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**South
Lakeland**

Lakeland Climbing Centre

An entrepreneurial spirit reaching ever greater heights.

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As one might expect from “the birthplace of modern British climbing” the Lake District’s associations with mountain sports are well documented. This stunning natural environment has also inspired two local climbers to establish one of Britain’s foremost climbing walls.

The Lakeland Climbing Centre was established in 1995 by Jeremy Wilson and Kathryn Phillips. Both passionate rock climbers, the partnership was one where each party perfectly complimented the other.

Originally from Bowness-on-Windermere, Jeremy’s career led him to the City of London where he bought and sold oil companies for international investment bank JP Morgan. This lucrative position meant he was able to provide the start-up funds and a heady vision for the new business, whilst Kate proved a reliable ‘belay’ partner with her feet on terra firma and undertaking the more hands-on duties to get their plans off the ground.

“Even when based in London, Jeremy always stayed close to his South Lakeland roots, visiting his parents and enjoying family holidays here.” comments Marketing Manager Andrea King.

“His life plan was always to come back to the Lake District after earning his ‘pot of gold’ in the City, to enjoy the beautiful environment with his family and to provide something really special for the South Lakeland climbing community.”

One obstacle to overcome was the fact that even though there are countless high fells and rock faces in the area, man-made structures that could accommodate a viable climbing wall were in short supply. The solution appeared on the northern edge of Kendal in the form of a disused Milk Drying Plant, part of a manufacturing facility vacated by Heinz (UK) when they modernised their production process.

After a hectic year which saw a complete change to the inside of the building, the doors were opened to the new ‘Kendal Wall’ in December 1995. Even when operational work continued to develop the site and, in 1996, the Main Wall was added and a height of 20m was achieved.

By the late 1990’s the Kendal Wall had gained national recognition and a high reputation for its quality of climbing; it was ranked in the British Mountaineering Council’s top three climbing walls in England.



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The business has always had its sights on raising standards with steady growth and investment in the Centre as well as developing the staff, whose number now stands at twelve full time employees and eight part-timers.

“The Centre is one of the largest and most varied in the UK right now and the plans are to keep on growing,” adds Andrea, who joined the team at the Lakeland Climbing Centre team in 2010.

“The ambition is one which hasn’t really changed from the vision Jeremy and Kate had when they started out: to provide one of the best indoor climbing centres in the country where people can come to climb either under their own supervision or for instruction.”

As well as standard climbing, the Kendal Wall offers an innovative and highly accessible experience, CrazyClimb, a fantastic starting point for complete beginners - both children and adults - who can simply clip in to a fixed top-rope and start getting to grips with bright, fun climbing panels in complete safety.

The Lakeland Climbing Centre also boasts a European first with an indoor Via Ferrata. “It’s an aerial adventure within the Centre and involves climbing through tunnels, across walkways with swings and incredible vertical exposure, ending with the ‘Jump of Doom’, a 20m drop to the ground – all done incredibly safely with participants in special harnesses and attached to strong wires throughout” explains Andrea.

When asked what the business highlights are for the Centre, the replies are more personal stories of achievement rather than those of business gain.

“Our growth has been steady and manageable, resulting in our standing today as one of the best and certainly most varied climbing walls in the country. That said, the successes of which we are most proud are the smaller things: the wayward teenager who finds a passion in life through climbing which provides a more constructive channel for their energies; the disabled

person who manages to scale one of our smaller walls; or the groups of over-60s who regularly use our facilities and stay young through exercise and the stimulation of being active with their friends.”

So would it be fair to say that the Centre is also providing a community service?

“Most definitely! Our visitors are incredibly diverse and happy customers are our oxygen! We regularly receive wonderful feedback that makes all the effort and investment worthwhile.”

It all sounds almost too good to be true, but the magic appears to be working away from South Lakeland as well – the business recently opened a climbing wall in Vauxhall, London (aptly named ‘Vauxwall’) and this unique brand of exhilarating exercise and diverse demographic appeal is already proving incredibly popular. So popular that the search is already on for two further locations in the UK in the next few years.

“We would like to continue the expansion of the Kendal Wall and maintain its high reputation as one of the best climbing walls in the country.” concludes Andrea, “It’s in our ethos, just like the mindset of every climber, that we can always do better and must keep focused on our purpose. Happy staff means happy customers, it’s the oldest rule in business, but it means we stay successful and can continue to invest in the business.”



The Lakeland Climbing Centre

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Welcome to South Lakeland.

A Breath of Fresh Air for Business.

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An area known globally for its astounding natural beauty and unique vibrant culture, South Lakeland is also home for a thriving and innovative business environment where companies can become established, grow and prosper.

The entrepreneurial business spirit is strongly encouraged in South Lakeland, reflected in the healthy number of fledgling enterprises setting up each year in our region, and our work also encompasses projects designed to help make the first steps to start-up as easy as possible.

The Economic Development Team at South Lakeland District Council are an inward investment service providing information and support to businesses of all sizes, covering all industry sectors, whether you are already here or are looking to locate your operations in South Lakeland.

The Economic Development Team are here to help your business uncover the exciting potential that exists here. Should you have any questions, we are on hand to assist and tell you more about the opportunities to be found in the most beautiful corner of the UK.

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