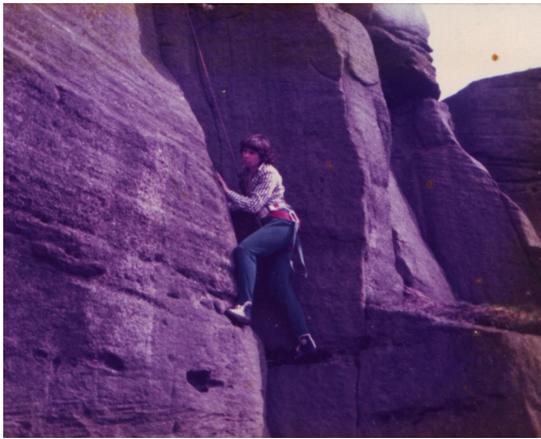


## Two Photographs

By Siân Robinson Davies & Helen Davies, 2013



There are two photographs. The first is of my mum rock climbing in Derbyshire at Burbage North in 1981. She is roped up and balancing in the middle of the frame, with her left hand against the rock, looking to see what her next move should be. The second is of me posing in the same position, climbing the same route in 2011.

I was given the first photograph by my grandma and took the second with some friends when I was climbing in the same area. There are miles and miles of crag around there and it was only due to the extensive knowledge of a local who could identify the climb as 'Greeny Crack' from looking at the picture, that we were able to find route.

I put the photos on Facebook and 19 people liked them. I think people like them because of their neatness. They link two generations, moving in the same way over the exact same stone crack in the exact same geographical location thirty years apart. But not only that, they also depict a tradition, a lineage continuing from one generation to the next, like a family name or a blood line. I gave the framed photos to my mum for her birthday.

But my mum didn't teach me to rock climb, nor have we ever been climbing together; my mum stopped climbing soon after this photo was taken due to a scare climbing in the rain. The lineage presented in these two images exists only because I sought out that route from the hundreds of others, to trying to track down where my mum had once done things I now I enjoy doing.

The two photographs attempt to marry a past and a present that don't quite fit in a comfortable way and it seems strange to me now that I wanted to take that second photograph. Maybe it came from a desire to make a connection between us. So what at first felt like the perfect gift now feels like something I should have just kept for myself, but you can't take back a present.

My mum has recently started writing about her past and her ancestors, so I asked her what she thought about the photographs and her memories of climbing.

—

Mum, dad, auntie Bettie and uncle John were there. They had never really watched me climb before. Would they be worried about me falling? My enthusiasm was failing. I had recently had some frustrating times climbing in the rain in Snowdonia and a scary moment when I was unable to help my climbing partner who was stuck on wet rock, so by the time this photo was taken I was starting to disengage from climbing. I was questioning how important it was for me to get to the top and keep up with the boys. This was one of the last climbs I ever did. It's ironic that despite having climbed for several years this was the only time I remember mum and dad watching me.

It never really felt as if I was climbing for myself. I was doing it because it made me believe that I was powerful and could challenge the verticals, the impossibles and the difficulties, coming out of it with some feeling of nobility and ability to achieve and conquer. But here I am on my own, climbing for the camera to keep this moment in posterity. My uncle stood there on the rock waiting rather precariously for me to begin.

Recalling the journey up the rock face, I remember that rush of excitement and fear. Feeling good in my EBs and harness I wondered whether I would manage to get to up. The camera clicked and I continued upwards. The rest is completely blank but another photograph of me with my friends at the top is evidence that I made it.

Yes, I found climbing scary and even now I sometimes feel uneasy when Sian climbs but I can see that she enjoys it. Doing this writing is a gift of courage to help me explore in safety rather than go for the rush. I'm sitting back now moving in parallel as Sian climbs steadily and confidently up 'Greeny Crack'. That's the best present I could ever have received. Thanks Sian.