Ruairidh has bouldered with one of the world's best climbers, Dave Macleod; he spent an afternoon in Glen Nevis with Dave where he learned a lot about bouldering outdoors and was lucky enough to see Dave 'send' a problem he had been working on for some time – an experience which Dougie describes as inspirational.



Screen grabs from
The Adventure Show
– thanks to Triple
Echo



Left Top: Ellen Dry-tooling at Extreme Dream, Aviemore

Left Bottom: Ellen climbing at the newly developed Creag Bheag near Golspie for The Sdventure Show

Above: Ruairidh bouldering in Glen Nevis with Dave MacLeod

Ruairidh competing in the Scottish Youth Climbing Championships 2008 at Extreme Dream, Aviemore

The kids regularly train at their local walls (Inverness and Aviemore) where they say they like the banter with other keen children as much as the climbing.

Dougie said, "there is a great group of very talented kids that train together at Inverness: Robert & Dylan MacKenzie, Steve & Nicki Addison and Ellen Barbour to name a few, and Ruairidh MacKenzie (MCofS Area Youth Coordinator and Wall Manager) continues to set testing routes and boulder problems for the kids to climb and us parents to fall off."

Dougie said of their aspirations "for myself and Diane I think we just want to improve our climbing technique so we can enjoy days with Ellen & Ruairidh, and take part, not just be a belay parent all the time which we tended to do when the kids were younger. Maybe we can consistently get that elusive next-step-up a grade."

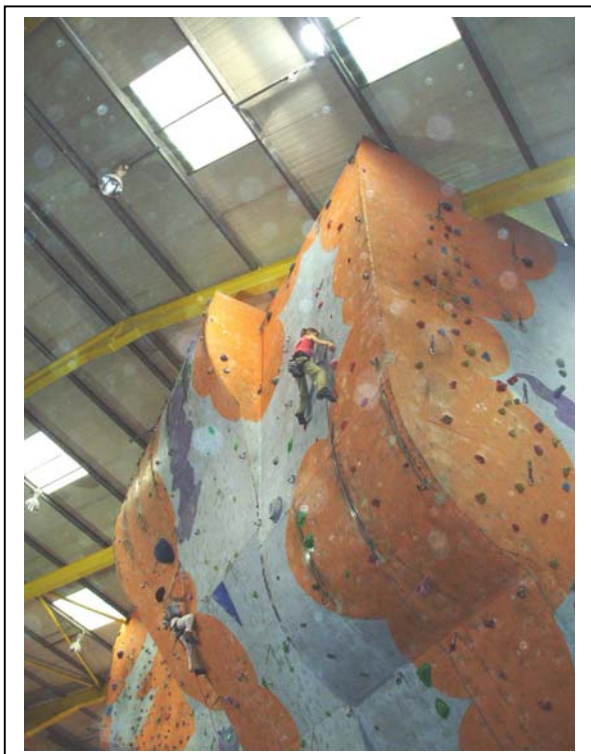
Ellen would like to get into the British team and is going to the trials again this year - she has attended twice. At her first in Leeds she qualified for the final and finished joint 8th but last year did not do so well. Ellen is more focussed now and said "at this year's trials, which hopefully will be held at Ratho (please) I hope to make a good impression." She also hopes to get into the top five at the YCS next year and build up her confidence for outdoor leading.



Dougie said of Ruairidh's talent, "he wants to improve on his 4th place at the Scottish Championships and improve his YCS results as he moved up an age category last year, but in truth all he wants to do is go bouldering and then more bouldering! We do encourage him to lead indoor which we feel will build his confidence for outdoor climbing."

"I think the kids came across brilliantly and they were kind not to show too much of me huffing & puffing!"

Dougie MacAskill commenting on Fame on the Adventure Show



Left: Ellen at the British Trials in Leeds in 2007

Above: Ellen competing at the EICA:Ratho at the 2008 Youth Climbing Series Final

Following Ruairidh's passion for bouldering the whole family have enjoyed visiting their local venue at Brin Rock near Inverness, with Ellen cranking V2 and Ruairidh and Dougie V1, whilst Diane has managed to complete a V0.

The family are now true outdoor addicts, "We are into hill walking too and are starting to get into mtbing when time allows. But what we like about climbing is the sense of achievement we get from working out a route, be it indoors or at a crag; even if it takes a while to get it" said Diane. "Once completing one climbing puzzle, we get the feeling of 'what's next'; to push our own abilities and physical limits, at our own pace".

This one Scottish family is evidence that climbing can be good for you!



Above Right: Ruairidh bouldering at Brin Rock, near Duntelchaig

Right: Ellen 'Training' at Cummingston

Below: Caving as well!

