

Press Release

First Recipient of the George Band Award for Exceptional Voluntary Contribution

A former member of the L&CPU Executive Committee who has helped behind the scenes in the introduction of some of the most important safety measures in modern climbing has been honoured with a new national award.

Seventy years old George Steele *FRGS CEng FIEE LRPS CPAGB* who lives in Rochdale is to be the first recipient of the *George Band Award for Exceptional Voluntary Contribution* for his 40 years service on the *British Mountaineering Council's* Technical Committee.

That period also includes 23 years on the Safety Commission of the *International Union of Alpine Associations (UIAA)*, including two spells as Vice President of the Commission, and 17 years as Chairman of the British Standards Institution Committee on *Mountaineering Equipment* and acting as one of the Principal UK Experts on the European Standards Committee.

The Award will be presented by George Band at the *British Mountaineering Council* Annual Dinner on 16 April 2011.

George Steele, a retired senior civil servant, has been a climber, part-time instructor and photographer over a period exceeding 50 years and is a member of the *Alpine Club*, the *Fell & Rock Climbing Club of the Lake District* and the *Yorkshire Mountaineering Club*. He is also a Fellow of the Royal Geographical Society and for many years led mountain walking holidays in the Alps.

His voluntary work extends to other fields and he is currently President of *Bury Photographic Society* and gives photographic lectures and judges photographic competitions across the North of England.

In addition he is Vice Chairman of *Rochdale Gramophone Society* and Photographer/WebMaster for the *Federation of Recorded Music Societies*.

Contact points

British Mountaineering Council, 177-179 Burton Road, Manchester, M20 2BB

Tel: 0161 445 6111 Website www.thebmc.co.uk

George Steele, The Cottage, 51 Pegasus Court, Rochdale, OL11 4EA

Tel 01706 525630

Notes for Editors

George Christopher Band OBE was, at 24 years old, the youngest climber on the 1953 Everest expedition when Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay made the first ascent of the mountain. Two years later, in 1955, he and Joe Brown became the first climbers to ascend Kangchenjunga, the third highest mountain in the world. George Band has been President of both the *Alpine Club* and of the *British Mountaineering Council*. In 2007 he wrote "Summit", a book celebrating 150 years of the *Alpine Club*.

The BMC Technical Committee is made up of volunteer members plus the Technical Officer from the BMC Office. The group contains a wide range of expertise, and includes mountain guides, engineers, research scientists and equipment manufacturers. Meeting five times a year, the committee investigates instances of equipment failure reported to the BMC. It also advises on methods of safe use of equipment. The group produces various BMC technical publications and occasional videos, and provides independent advice on equipment. Committee members sit on the two main standard making bodies for mountaineering equipment.

In past 40 years there have been enormous changes in mountaineering equipment leading to much safer and lighter equipment such as ropes and karabiners. Harnesses and helmets have been developed during the same period offering much better protection to climbers, especially in the event of a fall or of rock fall. Standards for mountaineering equipment have also been developed to a high degree and incorporate requirements posed in European Safety Directives.