**MRC of S FOUNDATION RIGGING COURSE, APRIL 2013**

I recently attended the MRCofS “foundation rigging” course at Grantully, near Aberfeldy. Read on for the highlights and delete if you’ve been there, done that, got the helmet.

Course Director John Armstrong from Glenmore Lodge ran the course. It was a really good refresher on abseiling super safely and also lowering and some raising techniques in a rescue context using decenders, IDs and plenty associated hints and tips. Good grounding for the more advanced courses and fairly short days and a short drive - so well worth the time invested.

Key learning points from the course itself:

* Safety is the absolute priority – your own, your Team then the casualty.
* Safety is everyone’s role and responsibility - no hierarchy with this.
* Key risks and hazards for rescuers include lack of a clear plan, no one in charge, boredom, poor communication, heroic actions, underassessment of technical terrain etc.
* Important to avoid a team culture whereby people are encouraged to ‘press on’ without being 100% confident that they can do it this particular day or in a particular moment.
* Edge attendant is a key role that needs to be done using a safety ro'pe and a prussic ideally to allow quick and easy movement up and down the line.
* various types of prusik/friction knot - only really need to know French or Classic (triple wrap). French less grippy so better for abseiling.
* Do not shock load a 'cows tail' sling or the knot might fuse/fail. Esp’ don’t use knotted Dynema <http://dmmclimbing.com/news/2012/03/knotting-dyneema%c2%ae-vid/>
* Anchors - always remember vectors, independence, equalisation – keep it simple which is quickest and best and use clove hitches to enable and orientation of the power point.
* Important to practice personal abseil regularly to be able to rely on your skills in a pressurised environment – at least every 3 months.
* Must always protect a personal abseil via a prussic from the control rope via a crab to the harness leg loop HOWEVER best practice is now that the belay device is extended away from the belay loop allowing for the prusik to attach to the belay loop – see picture. 2 reasons for this – apparently if you become inverted or horizontal for whatever reason the prusik can fail and also some modern self- locking leg loop buckles may also fail.
* IDs make lowering of stretchers etc. much easier than via rescue descenders – why wouldn’t you?
* When raising the ‘edge attendant’ plays a key role with communication and coordination, they can also help return the pulley by having it attached to a piece of cord, makes things much slicker.



**Dave Leven April 2013**