
Wales

Posted by Tom Dunlap - 12/08/2005 04:53pm

Play safe with expert advice in social climbing

<http://tinyurl.com/8rf7k>

THE urge to climb trees is as natural to children as a desire to run or eat sweets.

But opportunities to climb trees are getting scarcer, as the prospect of litigation after accidents prompts authorities to ban tree climbing in parks, or to prune lower branches to deny youngsters a foothold.

So kids - or grown-up kids - will relish the prospect of visiting a tree-climbing centre now on the cards in one Welsh town. Father-of-two Nathan Billington, who has 10 years' experience as a tree surgeon, believes there's plenty of demand for tree climbing from children, schools and even businesses.

"Centres are opening up here and there for socially climbing trees," said Mr Billington, from Prestatyn, Denbighshire.

"They're offering corporate events - tree climbing for team building.

"There are a lot of things involved, like checking ropes and doing the correct knots."

Next week Denbighshire councillors will consider whether to approve his plans for a tree-climbing centre in Spinney Wood, just yards from Prestatyn's High Street and railway station.

Mr Billington said children visiting the centre would be taught how to climb trees safely, using harnesses and ropes.

There would also be an environmental lesson for them, as they would learn how every scrap of a felled tree can be used for purposes ranging from furniture to compost.

"People think, you fell a tree and put it in the bin and away it goes. But you can recycle everything," said Mr Billington, 33, whose six-year-old son Luke climbs trees at every opportunity.

Local businesses were already expressing interest in team-building days for staff.

"People stuck in offices want to get out and about. A lot of people have said to us, 'We'd love to do that.'"

Some replanting is needed. Some dead trees in Spinney Wood will be retained to give tree climbers the opportunity to scale a trunk using spiked shoes. There are contests around Britain and Europe for pole-climbing in this way, including one at the Royal Welsh Show and another at the annual Woodfest in St Asaph, Denbighshire.

Child psychologist Judy Hutchings, director of the Incredible Years Wales centre at the University of Wales, Bangor, said the proposed tree-climbing centre sounded like a wonderful idea.

"I believe that physical activity is very enjoyable to kids, as is exploring the world around them," she said. "Tree climbing sets yourself challenges that are difficult and give you a sense of achievement. You can disappear when you climb a tree, and watch the world go by.

"If children live in an environment where they can't be physically active, they're often physically active inappropriately, climbing on the sofa or up bookshelves.

"We have a generation of children who are at high risk of obesity, who watch too much television and who can only benefit from anything that gives them exercise. Many children take part in competitive sports, but activities where you compete against yourself are even better. Today you can manage this, and then you can go a bit further."

The proposed centre's core activity initially would be training tree surgeons.

"If you want to become a qualified tree surgeon you need the training. You can't go up a tree without a certificate," said Mr Billington, who runs a grounds maintenance company called Greengrass Services. "Our centre will have everything on one site."

Tree climbing

TREES are graded by difficulty, according to Tree Climbers International. Similar to rock climbs.

Class 1 - trees can be climbed like ladders. Height: 25ft to 50ft.

Class 2 - can be climbed ladder-style but ropes recommended. Height: 25ft to 50ft.

Class 3 - require ropes because of height and distances between branches. Height: 25ft to 75ft.

Class 4 - can't be climbed unless a rope is put into place using throw weight. Height: 50ft to 125ft.

Class 5 - difficult because of adverse features. Multiple rope systems and traverses involved. Height: 75ft to 200ft.

Class 6 - initial line must be projected using a crossbow or similar device. Height: 150ft to 375ft.

Welsh Tree Climbing

Posted by Oldtimer - 12/09/2005 11:34am

Great Article, Thanks Tom D.

Posted by woodcut33 - 01/28/2006 05:42am

Are there any tree climbing centres elsewhere in the UK? We desperately need loads more recreational tree climbing here. Let us know when its all set up and ready to go won't you? :)

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Isle of Wight climber starts a Climbing Adventure

Posted by Treeman - 02/02/2006 08:00pm

A husband wife team has just started a tree climbing adventure operation. Abigail and Paul McCathie are their names. Their e-mail address is:

goodleaf@tiscali.co.uk

I invited them to post a message here. Maybe we have some new tree climbing friends.

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Posted by moss - 02/02/2006 10:24pm

I've had the opportunity to spend some tree time with Paul, he's an excellent climber and a great person. Wishing him the best in his new venture!

-moss

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