

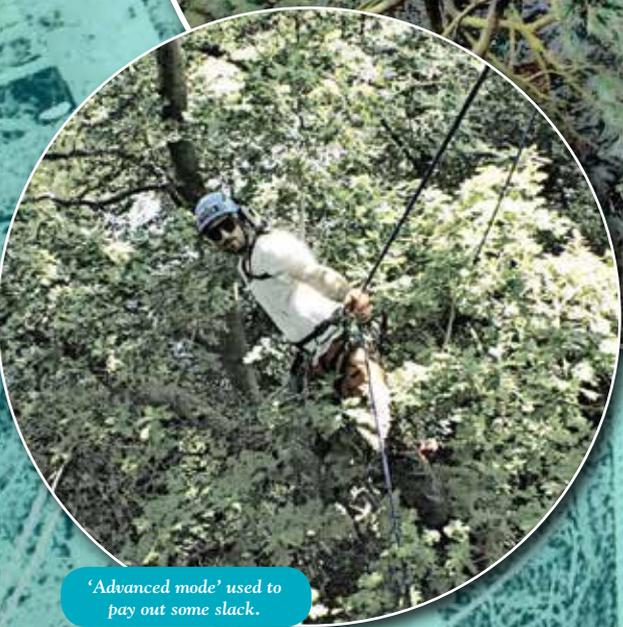
SRT-WP – *What is it?*



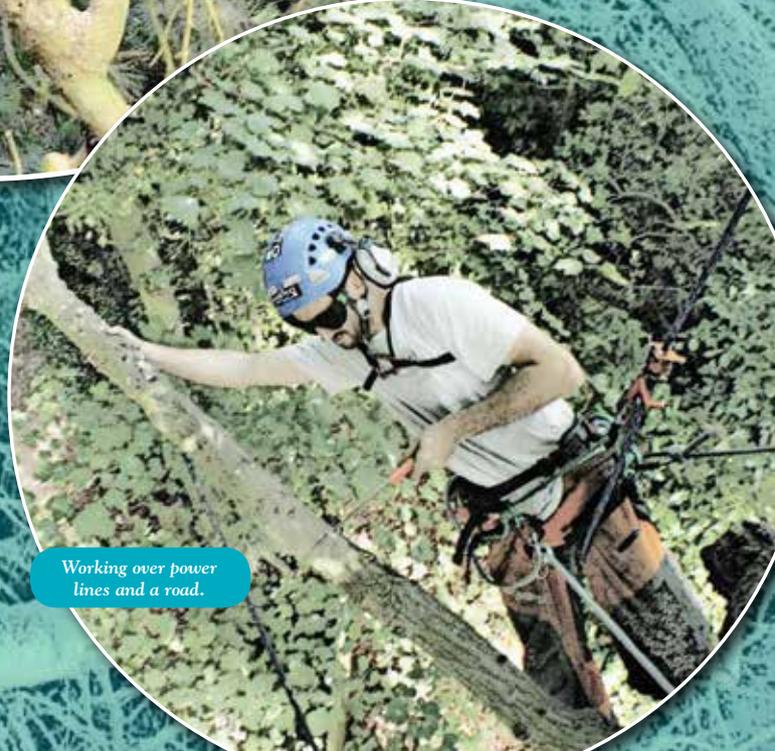
Adam Bourne using the Hitch Hiker for a cedar removal.



Using the rope wrench to descend parallel with a large split limb.



'Advanced mode' used to pay out some slack.



Working over power lines and a road.

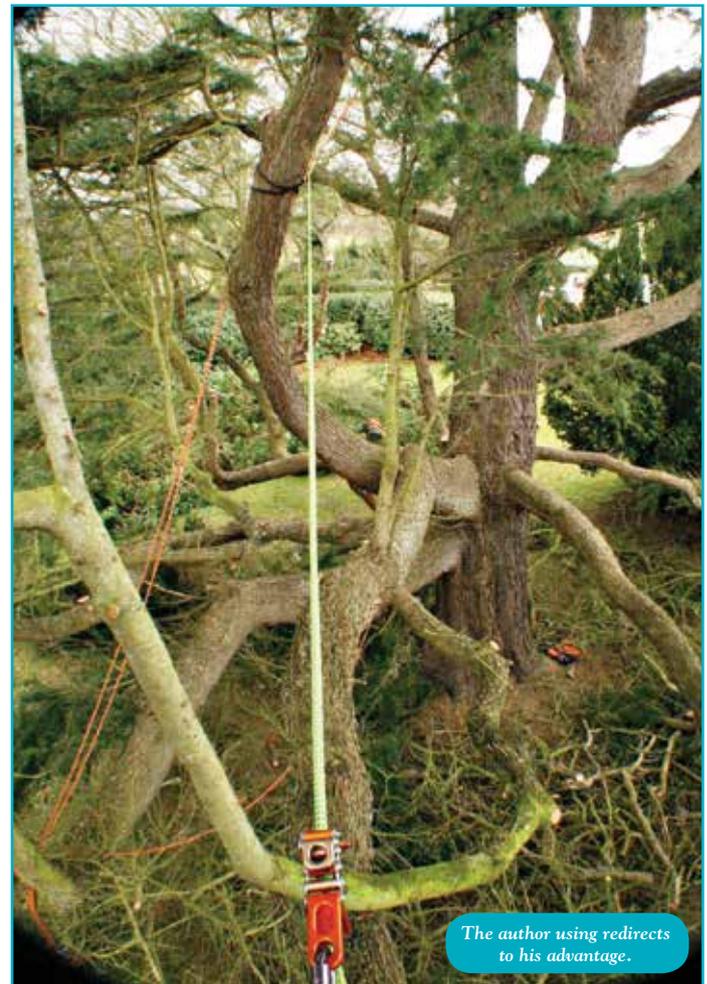
MOST OF YOU WILL KNOW WHAT SRT STANDS FOR – SINGLE ROPE TECHNIQUE. I will just explain a few other abbreviated words regularly used in SRT-WP for reference before the article continues.

- **SRT-WP:** single rope technique – work positioning – using the efficiency of SRT to move and work the crown of the tree.
- **LOTS:** lanyard over the shoulder – using the lanyard to create a chest loop that allows the system to be lifted as your body moves upwards.
- **PTP:** primary tie-in point – the main point of attachment.
- **TTP:** temporary tie-in point – A point used either above the PTP or a redirect above the PTP.

Hopefully with a few main abbreviations out of the way we can continue to a time before the rope wrench, when SRT was new(ish), well in our industry at least. It was predominantly used in ‘big tree’ territory, mainly the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Most used a ‘frog walker’ type system, which used a toothed cam in your hand ascender, chest ascender and foot ascender and also using a foot loop to create a walking motion but this system could only go in the upward direction. Already proven in the caving industry, it was now being used daily in our industry for access. It was faster, used bigger muscle groups and used less energy on the way up, although the frog walkers’ Achilles heel at this time was its inability to be used to work the crown of the tree. During this time double rope systems were king of the crown.

Skipping forward a few years and we come upon a forward-thinking gentleman, by the name of Kevin Bingham, who is best known for reviving SRT in our industry. Before this the UK was still a few years behind the rest of the world – who’d been able to take advantage of SRT-WP with Rock Exotica’s Unicender for the last few years. The Unicender is still in the CE Mark process. I have, however, been using and monitoring the daily wear and tear and correlating the data.

Now onto the Singing Tree rope wrench (Kevin Bingham’s invention) and WesSpur Hitch Hiker. These are similar in their application but completely different in their design. The rope wrench creates



a slight bend in the rope to relieve pressure off the hitch, allowing easy compression and advancing of the hitch, which would be very difficult to do if you only used a hitch on a single line. A stiff tether vastly increases the performance of the rope wrench, especially its

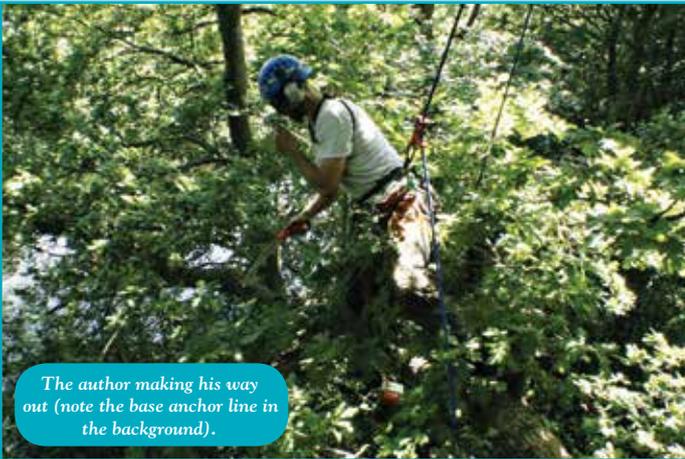
slack tending and advancement of this system. The Hitch Hiker is a more compact system and fits comfortably in the palm of your hand. Although it can take a bit of time to fine tune, the results are worth it. The system sits very close to the climber like the Unicender, that keeps it always within reach. Occasionally the rope wrench can become out of reach due to the length some harnesses bridge, but this is easily rectified if you have the ability to shorten it.

So finally, onto the Unicender – a mechanical grab system that uses four cams to pinch the rope. This has been a favourite with a number of climbers around the world and was around many years before the arrival of the Hitch Hiker and rope wrench. The Unicender performs extremely well when used in conjunction with a chest loop to slack tend as you ascend upwards or returning from a limb walk. This allows you to have both your hands free whilst advancing your way upward or to slack tend the line. There are two types of descending – ‘control mode’ and ‘advanced mode’. Control mode is extremely smooth and requires you to wrap your rope over the release plate and feed slack through your hand, thus controlling its speed. Advanced mode on the other hand takes a lot of practice and requires your fingers to depress the top plate only for a very fast descent. Although scary at first it is very useful, especially when slack is required on limb walks and, more importantly, lunchtime!

All systems can be made more efficient by using LOTS or a chest loop and karabiner. For long ascents some people decide to add a hand ascender and foot loop creating a different variation of the ‘frog walker’ system.

There are many ways of anchoring your line in the tree for SRT but the most common two used are explained below.

TOP TIE – this requires isolating your anchor in the same way as you would for double rope systems and exerts the same force on your



The author making his way out (note the base anchor line in the background).

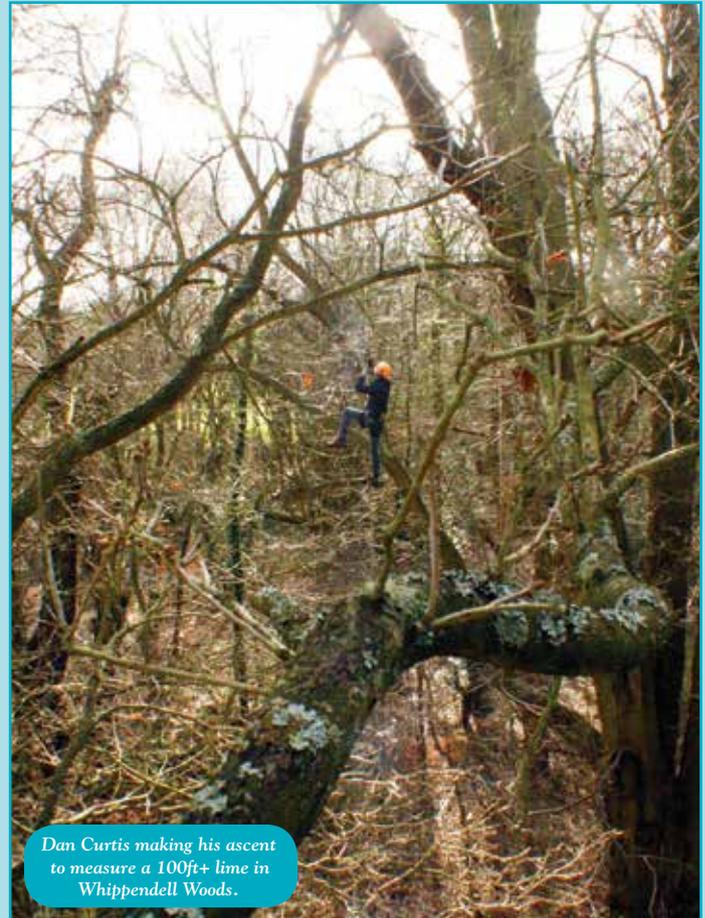
anchor as you would when using a natural crotch or cambium saver. You will have to climb back up to your PTP to retrieve your rope and switch over to double rope or tie a throwline into the loop to retrieve from the ground. This can be done before you pull your line up to create the PTP or just before you descend to the terra firma below.

BASE ANCHOR – this is commonly used to access the tree prior to establishing a PTP. Care should be taken when identifying, and then selecting, your anchor due to the 2x increase of pressure on the branch or fork union. You should ensure the end towards the base of the tree is either terminated around the stem or the stem of another tree. This can be as simple as using a running bowline or using base anchor strops to create a ground rescue system, providing they are able to undo their side strop/lanyard.

When it's time to work the tree, it's mostly the same as double rope, well without the 2:1 mechanical advantage! The biggest advantage is the ability to set up multiple redirects without losing any friction in the system. Natural TTPs or false TTPs use strops to choke a selected position on a branch or limb with a karabiner to clip the line into. Recently the SRT retrievable 'Craig Johnson' was invented that allows the redirect to be recovered via a tail length of rope. Being SRT-WP the friction is consistent as you are moving up the static line, unlike double rope where the line moves with you. This makes moving through tight forks less of a worry and routes to a work area can be planned a little easier. Using multiple false anchors, much like the fishing line rigging technique, allows you to work the very tips of the crown comfortably and reduces the risk of a long pendulum fall into the stem by creating a shallower angle of work. Should you require a mechanical advantage, either create a loop with a karabiner or simply attach your hand ascender and clip the line through the karabiner. Make sure you keep hold of the running end, as you'll need this to pull yourself back in from that tricky limb walk. This creates a 3:1 advantage and can be set up and removed in less than 30 seconds.



A secured base anchor around a nearby beech tree.



Dan Curtis making his ascent to measure a 100ft+ lime in Whippendell Woods.

Chogging stems and using spikes have the added advantage of already being your PTP as you advance or descend the stem. In double rope techniques using a running bowline, figure 8 and a hitch is already good practice and commonly used when working a stem section, although the SRT-WP system can be a simple running bowline that operates in the same way. Should you double gaff out on a stem your SRT-WP system allows controlled descent/ascent.

Rigging operations are performed pretty much in the same way as you would in double rope, except you're using SRT-WP. Good practice is to keep your climbing lines away from a fast moving rigging line.

The recommended equipment for an SRT-WP system would be, from your feet up:

1. A foot ascender
2. The SRT-WP piece of equipment
3. Chest loop with a snap gate karabiner
4. A couple of slings and karabiners for TTP

Hand ascenders and foot loops are recommended for long ascents.

(Note: CE Marked equipment is required for use within the European Economic Area since 1993).

Remember, when learning how to use a new system you should start by reading the manufacturer's instructions and then practising low and slow under guidance until you feel confident to advance your learning.

Until next time...

Ian Flatters

Nomadic Climbers