



# Women's Trad Festival

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2023 Press Release



October  
2023



**Dear friends and supporters,**

After an incredible eight-year journey, the Women's Trad Festival has come to its conclusion.

Since our founding in 2016, the Women's Trad Festival has grown year after year in size, heart, and impact. It has provided a space for learning and connection to thousands of attendees, outdoor professionals, and volunteers. Throughout this time, our ambition has remained constant: to help beginners transition from indoor to outdoor climbing, support women and other marginalized genders in outdoor leadership, and help create an inclusive network of trad climbers.

When we set up the festival nearly a decade ago, the face of climbing in the UK was distinctly different. Since then, the landscape has changed. As thousands of climbers have passed through our festival gates, we have seen a great increase in diversity, and the stereotype of a 'climber' has been challenged. There is still more work to do, but we are heartened to see greater inclusivity within climbing and more support for underrepresented climbers than ever before. While we can't take sole credit for this change, we are exceptionally proud to have been a strong stepping stone on the path to true equity and equality within climbing.

As a team, we have gained a huge amount from dreaming up, creating, and organising the Women's Trad Festival. It has brought a monumental amount of joy into our lives. We have grown as individuals and as a team in ways we could never have imagined. The festival has shaped us as we've shaped it. It holds a piece of our hearts.

Brought together by guiding principles we share as individuals, our core values of sustainability, mental wellbeing, and accessibility have resided at the heart of the festival, impacting every decision. Beneath this, our passion for co-creation, shared leadership, and doing something 'for the love of it' has underpinned our work. We passionately believe in the importance of community. Alongside this, a sense of responsibility to care for our planet and a desire to uplift others, making the outdoors accessible to all has provided constant motivation.

Returning to the present, the time has come for us to take a step back. As directors, we are each ready to take the values we hold, which we poured into the festival, and invest them in other new and blossoming ventures. We deeply love the Women's Trad Festival and working with each other, so this decision has not come easily. But giving ourselves time this year has allowed us to see that we're ready for the next chapter

.As we stand, looking back, we see so many people who created this with us. We want to send out the biggest thank you and love to everyone who has supported our vision over the years.

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Thank you to all the friends and volunteers who made each event so smooth, well supported and truly special! Thank you to the leaders and mentors who have given their time, often over many years. You were the ones who took our vision and made it happen in such professional, kind, fun and engaging ways.

Thank you to all the sponsors and supporters over the years. Thank you for understanding what we were creating and for enthusiastically backing us, for everything you gave, in time, equipment, funds, expertise and more. Thank you to Rachael, Vicki, Olivia and Roxy for the invaluable part you each played on our team.

And last but by no means least, thank you to all the folk who have attended the Women's Trad Festival. For being brave, open, enthusiastic, and ready to learn and be together. For shaping the festival with your feedback. For calling the festival into being. We have always done this for you, shaping it around what was needed in the community each year.

We are sad to be reaching the end of our time together as a community but are glad and grateful to be able to look back and remember everything we achieved together. Collectively, we have created something special, born out of love. Together, the Women's Trad Festival became more than a dream, more than the sum of the time and energy of its four organizers.

We would like to celebrate that. Celebrate what the Women's Trad Festival has been, and exploded into during its lifetime. Celebrate everything we as a community have co-created, and everything that has and will come from that.

Finally, and most importantly - this is an opportunity - where one path ends another begins. If you feel inspired to take the mantle forward and continue the work of the Women's Trad Festival get in touch. We would love to mentor a new team and have a lot to share from our years of learning. Our door is open.

Thank you for sharing our vision and helping us give others the platform to shine.

**Hetty, Gilly, Charlie and Ellie**





### Gilly McArthur

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“I’ve so many memories and proud moments in seeing our community here take a new direction in their own lives via the conduit of climbing. I’m immensely proud of what we have created and what seeds we have sewn these last few years. The WTF community, climbers, instructors and supporters will always be held close to my heart”



### Hetty Key

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“The Women’s Trad Festival has had a profound impact on my life both professionally and personally. The decision to draw things to a close has been incredibly tough, however I do not see this as the end, just the start of a new chapter. I am incredibly excited to see what is build on the foundations the festival has laid for so many people.”



### Ellie Fuller

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“This festival has meant so much to me. Over the years we have seen the power of role models and mentorship. And perhaps more so, the learning and healing that can come from connections made out on the rock, under the sky, or in shared stories around the fire. It has been incredibly moving to be part of.”



### Charlie Low

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“Women’s Trad Festival has been a pivotal part of my life for the past 8 years. Trad climbing is so special and meditative, and enabling more people to experience that magic has been so rewarding. Watching the festival slowly disperse on a Sunday afternoon, climbers faces glowing from new experiences and connections made will be a memory that will stick with me forever.”

## Our Journey



**2016**

Inspired by the Women's International Meet planning for WTF begins. A couple of busy months later, attendees gather for the very first Women's Trad Festival.

**70 climbers**



**2017**

Following on from the success of year one, both the team and festival expands to accommodate the ever increasing demand for tickets.

**120 climbers**



**2018**

The festival grows in size and introduces a 'Climber ticket' to enable more experienced climbers to attend. Tickets sell out in 180 seconds - faster than Glastonbury!

**200 climbers**



**2020**

Despite months of planning the festival has to be cancelled due to Covid-19. However, keen to support our community we launch '[Climbers Like Me](#)' a digital photo series shining a light on the diverse voices within the climbing community.

**View series**



**2019**

WTF moves to Clark Farm to continue to expand. Tickets sell out in 3 seconds! 'Parent & Child', 'Crack Climbing' and 'Self Rescue' workshops are added to the lineup.

**300 climbers**



**2021**

Tickets are moved to a ballot system to be more accessible. The festival is still 400% oversubscribed. New additions include yoga, breezy ecoolors and the 'Learning to Lead' and 'Breaking Barriers' workshop. The event is carbon neutral.

**350 climbers**



**2022**

Going into year seven, demand is as high as ever - for every person that gets a ticket, five didn't. Focusing closer truly making the festival accessible for all - we increase the number of subsidised places, loan camping equipment and introduce the Beta Chill Out Zone. The event is carbon neutral for a second year.

**400 climbers**



WTF in Numbers

## AIMS

**To help beginners transition from indoor to outdoor climbing:**  
Over the years, we have welcomed over 1,500 climbers through our festival gates.

**To support women and other marginalised genders in outdoor leadership:**  
Our 2022 festival feedback found that 70% of attendees were considering a climbing qualification (or further qualification). This is similar to previous years but a record high.

**To create an inclusive network of trad climbers:**  
When asked what the next steps in their climbing journey was the top two replies were to climb more and cement the friendships formed at the festival. In 2022 93% hoped to keep climbing with their group/partner.



## VALUES

**Accessibility**  
Over the 8 years, anyone who wanted to attend WTF was welcomed with open arms. Climbers could come with nothing but enthusiasm letting us know how to support their mental, physical and financial needs.

**Sustainability**  
From 2018 to the last festival in 2022, each event only produced 5 household bin bags of landfill waste. From 2021 the festivals were carbon neutral.

**Mental Wellbeing**  
85% of attendees felt that WTF2022 improved their mental wellbeing.



### Marie Uri - United We Climb

“If the Women's Trad Festival were a feeling, it would embody pure happiness and a perpetual smile. I've never experienced such profound empowerment before. While I thought I had received support and encouragement previously, this was on an entirely different level. The very first time I attended the festival, it inspired me to become a better person for novice climbers. I participated as both an attendee and a volunteer, and the colossal amount of effort, passion, and love poured into the Women's Trad Festival is truly extraordinary.”



## A few final words from our festival-goers...

"This was a festival of dreams. I have not stopped smiling since I left the campsite. I have spoken to everyone that will listen about how amazing the experience was. I have learnt so much about climbing, but more importantly about myself. I believe in myself so much more. You will never know just how much this experience has changed my attitude to life."



"One of the most joyous and life changing weekends that completely exceeded my expectations in every aspect."

"Your beliefs, core values and ethos ensured every single person in that field felt welcome and appreciated and it is a truly amazing talent to have the ability to create such an environment. You made the doors to a sometimes inaccessible world, fly open and rolled out the red carpet to us all."



"It was one of the best experiences of my life and I would repeat it infinite times if I could!"

"It is hard for me to express how much climbing means to be personally, and how much this festival did. If it had been any other event I was going to where I only knew one person, and I would be spending a weekend pretty much surrounded by strangers, I wouldn't have gone. I can't explain how happy I am that I didn't let the anxiety win, and that I came. This festival was a perfect reminder during a difficult time that in climbing I have found a home."



"WTF showed me that I belong in the climbing community despite my disability, chronic illness, and mental health."



"I often felt like it was my own shortcomings that were stopping me from being a part of the climbing community, rather than existing barriers. The WTF created a space in which I felt part of the outdoor climbing community, and a space for me to grow into as a climber. I cannot explain how much this has meant to me."



"Never before have I felt so at home among such a varied mass of people - all of whom were vastly individual, but commonly welcoming and motivated by climbing."



"I came on your funded ticket, really stuck with how to progress, learn or simply participate in a sport I love. I nearly cancelled so many times, even in tears about how I would cope on my own, would I be good enough, will I be the largest lady there and send my belayer into the sky! How would I get there, I've got no gear, the list goes on but oh my word...."

You have things sorted and more, I felt loved supported, able, and alive for the first time in a climbing environment and that is down to the amazing team and beautiful WTF community."



"Being pretty new to trad and just over a year in to my climbing journey I didn't know if I would fit in or be "good enough".... But I was so wrong! I feel empowered and ready to embark on the next chapter of my climbing."

"The festival is genuinely true to its values in every aspect - not many events can really say that. It represents the very essence of what climbing is about."



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## Women's Trad Festival

