

• >> WIN A FANTASTIC CLIMBING TRIP TO THE COSTA BLANCA << •

JUN 06 | ISSUE 16 | £3.50

CLIMB

M A G A Z I N E

FREE
SIURANA
POSTER

GO WILD!

WINTOUR'S LEAP CLEANED
AND READY FOR ACTION

CATALUNYA
SPAIN JUST GOT BETTER

MICK FOWLER'S
LATEST
EPIC

WHERE'S YOUR
HEAD AT?
TOP TIPS TO KEEPING YOUR COOL

PLUS MOUNTAIN INFO THE WORLD'S MOST
AUTHORITATIVE MOUNTAINEERING NEWS SERVICE



www.climbmagazine.com



all systems

G



IT TOOK 200 PEGS, 100 BOLTS, AND 50 TONS OF LOOSE ROCK BEFORE **MARTIN CROCKER** COULD LAY DOWN HIS TOOLS AND COIL HIS WORKING ROPES FOR THE LAST TIME – THE GO WALL PROJECT WAS DONE AND DUSTED. MARTIN RECOUNTS HIS LABOUR OF LOVE AND PASSES ON THE TORCH OF PASSION SO YOU CAN GET TO GRIPS WITH ONE OF ENGLAND'S HIGHEST AND MOST BRUTALLY SPECTACULAR INLAND PRECIPICES – THE GREAT OVERHANGING WALL, WINTOUR'S LEAP.

Mercifully it had been a dry winter – but cold. Just as the Siberian easterlies had picked up, the heater in my car broke down – only a hot water bottle had prevented me from arriving at the crag with frostbite each morning. Cruel work for an aging pen-pusher, but today **GO Wall** has never looked so good, liberated from its air of rack and ruin and glowing warm and orange in the winter sun – just like that feeling inside.

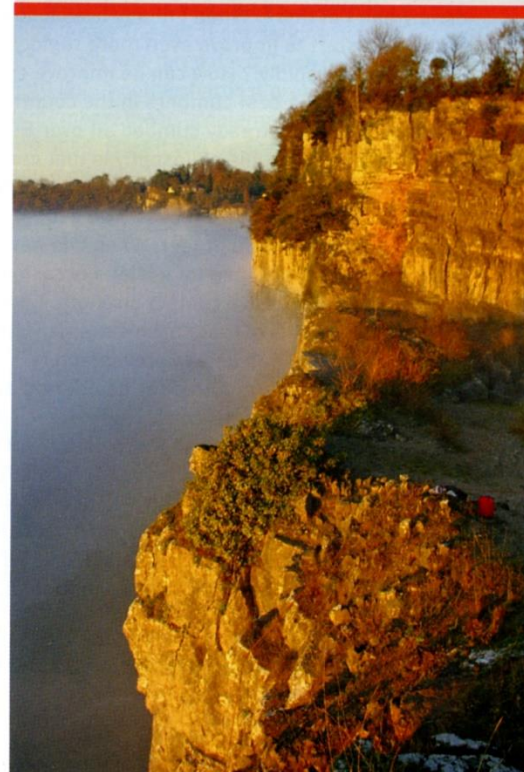
To start, no more compelling company can be found than that of *King Kong*. A nit-picked Kong perhaps but, for a crag that somehow eludes big-screen treatment, this is a line to outmatch most quarry-dwelling peers. Free of its huge buddleia, the true magnificence of Kong's groove can be fully appreciated as, centre stage, it stretches up to grasp the cliff-top 100m above your straining neck. Originally graded VS, its initial roof collapsed to leave an overhanging E1 corner lashed with polish from frantic feet scuffling to escape Kong's stranglehold. Don't be put off, the second pitch is splendid and, in common with routes in this vicinity (*Stairway to Heaven* to *Feline*), you can now top-out for the full summit experience. (Actually it is desirable that you top-out to save raining earth down onto *Stairway to Heaven* (E2) – and anybody who might be tip-toeing its taut, technical delights!). This walk-off option is largely thanks to John Willson who negotiated the construction of a path across private land from the cliff-top to the Offa's Dyke track. The landowner, Julian, is an understanding ally, so make sure you stick to the rules laid out in signage at the cliff-top. John lives near the cliff-top too.

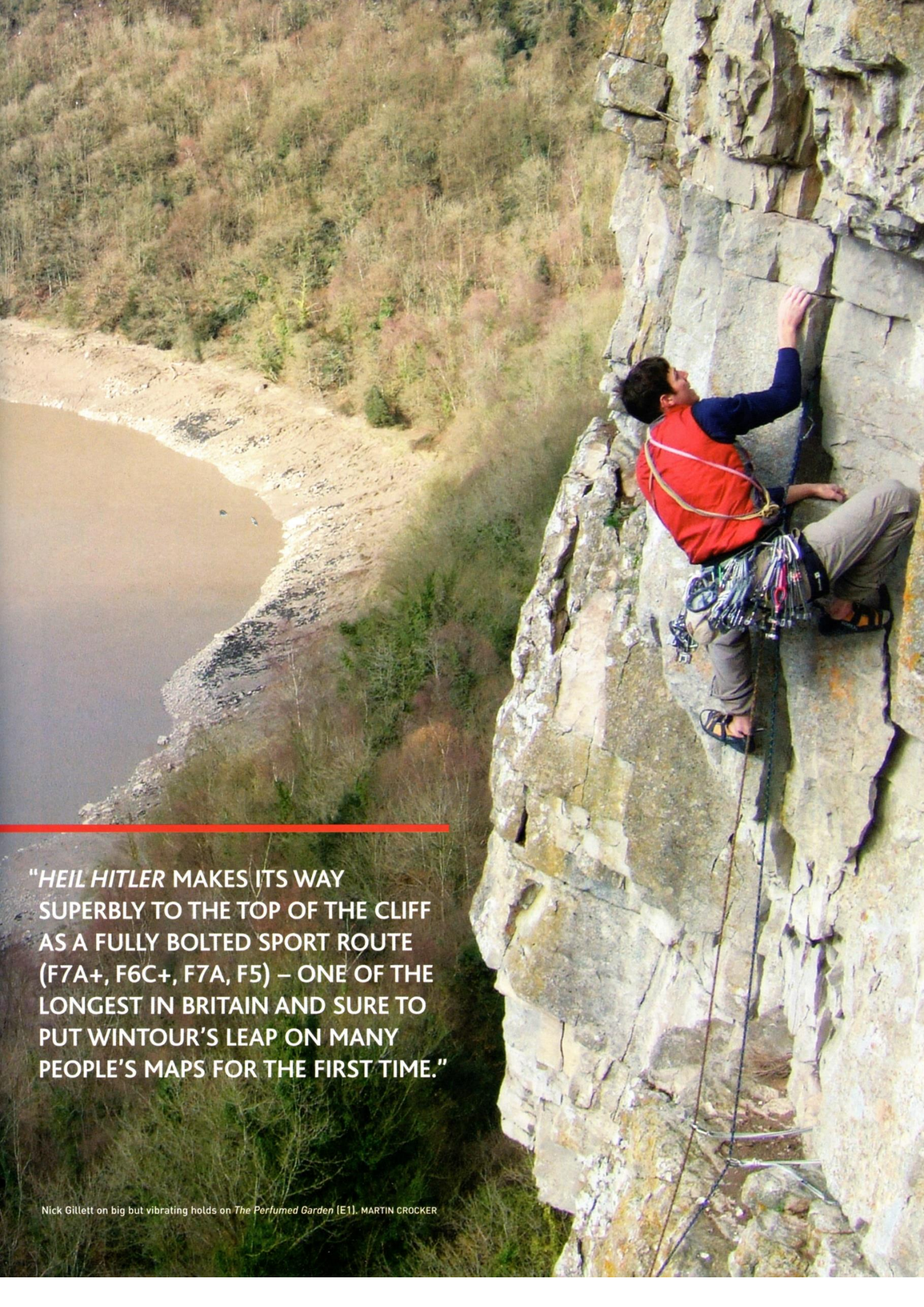
GO Wall has three moods. The first shadows an expansive grey wall that has been opened out to the winter sun by thinning the cliff-base scrub, left of *King Kong*. Good quality face climbs predominate and, given their reliance on fixed gear, at first glance you may gain the impression that the re-equipping hasn't been as conservative as it normally is hereabouts.

The classic of this section is *Kaiser Wall*. Two superfluous bolts, part of the original aid ascents, have been removed, but given that you can now clip a peg before the crux of pitch 3, the route is still E3. For all who have fumbled thereabouts a place for the 6a grade has been booked in the guidebook – possibly provoking a re-appraisal of whether you were climbing as badly that day as you had thought. The terrace above is unstable so retreat from *Kaiser Wall* and its immediate neighbours is now by means of two abseils from chunky 12mm stainless steel ring bolts (all new fixed gear courtesy of the BMC-facilitated Access and Conservation Trust fund).

Right of *Kaiser Wall* are two of GO Wall's best E5s: *Mein Kampf* and *Heil Hitler* are products of the unavoidable Gary Gibson – now a British climbing establishment in his own right (and by implication constantly challenging himself). Both have been given new blood, 20 years on, and shouldn't be missed. Of particular note is the fact that *Heil Hitler* makes its way superbly to the top of the cliff as a fully-bolted sport route (F7a+, F6c+, F7a, F5) – one of the longest in Britain and sure to put Wintour's Leap on many people's maps for the first time. While thereabouts check out the sketchy first pitch of *Mein Kampf* and let me know what you think – it's harder since a 2mm thin scallop-shaped

The King Kong bolts have been removed
For routes between *Stairway to Heaven* and *Feline*/*The Jackal*
topping out is now permitted





**"HEIL HITLER MAKES ITS WAY
SUPERBLY TO THE TOP OF THE CLIFF
AS A FULLY BOLTED SPORT ROUTE
(F7A+, F6C+, F7A, F5) – ONE OF THE
LONGEST IN BRITAIN AND SURE TO
PUT WINTOUR'S LEAP ON MANY
PEOPLE'S MAPS FOR THE FIRST TIME."**



all systems GO

Left: Ed Heslam setting out on the traverse of *Vulture Squadron* (E3 6a). MARTIN CROCKER

Middle: Tony Penning in the groove on pitch 3 of *Surrealist* (E1) (Nick Gillett belaying.) MARTIN CROCKER

Right: Martin Crocker cutting loose on *Joe the Lion* (E3 6a/E4 6b). DON SARGEANT

flake, that you could pivot your finger-nails and edge of your boot on, floated off.

A more amenable climb, *Never Say Die* (E2), can be found at the left edge of GO Wall, though its finest pitch actually belongs to the compact gritty walls of the Far South Bay. The new pitch 3 was an afterthought of Rob Kingston, a man otherwise censured for obsessive infilling eliminate-style in the early '90s. But here he got it right with an elegant and technical groove and that's the way the route has been re-gearred, improving upon Willson and Jon Shaw's still-fine original.

Immediately right is a line of new bolts substituting for a line of old pegs. *Never Say Never Again*, a strenuous F6c, is probably the route that most vexed the local 'Control Group' set up via the BMC South West Area Committee. The Group's purpose, belying its Orwellian title, is to make democratic decisions on ethical matters in the Wye Valley, taking into account the spirit of the climbing in the area, the practicalities and the need to make the climbing there appeal to the numbers of climbers that the cliff deserves and sustain its condition and climbing activity. On the one hand, for example, the group decided that with the first ascensionists' blessing some of the partly/mostly bolted routes on GO Wall should be fully bolted. After all, the likes of *Lurking Sear* (F7c+) were worked to hell in the '80s, just as sport routes are today. On the other, it approved finding solutions to

the *in-situ* slings that were multiplying across the cliff because people couldn't reach high enough to clip the pegs or bolts. So, while you make do with wires at waist-level instead of overhead sling protection on *Fond Adieu* (E4 6b), you might be relieved to be able to clip a repositioned bolt rather than a piece of worn-out bootlace on *Blitzkrieg* (E3 6a).

Heading right of King Kong, GO Wall undergoes a severe mood swing and the reason isn't hard to spot. A canopy of huge overhangs at half-height presents a fearsome challenge, and hence hard climbs. Once you are above them, the cavernous exposure kicks in, making 5b feel like 6b. Gone is the opportunity of abseil retreat – unless you want to find yourself dangling haplessly at the end of your ropes a long way off the deck. Here, the atmosphere is taut and epics lurk the merest slip-up away...

Here, you'll find no finer British outcrop E2 than *Kangaroo Wall*. Enough said, save you might like to ask to inspect the original (possibly even Fred Bennett's) inverted aid peg from pitch 3. The opportunity to do so assumes that Tony Penning hasn't swiped it for his 'museum of relics and horrors' at The Warehouse climbing wall. Anyway, it's quite a peg. It looks how you might feel after trying to repeat Tony's new route *What's New Pussycat?* (E5 6a, 2pts) that claws its way under a three-metre 'Toblerone block' hanging loosely from the rockfall hollow in the roof above. Judging by the fresh cracking, there's a whole lot more to

follow. See it coming and you'll have precisely three seconds in which to run...

Fear can trade places imperceptibly with exhilaration on GO Wall, no more so than when hanging from the roofs of *Howling at the Moon*. A sensational E5 with hidden finger-pockets, end up wrong-handed and your whingeing can transform to howling as your feet kick out at overhangs that vibrate ominously, resonating like poorly tuned timpani. A new variant is to finish with a *glutimus maximus*-straining bridge up the hanging corner; this way is 6b and a thin excuse to reinstate Tony Wilmott's original 1968 aid-route name *Interstellar Overdrive*.

Rockfalls from the overhangs have affected a number of routes, but miraculously without any loss in their quality. While Pat Littlejohn's big lead, *Hyena Cage* (E4) managed to escape, his neighbouring *The Jackal* lost footholds under the roof and now warrants E5, at least according to Ian Parsons who failed on it recently – though he was trying to solo it with a back-rope at the time. Most threatened by

extinction was GO Wall's wild testpiece *Dinosaur Heaven* (F7c), which shed its lower overhang and a jug higher up. (Its first bolt runner was found on the ground five years later still clinging loyally to the overhang!) Fortunately, recent ice-cold battles via a new start and a tantalising footless move through the main roof evolved successfully, thus offering this man-eater a second chance to rule the Wye Valley.

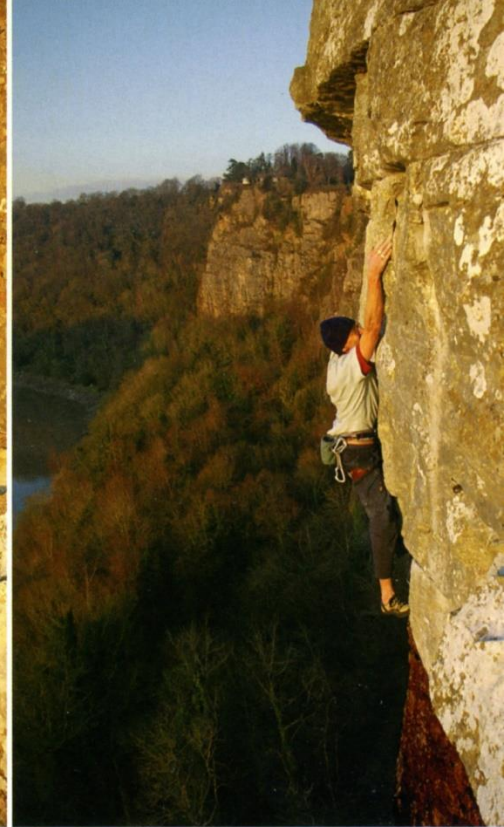
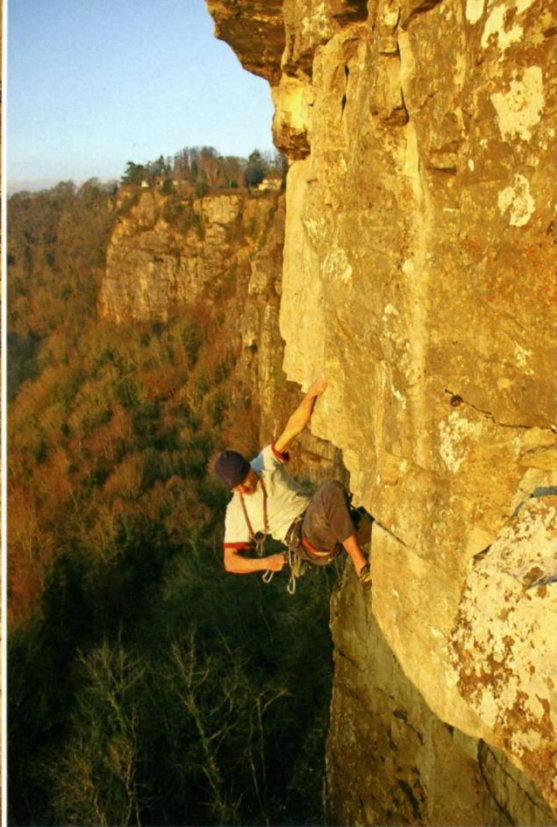
Working on the project while having a new guidebook script in mind presented the chance to improve or rationalise some lines. Such was the case for *Big Dong* (E3), *Crocodile Tears* (E4) and *Cat Gut* (E4), which have been linked in with long-forgotten variants and esoterica having no real identity themselves. Outrunning these, and most hard routes in the entire region, is *Feline* (E5 5b, 6b, 5c, 6a). It has a particularly brilliant second pitch, on a slightly improved line, which incorporates the crucial roof section of the former pitch 3 and abolishes the uncomfortable hanging stance on two vintage bolts – these 4mm bolts sheared off with sickening ease.

For some, like garrulous evergreen activist, Tony Penning, GO Wall is a perfect crag on which to, 'go out and have an adventure'. Ripping a block from *Endangered Species* (E3) and landing on his back from six metres a few years ago, Tony only narrowly escaped extinction himself. He has since returned to the route and agrees it to be the best of the *noir* genre of E1-E3s that populate the lower right wing of GO Wall. Cleaned up, and with their fixed gear replaced, others like *Zebrazone* (four pitches at E1/2) and *Chase Darkness Away* (E2) are well worth a second look. As is *Urizen* (VS), one of the few non-Extremes on the wall, which boasts a fine right-angled corner under a bad-hair day of jungle.

Some routes swagger rightwards to finish up the right wing of GO Wall (its third mood; a terraced gallery with a breathtaking view, possibly the most scenic hang-out in the whole of the Wye Valley). Here you can watch the Wye Valley Bore as, at the turn of spring tides, the wave strolls up-river, churning the silt of the

Tony Penning hoping the flake holds on his *Liquid Leather* (E3 6a). MARTIN CROCKER





Above and opposite: Martin Crocker on *Dinosaur Heaven* (F7c). DON SARGEANT



Tony Penning on *Captain Beaky* (E2 5c, 5b). DAVID HOPE

river banks and creating a little surf for the local otters. Like good cinematography, you hear it before you have any inkling what is going on.

All the single-pitch climbs starting here are worthwhile and some even popular, especially *Never Say Goodbye* (E2 5c), *Joe the Lion* (E3 6a/E4 6b – depending on who you talk to), *Liquid Leather* (E3 6a), and the stand-alone third pitch of *Surrealist* (E1). An oft-overlooked two-pitch E1 is *The Perfumed Garden*, which has an exciting finale up an exposed overhanging crack – all on huge vibrating holds. Except for the ultra-classic *Vulture Squadron* (E3 5b, 5b, 5b, 6a, 5a) the right wing provides the launch pad for all GO Wall's best traverses. In particular *The Umbrella Girdle* (E2 5c) has shaped up really well, even after a few rockfalls. With a 'new' first pitch (back-rope for second from the stainless steel maillon on *Parasol*) and all its pegs, bar one, renewed, the feedback is positive: "One and a half stars and almost a sport route," to quote one happy customer.

Intensive new route activity in the '80s and '90s left GO Wall with little room for fresh development in the 21st Century. One exception is a right-to-left lip-trip from *The Perfumed Garden*, which incorporates the traverse of Pat's *Big Bad Wolf* (E6) (itself a route so scary that second man Penning admits: "Why couldn't I remember anything about it? I had my eyes closed, that's why!") Gareth Edwards tied on the equally sharp end for the harrowing *Blow the House Down* (E5 6a, 5b, 6a/b, 6a, 4c), and emigrated to New Zealand shortly after.

WOODCROFT QUARRY CHASER

As if to compete with the hubbub on GO Wall, two men of manifestly different persuasions went to work in this hole in the ground that some say deserves to be filled in. Gordon Jenkin was the man with the drill – concerned with 'the quality of the climbing product from brownfield sites'. Tony Penning was the man without the drill but with a worry that 'it is all too easy to get carried away with bolts'. Most of the resultant climbs were recorded in a mini-guide prepared by John Willson and available free – on the gentleman's agreement that a donation be made to the Wye Valley Equipment Fund. That's out of print now, but you will find an update on The Climbers' Club website.

So, for the new routes, as you walk down the path next to the edge of Fly Wall look right to a clean white-streaked wall where much of



all systems

GO

Big Bad Wolf (E6) ... a route so scary that second man Penning admits:

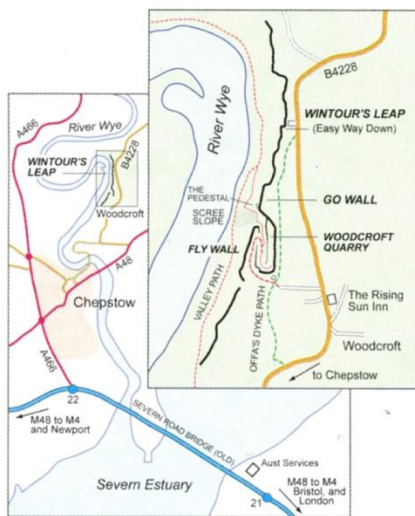
"WHY COULDN'T I REMEMBER ANYTHING ABOUT IT? I HAD MY EYES CLOSED, THAT'S WHY!"



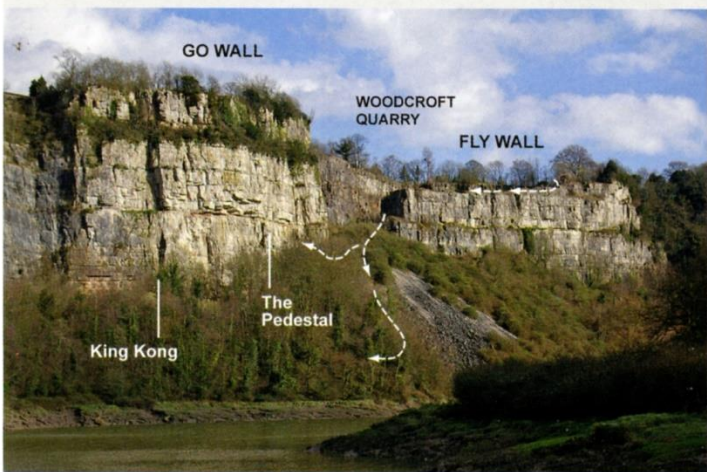
Gordon Jenkin on the first ascent of *Gunshot Wound to the Head* (F6c+)
MARTIN CROCKER (GORDON JENKIN COLLECTION)

the action has occurred. Sandwiched between Tony's *Lord Haw Haw* (E3 5c) and *A Slender Thread* (E3 6a) are three new sport routes from Gordon at attractive grades: *A Blast from the Past* (F6c), *Gunshot Wound to the Head* (F6c+) and *Lower the Tone* (easy F7a+). There are around 10 other routes in the quarry, three of which are new and fully bolted including a cover version of *Nice and Sleazy* – a marathon 35m pitch, its see-saw history rounded off by a kiss-and-make-up phone call between Gordon and Tony. In the right arc of the quarry, an off-balance arête is *Rippled and Toned* (F7a), and there is now a direct start to Tony's mono-bolted *Two Mules for Sister Sara* (F6c), a fine piece of climbing animated by its little

run-out to the belay. Don't dismiss the trad routes nearby, they have acquired their own fan club, which must be a testament to Tony's powers of salesmanship. So, on your way back from GO Wall one summer's evening, check the place out, appearances are not deceptive; it is full-on 'brownfield' but – perversely – you might find yourself getting distracted for quite a while. 🐿

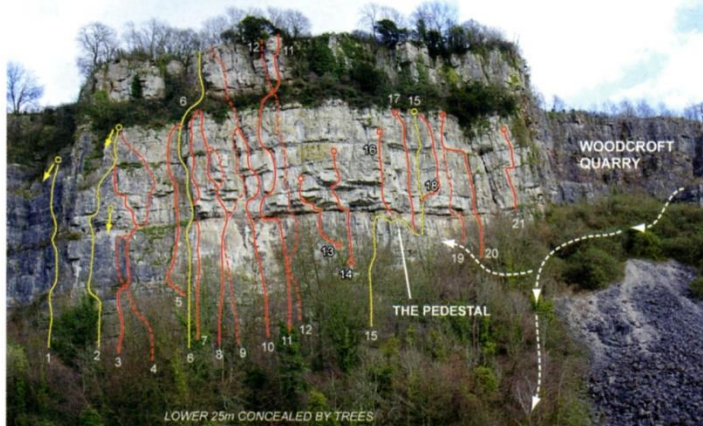


GO WALL & FLY WALL



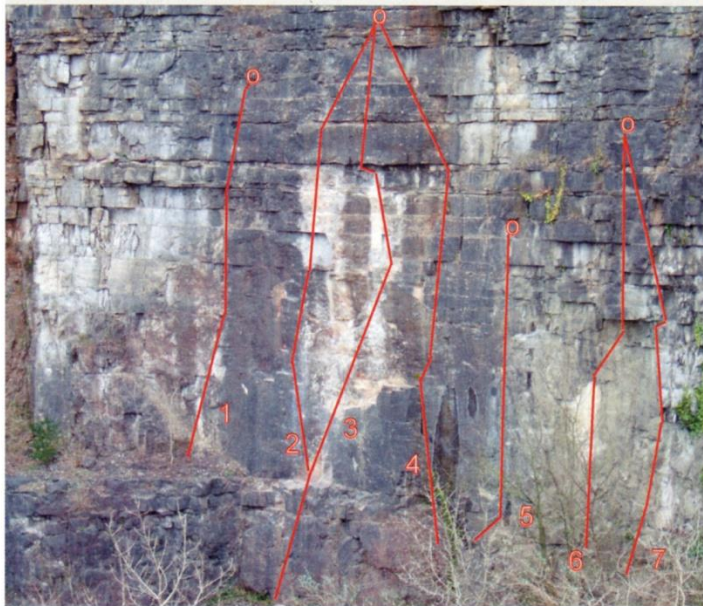
GO WALL

No exit to cliff top right of 11 The Jackal



1 Never Say Die	E2	8a Interstellar Overdrive	E5	16 The Isle of Dogs	E5
2 Lionheart	E5	9 Kangaroo Wall	E2	17 Never say Goodbye	E2
3 Kaiser Wall	E5	10 Hyena Cage	E4	18 Liquid Leather	E3
4 Heil Hitler	Fr 7a+	11 The Jackal	E5	19 Power Games	E4
5 Stairway to Heaven	E2	12 Feline	E5	20 The Perfumed Garden	E1
6 King Kong	E1	13 What's New Pussycat	E5	21 Face Transplant	E4
7 Big Dong	E3	14 Dinosaur Heaven	Fr 7c		
8 Howling at the Moon	E5	15 Surrealist	E1		

WOODCROFT QUARRY



1. Lord Haw Haw E3 5c
2. A Blast from the Past F6c
3. Gunshot Wound to the Head F6c+*
4. First Steps E2 5b
5. Lower the Tone F7a+*
6. A Slender Thread E3 5c/6a*
7. Ring Tone E2 5a/b



WALL FACTFILE

CHARACTER

The showpiece of Wintour's Leap, near Chepstow: a limestone wall almost 100m high that hosts 65 climbs, generally three to five pitches on traditional gear. Mostly a high standard venue, but 35 of its routes lie in the E1-E3 category and some of these are regional classics. There are 12 fully-bolted sport routes.

Private land or impenetrable vegetation at the cliff-top necessitates abseil retreats from most routes. Multi-pitch climbs between *Stairway to Heaven* and *Feline/The Jackal*, including *King Kong*, top out, so walk off. There is loose and suspect rock on the cliff including large formations showing clear signs of instability; helmets and vigilance obligatory.

CONDITIONS

West-facing, fairly sheltered, and little affected by seepage, it provides a reliable winter climbing ground. In high summer, the sun can be debilitating while climbing on this bright white rock, but cliff-base woodland provides a relief on a selection of climbs.

GUIDEBOOKS

The Climbers' Club *Wye Valley* guidebook edited by John Willson; a new edition (*Lower Wye Valley*) expected 2007, various authors.

WYE VALLEY FIXED EQUIPMENT FUND

Much re-equipping work in the Lower Wye Valley remains. Contributions to the fund are very welcome; cash contributions can be made at The Warehouse climbing wall (Parliament Street, Gloucester, Gloucestershire, GL1 1HY). Alternatively, make a cheque out to: Wye Valley Equipment Fund and send c/o The Martens, Hamshill, Coaley, Glos GL11 5EH.

THE GO WALL PROJECT

Supported by grants from the BMC's Access and Conservation Trust and The Climbers' Club Colin Kirkus Guidebook Fund, the project sought to restore GO Wall's climbs and help revitalize climbing in the Wye Valley.

Works included: the removal (subject to expert botanical advice) of scrub, ivy, and invasive wasteland plant species; the renewal of legitimate fixed gear and, in some circumstances, (decided by an appointed local Control Group) placing additional or removing anachronistic bolts – all embraced by the fixed gear policy approved and amended under the auspices of the BMC SW Area Committee; and the removal of manageable loose rock.

WOODCROFT QUARRY

The Quarry (together with Fly Wall that forms part of the same property) is under different ownership from GO Wall. Though climbing has carried on unimpeded, note that there is no official consent to climb there.