

Climbing in the Brecon Beacons National Park



Part 7: Western Black Mountain
Martin Crocker

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Published privately and available solely on the website www.martincrockerclimbing.com

Front Cover: Joe Squire taming *Fatboy*

Dedicated to Brian and Betty Vincent

Gower & SE Wales climbing began for me in 1972 with forays from Bristol to Llangattock, Taf Fechan, and Gower with the Exploration Group of North Somerset. My knowledge of the area and its climbing potential grew from 1974 while studying at Cardiff University. Ten years later it gained a new momentum after I met my wife-to-be, Beverley. Her parents, the late Brian and Betty Vincent, who lived in Newbridge, Gwent, showed extraordinary understanding of my extensive climbing explorations in Wales. It was not always the case that I'd slip away climbing while they looked after their grandchildren, but – at times when I was super-keen – it must have seemed that way. My heartfelt thanks, therefore, to them and my family.

Free Guidebook

It's a pleasure to be in a position to make this guidebook available without my pocketing any of your cash. All I ask is that you make a donation to one of the regional Mountain Rescue Teams (MRTs). They are all volunteers and on call 24/7. You might need them one day (but hopefully not). The choice of which MRT(s) you support is up to you; here's how to do it:



Brecon Mountain Rescue Team

Donations for Brecon Mountain Rescue Team can be made online through localgiving; i.e.: <https://localgiving.org/brecon-mountain-rescue-team>



Longtown Mountain Rescue Team

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Central Beacons Mountain Rescue Team

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Western Beacons Mountain Rescue Team

Donations for Western Brecon Mountain Rescue Team can be made online through JustGiving i.e.: <https://www.justgiving.com/westernbeacons>

Print at Will

Originally I built the BBNP guidebook as a single entity, but it became apparent it would be huge, and impracticable to print domestically. So I have split it into seven mini-guides based on their host mountain or upland area. The introduction is the same in each. They have been designed to be printed in A5 format on both sides of A4 paper. Good luck with that. And enjoy.

Copyright

A significant voluntary effort has gone into preparing this guidebook and making it freely available for personal climbing use. The publication of any of its contents either as hard copy or via the internet without the author's consent is prohibited. However, I appreciate that much information is shared on the internet these days, and I have no objection to basic details being referenced in any not-for-personal-profit (non-commercial) website. If in any doubt, just ask me.

Climbing in the Brecon Beacons National Park Guidebook Series

Western Black Mountain is one in a series of seven topo-based guidebooks to the climbs and boulder problems in the Brecon Beacons National Park. The crags in the BBNP essentially fit into two categories: limestone quarries (comprising mostly traditional climbs) and – the new kid on the bloc – Twrch Sandstone crags (comprising mostly bouldering). All the climbing sites are united by their stunning upland surrounds, and many are remote and rarely visited by walker or climber alike. If wilderness bouldering is your thing and you're not afraid of a good walk – eat four Weetabix, breathe deep, and take to the hills.

The aims of this series are to make available for public use details of some activists' explorations and to use this opportunity to raise money for a proven good cause. The guidebooks are *not* definitive records of the climbs since legitimate access to, and use of, sources of information outwith the public domain is not always available. I must express my apologies, therefore, for the inevitable omissions or errors, which could fill a guidebook. If nothing else, this project may well tease out more details of both past and present so a wider record of the climbing and – importantly – its correct history can evolve. As scotch mist Madge of the launderette in Tooting would tell me: 'It'll all come out in the wash, luv.'

There seems to be no universal convention regarding the publishing of first ascents of boulder problems. Originally I was going to publish the available known first ascent records (since boulder problems can sometimes be more significant than routes). Instead I've just summarised the years of development, allowing inferences to be made. Any first ascent details here should not be taken to heart. Many short or minor routes will not have been considered routes 'back in the day' and therefore left unrecorded. An effort has been made to estimate (+/- 5years) the date of any line so obvious that surely must have been led/soloed but where the first ascent is unknown.

In this guidebook series the climbing sites are generally described east to west.

Grading

E grades coupled with UK technical grades are used for the trad routes. French grades are used for the few sport routes. V grades (in combination with UK tech grades) are used for the bouldering, but please feel free to convert to Font grades at your leisure, because I can't. No attempt has been made to V-grade anything less than 4c.

Bouldering and first ascent style

Given the potential misery for a solo climber having to cart a mat uphill three, four, or five kilometres, the vast proportion of the bouldering has been achieved ground-up without a bouldering mat, but with the limited cushioning of a sleeping mat and a few old jumpers where necessary. In the absence of a mat some of the harder higher boulder problems will have first been inspected on a top rope (denoted **(H)**); a well organised team should find that spotters and mats more than compensate for top-rope inspection.

For solos of *routes* not indicated as ‘on sight’ or ‘above a mat’ assume they have been inspected and possibly even top-roped first. Routes indicated as ‘roped solo’ were led conventionally and safeguarded by a self-belay Soloist device instead of a flesh and blood climbing partner.

Ethics

For each crag a brief statement on the usual style of ascent is given under ‘**Ethic**’; this is a matter of fact, and best considered as *de facto* acceptable practice proven by historical record. Where it is stated that bolts are or are not acceptable, this is based on long-established principles (e.g. no bolting at Morlais or Twynau Gwynion; bolting acceptable at Baltic Quarry) and should be found to be in accordance with any legitimate local drilled gear policy. ‘Bolting acceptable/permitted’ relates to establishing new routes only. Where routes were first climbed solo (as indicated in the first ascent details) a mat will not have been used unless stated otherwise.

Stuff to Take

On the higher and more remote crags especially, equip yourself with robust all-weather gear as would a mountain walker; conditions can change quickly and a blue-sky day can become a mist-clad howling-gale in no time at all. A 1:25000 OS map and compass are invaluable when using this guidebook: the map references given are often the key data to get you to the crags. If you will be climbing on your own, also take a mobile phone (but don’t rely on it completely because of variable signal strengths), a head torch, and a whistle; and leave word of where you will be going.

The choice of what and how much padding to take is left to the individual boulderer. Certainly it is little hardship for an individual to take a lightweight sleeping mat to any of the crags, while a team might consider ferrying a bouldering mat or two. The use of bouldering mats will of course open up harder problems and unlock the remaining sit-start and bad-landing projects.

Rescue

In the unfortunate event of an accident requiring assistance ring **999** or 112, ask for **Police**, and then state you need **Mountain Rescue**.

Access

Access notes are included in each crag introduction. The vast majority of the crags are located on Access Land where visitors enjoy a right to climb. However that doesn’t mean you can do what you like on the crags: issues such as the presence of or potential for nesting birds of prey or protected scarce or rare plants take legal and moral precedence over your right to climb. Some sites are SSSIs, the citations attached to which denote the reasons for such declaration (e.g. rare plants, distinctive geology) and the management measures to maintain them including any necessary control over recreational activities (e.g. a direction that climbing is inappropriate).

A few of the crags within the boundary of the national park are *not* located on Access Land, but are approachable from RoWs without being forced to mount any fences or walls. **The inclusion of any climbing site in this guidebook does not assume or confer any right of access to it.**


You are best advised to do further reading by consulting the BMC's Regional Access Database (www.thebmc.co.uk/rad). For access issues please contact the BMC's Wales Access and Conservation Officer or local volunteer access representative (www.thebmc.co.uk).

Guidebook Disclaimer

You climb entirely at your own risk in line with the BMC Participation Statement (see below); this guidebook has been published strictly on that basis. The author and any other party connected with this guidebook cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions or be held liable for any personal or third party injuries or damage, however caused. The inclusion of climbs in this guidebook does not assume any right of access to them; please refer any access queries to the BMC.

BMC Participation Statement

Climbing, hillwalking, and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept those risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

		CRAG CODE www.thebmc.co.uk	
Access	Check the Regional Access Database (RAD) on www.thebmc.co.uk for the latest access information		
Parking	Park carefully – avoid gateways and driveways		
Footpaths	Keep to established paths – leave gates as you find them		
Risk	Climbing can be dangerous – accept the risks and be aware of other people around you		
Respect	Groups and individuals – respect the rock, local climbing ethics and other people		
Wildlife	Do not disturb livestock, wildlife or cliff vegetation; respect seasonal bird nesting restrictions		
Dogs	Keep dogs under control at all times; don't let your dog chase sheep or disturb wildlife		
Litter	'Leave no trace' – take all litter home with you		
Toilets	Don't make a mess – bury your waste		
Economy	Do everything you can to support the rural economy – shop locally		
<small>BMC Participation Statement — Climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.</small>			

Abbreviations Used

BBNP	Brecon Beacons National Park		o-s	on sight
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest		stal	calcite/flowstone
SWMC	South Wales Mountaineering Club		BB	Bolt belay
SWCW	South Wales Climbing Wiki		BR	Bolt runner
RoW	right of way		Adjectival Grades	
km	kilometre		M/D	Moderate/Difficult
N	north, northern, northerly,		VD	Very Difficult
E	east, eastern, easterly		S	Severe
S	south, southern, southerly		HS	Hard Severe
W	west, western, westerly		VS	Very Severe
FA	first ascent		HVS	Hard Very Severe
SS	sit start		E1 – E7	Extreme

Part 7: Western Black Mountain

This is the area dominated by the hills of Garreg Lwyd (616m) and Tair Carn Uchaf (482m) E and W of the A4069 respectively. This mountainous area embraces both the mixed-ethic limestone quarries adjacent to the A4069 and the Twrch Sandstone bouldering outcrops between the A4069 and Garreg Las to the E. Activity in the former arose from a wider interest in limestone quarries prevalent in the 80s and 90s, though the routes that got done here are all pretty esoteric and rarely revisited. Much finer is the Twrch Sandstone which Joe Squire and Martin Crocker independently explored in the 2010s: you must go there too. Thanks to Joe for the information and pics he supplied.

GARREG LAS: Carreg y Garreg Las OS 7713 1869

Possibly the most remote 'bouldering' in South Wales: imagine if only for one silly moment carrying a mat the 7 km distance from Ystradowen. Located on the W side of the Garreg Las ridge at almost 600 metres altitude, this 6-metre high Twrch Sandstone crag is probably not the best place to be on a windy and cold day. However it does face W (towards Foel Fraith) and is quick drying. The crag is quite limited in scope but the rock quality and outlook compensate. The climbs are best (most safely) enjoyed after a quick check or practice on a rope (given the hospitalizing boulder-strewn landings). And, unlike many a Twrch Sandstone crag, you can enjoy the camaraderie of fellow mountain-lovers on the Beacons Way overhead.

Approach

This really depends on what else you are doing that day. The two obvious options are: (a) to combine a trip with routes in the Twrch Valley (in which case approach from Ystradowen in the S – which is what I did), or (b) combine a trip with The Badlands/Carreg y Truman (in which case approach from the A4069 to the W by means of a mere 4 km walk – one hour for the fit). The map reference (in combination with lots of leg power) should get you there; but see the approach to The Badlands for a helping hand. The pic below is a look back at your approach, taken from Garreg Las.



Ethic: Soloing, bouldering

The routes are described from right to left.

1 **Tomorrow starts Today** 6m VS 4c (8.4.2015)

Climb the wall under a low roof; step left and up to the high roof spilt by a fist crack. Valiantly jam up with the best intentions; but chicken out using the block on the right. Bad landing.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

2 **Crackpot** 6m M (8.4.2015)

The easy crack.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

3 **Beacons Way** 6m E3 5c (8.4.2015)

Starting just right of a corner-crack, climb the vague groove up to a finger-slot for right hand. Delicately move up using sidepulls high up left; then reach the top. Bad landing.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

4 **The Hush** 7m Severe 4a (8.4.2015)

Climb the corner-crack; and then hand traverse an angular flake left to the top. Bad landing.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

5 **Windy With It** 6m E2 5c (8.4.2015)

Take the left-hand side of the white arête over a roof and use a flat jug to gain the angular flake. Bad landing.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

6 **Live against the Prevailing Wind** 6m E4 6a (8.4.2015)

Start under the centre of the roof, and extend for an open finger-jam for left hand just over the lip. Strenuously pull up to smaller holds before using the jug of 5 to gain the angular flake. Bad landing.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

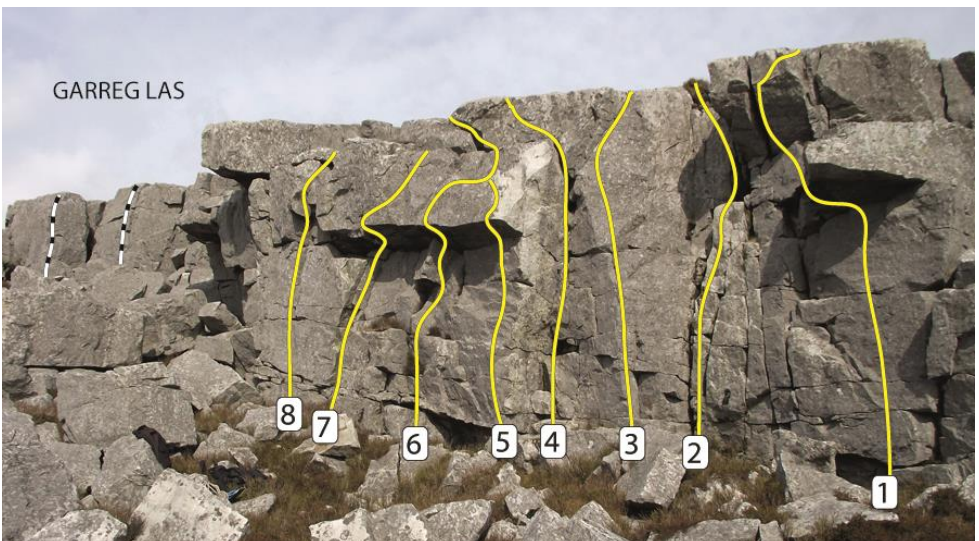
7 **Quaking in my Boots** 6m HVS 5a (8.4.2015)

Gain the obvious right-slanting crack over the roof, and exit on jugs. Bad landing.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

8 **Quaking on the Blocks** 5m Severe 4a (8.4.2015)

The crack just left to pull out on quaking blocks.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

There are some shorter pleasant problems on the walls to the left and only one in the deep rift behind the crag (a slabby wall at V0-, 4c).



GARREG LAS: The Badlands OS 7747 1887

They are all hidden in a cool maze which is just behind your cliff, to the east. There is some very good stuff but it needs a group of people and lots of pads. I haven't been able to rope anyone in yet.

The climbing here is tucked away in a maze of rifts NE of Carreg y Garreg Las, on top of the broad ridge of the mountain. Here the gently arcing layer of Twrch Sandstone has cracked apart to create a considerable expanse of climbable rock. However, the problems are well-adventurous and some of the landings rocky, so – as Joe suggests above – a mat and mate are recommended (although many were climbed ground-up above a few of my dear late Nan's rocking chair cushion). Facing all directions, the climbing enjoys some shelter and sun in the rifts, so this could be a relatively amenable place to climb on a windy day (but don't count on it). So far as is known, the problems as described were first climbed in September, 2014 and in August, 2018.

Approach

As for Carreg y Garreg Las. If carrying a mat, the only just-practicable approach is from the A4069 to the W. Park in a large car-park on the E side of the A4069 Brynamman to Llangadog road, at OS 7324 1875. Follow the track NE and then E under Herbert's Quarry whereupon Carreg y Truman can be seen in the near distance. (Yes, the level ridge on the horizon in the far distance is Garreg Las!) Carry on E crossing the Afon Clydach above its waterfalls and then pick up sheep tracks that eventually lead to the col above Blaen y Cylchau. Carreg y Garreg Las lies amid the boulder slopes above; from it walk 300 metres NE onto the summit ridge to a slightly anticlinal bed of grit where an entry to the maze becomes visible.

Ethic: Bouldering and frights

A principal rift creates a zig-zag shape which runs from SW to NE; this is 4 metres wide and pleasantly open and grassy at its S end. Branching off leftwards (N) from its S end is a narrower rift choked with arêtes (but there are evil, sharp boulders underfoot. There is potential here, when dry, but mats will be essential, if only to keep the mountain rescue teams at bay).

The routes in the S end of the principal rift are described first, starting on the left wall.

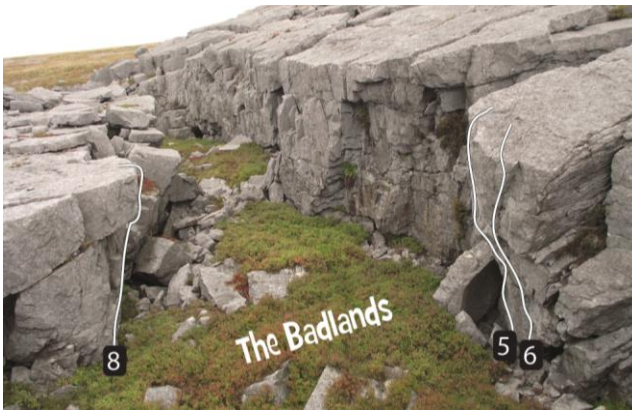


1 *Get a Stamp V0
(5a) The first wall via a large flat hold at 3 metres.

2 Move On V0- (4c)
The next wall right of a hanging flake.

3 Smooth It Out V0
(5a) A slim wall with a sloping mantel exit.

4 In Between V0 (5a) A slimmer wall with a block overhang, between two wide cracks.



Far right before the rift right-angles left is a fine arête with two ways to climb it.

5 ****Lay It On** V3 (6a) Start from crouch with left hand on a fat sidepull. Launch to a big jug for right hand, reach up left for the arête; then lay one on for the top with right.

6 ***Kick It Out** V2 (5c) Gain the jug with your left and use another good hold up right to gain the top.

Back to the S end of the rift, but on the right wall are:

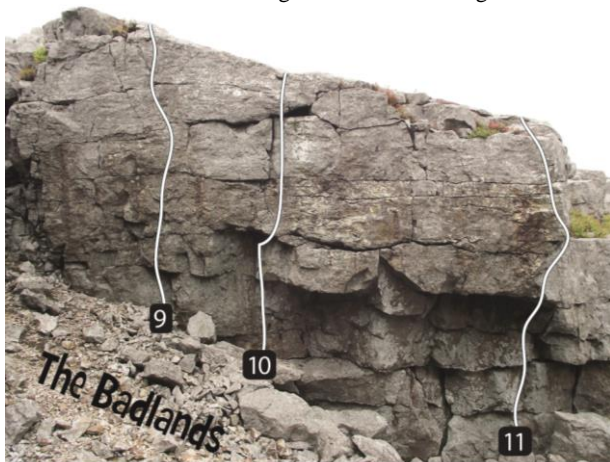
7 **Head is a Jungle** V3 (6a) A cantankerous pipsqueak from a SS on a sloping boulder: a sidepull and pinch combo masters the little arête at the entrance to the rift.

8 **Me Hearties** V1 (5b) An overhang split by a crack far left; start low, reach the lip and heave-ho.



Pic: Joe Squire uplifting on *Kick It Out*

Beyond the left turn and where the 'zig' zag's back right is more worthy material. On the left, first, is a crack-seamed wall ending in an arête on its right.

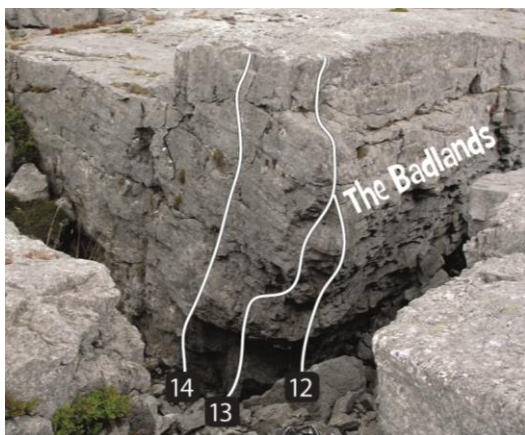


9 Party Balloon V2 (5c) From two fingerholds at head height, gain two crimps in a thin break: go for the top.

10 Party Ribbon V0- (4c) The flake central in the wall.

11 *Born Slippery V2 (5c) The right arête; start standing and use a thin layaway for left above the roof to gain a series of finger-jugs on the right. Power up to the top, pulling over with due respect for a rattling pancake. A SS will be possible in the dry, as will a line over the roof to the left.

Opposite, on the right wall, is an arête: check it out! There are two ways to climb it.



12 *Fatboy V2 (5c) From standing use a pinch for left to gain jugs atop the arête.

13 **Slim V4 (6a/b) Start low in the pit on the left as for *Sky Wall*. Climb rightwards onto a serrated finger-jug, ease right onto the arête and – making full use of a thin layaway for left – stretch to a jug.

14 *Sky Wall V0 (5a) The El Cap of Badlands: start low in the pit and take positive spaced holds to the top. This is high, so don't fall off. See pic of Joe on the first ascent, below.





CARREG Y TRUMAN (OS 7452 1903 – 7459 1911) is a superb little crag of near perfect Twrch Sandstone with an unusually diverse range of problems. Perversely – just when you discover a crag close enough to the road to enable a mat to be carried comfortably – you find that almost all the landings are so soft or spongy that you don't really need one. (However a tarpaulin or equivalent is useful to keep your feet dry.) The crag faces NW and is quick drying. So far as is known, the problems as described were first climbed between September, 2013 and June, 2015.

Approach

Park in a large car-park on the E side of the A4069 Brynamman to Llangadog road, at OS 7324 1875. Follow the track NE and then E under Herbert's Quarry whereupon Carreg y Truman can be seen at a slightly lower level in the near distance. Carry on E crossing the Afon Clydach above its waterfalls and views NW towards Carn Goch and the Tywi valley (pic); then bear left to the crag.

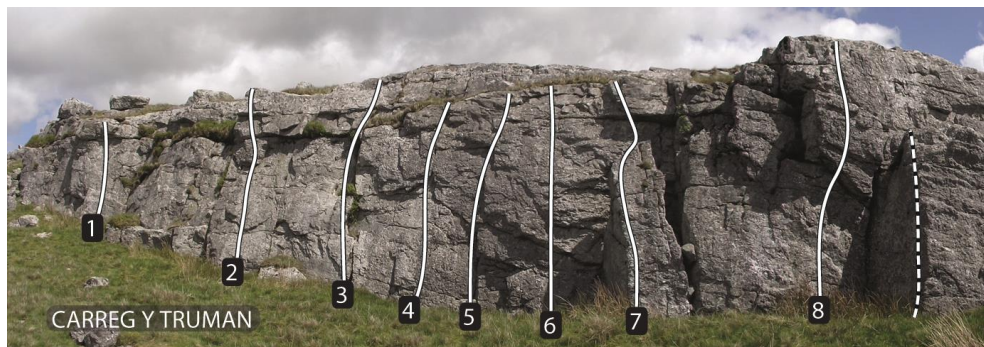
Ethic: Bouldering



The routes are described from left to right.

Left Section.

This is an off-vertical wall, 5 metres high, above a grassy landing. Sit starts optional (and subject to ground-moisture levels if you don't have a mat with you).



1 **Far Side 4a** At the far left-hand end trend leftwards over a tiny roof to the top.

2 **Sleepwalk V0-** (4c) Ramble leftwards up a slabby wall and over two tiny roofs in a slight prow. It's 6 metres high so don't doze off.

3 **Morpheus 4b** The crack with a small bilberry ledge.

4 **Harry Truman Show V0-** (4c) The next crack.

5 ***Light Side V0-** (4c) The most continuous crack in the centre of the smooth part of the face; better holds than might be expected.

6 ****Out of the Shadows V3** (6a) Brilliant; climb the slabby pebbly face on small holds, a metre left of the pinnacle.

7 **Hey Joe! D** The pinnacle and short wall.

8 **Dark Side V0** (5a) Climb left of a corner-crack, up a short wall and bulge and onto a juggy ledge. The short arête to the right can be climbed at 4a on either side.

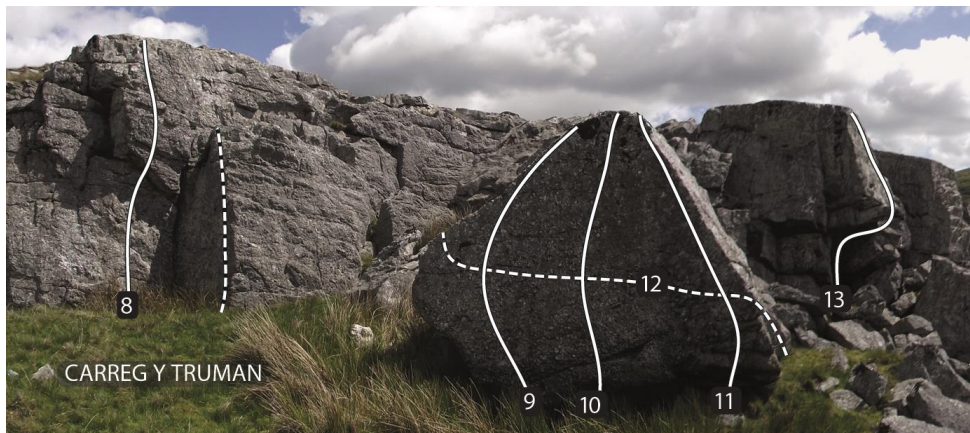
In front of the edge at this point is a triangular boulder with an immaculate N face.

9 **Wet Butt V3** (6a) From SS climb the left arête.

10 ***Reach Treat V2** (5c) From SS climb the centre of the N face.

11 **Sideshow V3** (6a) SS the right arête (start on good holds under the roof).

12 ****Transit of the Sun V4** (6b) A low right-to-left traverse. Start on the easy W face, and drop down low and around onto finger-flakes. Keeping low make very thin moves left to the left arête.



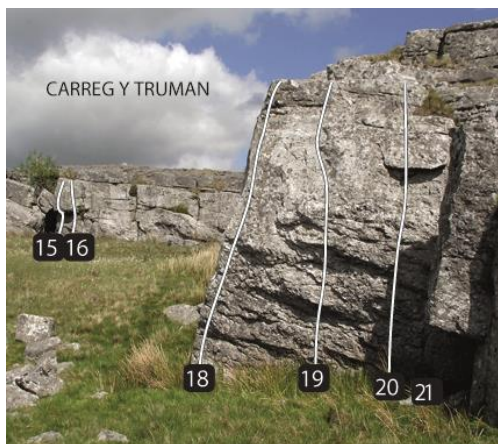
Central Section

To the right, above boulders, is a jutting roof in the edge.

13 ***Shag** V1 (5b) SS and extend from a flake to the jutting jugs. Cut loose and hump that ledge. (Crack to the right out of bounds.)

14 **Big Caboose** V1 (5b) SS the crack.

Around to the right is a SW-facing wall which only gets its act together at its far left-hand end, above damp ground (keep your feet dry), next to a cave.



15 ***Soak It Up** V3 (6a/b) Climb the arête from (optional) SS; very technical low down.

16 **Bog Monster** V1 (5b) The wall a metre right, from SS.

Right Section

17 V0 (5a) The slightly dirty N-facing wall; better than it looks (keep to the hardest part).

Next is a fine clean grey arête, with an overhanging right wall.

18 ***Sweet Arête** V1 (5c) Take the right-hand side of the arête; SS optional.

19 ***Sweet Face** V3 (6a) SS making gnarly moves to a slanting finger-crust; and go for a sloper.

20 **Sweet SS** V2 (5c) SS from the base of the crack and climb through the tiny overlap.

21 **Sweet Crack** V0- (4c) SS the crack.



Six metres to the right is a long low wall.

22 Piano Player in a Whorehouse V5 (6b) Traverse the band rightwards on tiny holds into a groove. Another difficult section gains the second of two cracks, after which hand traversing the top appears the only plausible cadence (or is it?).



The 3-metre high boulder to the right has two minor problems: 4b; the left arête, and V0+ (5b), the centre of the wall without using the boulder at the base.

There is a stray in the boulders opposite the right-hand part of the edge.

23 Tell the Truth and Think It's Hell V2 (5c) (but harder for the core-poor tall.) SS, extend over the roof, and make an awkward rock-up to the top – or do something else!



The Arête Jonathan Crocker

HERBERT'S QUARRY OS 7346 1888



The N-facing limestone quarries below Garreg Lwyd offer considerable exposures of rock but, as the pic above might suggest, not so much in the way of quality climbing potential.

Ironically the best climbing is located on a smaller quarry face (Foel Fawr Wall) just 300 metres from the car-park. This supplies a few short hard routes, some classical bouldering on fine waterworn rock, and substantial routes' potential on adjacent walls. The main face weeps after heavy rain, but it does get infra-red toasted by the sun from mid-afternoon high summer.

Approach

Park in a large car-park on the E side of the A4069 Brynamman to Llangadog road at OS 7324 1875. Follow the track NE and then E to a W-facing wall on the right in a mere 5 minutes.

Ethic: Soloing, bouldering, and trad on Foel Fawr Wall. Trad routes with pegs and bolts in the Main Quarry. New bolt routes permitted.



Foel Fawr Wall

The routes are described from left to right.

The first routes are on the beautiful waterworn block with a right-angled arête, on the left.

1 V0 (5a) The left wall of the arête.

2 ****The Arête** V1 (5c) The arête; a tenuous move at the top (crack on the right out of bounds).

3 V0 (5a) Finger-jam the crack right of the arête.

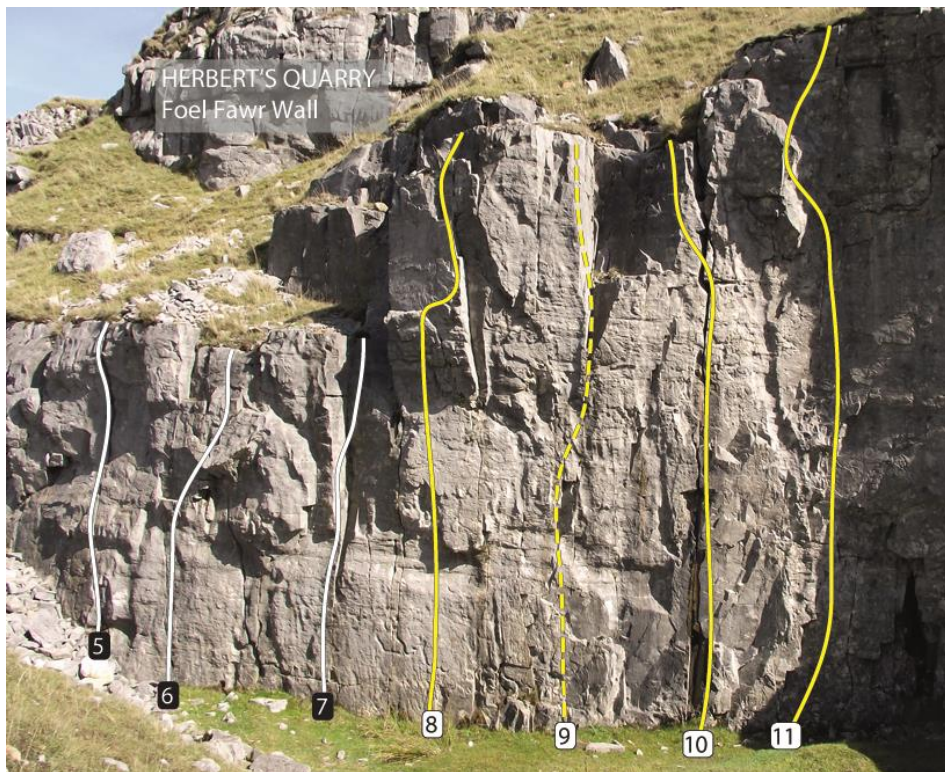
4 *V0- (4c) The rounded right-hand arête.

The following routes are on the main face.

5 VD The widening crack; swing left to descend.

6 V0 (5a) Start on the mega-jug and take the overhanging wall on spaced jugs.

7 V3 (6a) The V-groove started under its left-hand side. Harder than it looks



8*Summer Madness 7m E2 6a (V3/4) (7.2007)

Use a big undercut and then a pinch up slightly left to grab a finger-jug rail above the bulge. Swing right and take jugs spectacularly up the short headwall. (Do **not** use the unstable detached block-jug just to the right, which the original may have gained by a different sequence slightly to the right.)

FA: Gareth Tucker (solo)

9 Project: Magnetar 7m E5 6c?

Desperate bulge on non-holds into a V-groove (good wire, peg). One brief session led to abject failure. It's a long drive, but it could be worth it!

10Sophism** 7m E1 5c (V1) (9.2006)

The superb finger/hand-jamming crack: eminently protectable, though not too scary a solo either.

FA: Gareth Tucker, T Panthaman

11 Supermoon 8m E4 6a (28.9.2015)

The sustained groove on the right. A bold start; OKish microwire protection thereafter. High in the grade. Take unaccommodating holds over the bulge to a thin vertical crack (first gear at 6 metres). Using an undercut on the left enter the groove, and finish strenuously direct using a finger-pocket.

FA Martin Crocker, unseconded

There is a great V4/5 (6b) low-level traverse from problem 5 to holds at 4 metres up *Supermoon*.

Main Quarry

The five routes in the main quarry to the E are described as originally written-up since they have not been checked by the author. The fixed gear must still be the original so beware or re-bolt.

East Wall

Nine Below Zero 24m E4 6a (1988)

Climb up (peg); then move left and up to a horizontal break (thread, two pegs and bolt). Trend leftwards over blocks to a bolt belay.

FA Paul Donnithorne, Emma Alsford

Can't Do my Homework 12m E1 5b (1988)

A line defined by two bolts.

FA Paul Donnithorne, Emma Alsford

Mojo 12m VS 4c (1988)

Climb a crack in the right-hand side of the vertical wall (thread) into a bay at half height; peg belay.

FA Emma Alsford, Paul Donnithorne

West Wall

Doochie Coochie 12m E4 6b (1988)

Climb the wall 4 metres left of a muddy corner (two pegs); difficult moves up and left to finish.

FA Paul Donnithorne, Emma Alsford

Wooly Bully 15m HVS 5a (1988)

Climb the pink groove in the right-hand side of the cliff.

FA Paul Donnithorne, Emma Alsford

PEN RHIW-DDU OS 7269 1922 (left-hand bay), OS 7260 1920 (right-hand bay)

There is a series of small limestone quarries facing N towards Llangadog; this one in particular is well worth a visit and the climbing is good.

Approach

Carry on N along the A4069 past the car park for Herbert's Quarry and – 300 metres past a further car-park and viewpoint on the right – pull in to either of two small lay-bys on the left (these are before a hairpin back right).

Ethic: Trad, soloing, bouldering, and there's even a sport route. New bolt routes permitted.

The routes are described from left to right.

Left-hand Bay

There are two small caves at the base of the cliff which are useful markers. In the wall left of the left-hand cave is an obvious ramp.

1***Think of a Name** 12m E2 5b (19.6.94)

A great little line, which may require re-cleaning. Mantel onto the ledge under the ramp from the left (rock-spike runner). Follow the ramp (runners in a shothole) to a small tree whereupon a shuffle right leads to the top.

FA Martin Crocker, unseconded

Right of the left-hand cave is a fairly blank wall which contains the crag's only sport route to date.

21994** 12m F7b (16.6.2015)

Cleaned in 1994, climbed in 2015. High tech precision on dimples and dinks. A light brush-up will be required from time to time. Start hard, move left under a tiny overlap to reach a long layaway. Don't use the arête on the left, but make a delicate move back right just above the overlap to gain an isolated hold in the middle of the wall. One final corker of a move and a hand-ledge is reached. Swing right and move up to a tree. Three 12mm industrial through-bolts; use a short clip-stick for the first bolt (you should be able to find a twig in the quarry).
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo – first redpoint attempt, just as well)

Midway between the two caves is a short wide crack high up.

3 Cadair on a Clear Day 12m E1 5b (16.6.2015)

Enjoyable, and easy above half height. Make hard moves to reach a short thin crack (wider one just right). Climb up to a ledge; then take the wide crack and grassy scoop to the top. Tree belay.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

4 *Drunk as a Skunk 10m HVS 5a (16.6.2015)

The rather striking bottomless crack 5 metres left of the right-hand cave; well protected. Enter the crack strenuously and then continue steeply but on excellent holds to a sloping ledge. Exit up a short scoop, pulling over onto grass. Belays a long way back.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

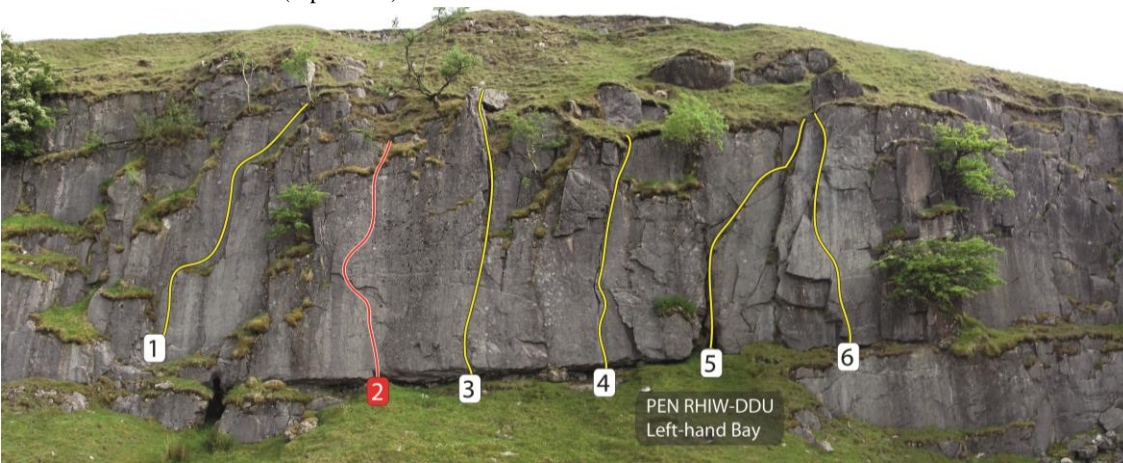
5 *Loose as a Goose 9m E1 5b (9.7.2015)

Excellent; safe. Climb out of the right-hand cave, threads. Swing right and follow a diagonal break (for feet) – good gear – until a difficult move must be made right to the top of a veggy V-groove.
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

Right of the right-hand cave is an unclimbed veggy groove and just to its right a second groove.

6 Back from the Dead 9m E3 6a (9.7.2015)

Exciting. Start from a ledge below small stepped roofs. Innovate up onto a narrow sloping ledge (long-reach to clip a peg) and gain a finger-pocket hosting a bomber wire placement. Stretch up left for an arête, and – right foot in the pocket – layback the arête into the narrow groove. Follow the groove more easily to the top (peg).
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)



Right-hand Bay

Left of the main face across a grassy gully is a fine karst wall.



7 ***Shostagofish** 7m E2 5c (16.6.2015)
Named after my goldfish (2003 – 2017). Technically the most interesting route on the wall. Start on the ledge on the left. Using footholds on the left, take a short right-slanting crack and pockets to a diagonal jug. Reach up and pull out on karst battlements.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

8 ***A Hack in a Trance** 7m HS 4a (16.6.2015) The superb left-hand crack on sharp water-eroded jugs.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

9 ***Pravda** 7m VS 4c (16.6.2015) The right-hand crack; solid gear to the top.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

10 **The Vyborg Side** 6m E2/E4 6a (16.6.2015)

The eliminate line of layaways just left of the arête (not used) with just one (hand) hold in the crack to the left to help an awkward crux rock-up at half-height. E4 is the solo grade.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

There is a smaller smooth wall on the western side of the grassy gully, with some bouldering.



11 4b The left-hand line via a pocket; exit left.

12 V0 (5a) The line above a square pedestal via a big layaway; top out on grass.

13 V0+ (5b) The thin slab to a short fin and exit left as for the previous route.

14 V0- (4c) The shallow groove; top out.

15 V0- (4c) Take cracks to a hand ledge; top out to the left (or reverse).

16 **Piglets' Pirouette** V3 (6a) The pick of the litter; a sustained left-to right low-level traverse eschewing the long grassy hand-ledge.

The next two are *not* boulder problems! Down and left of the tree at the cliff-top is a V-groove.

17 Bulletproof 6m E2 6b (17.8.2015)

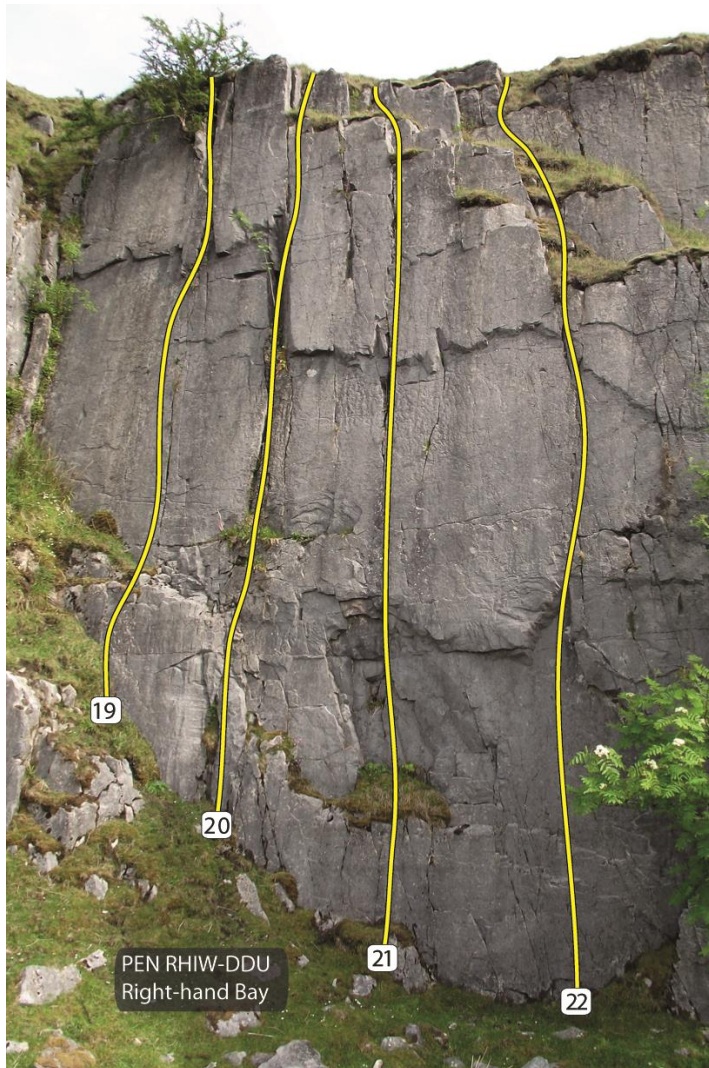
The sheer wall left of the V-groove. Start by using the left-hand arête of the groove; then progress in fine balance on tinies on the sheer wall to its left.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

18 Dodge 6m VS 4c (17.8.2015)

The V-groove.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)



The 'class of 94' is hosted by the main face. They may need a brief re-clean, if still spurned.

19 *Crack One 12m E4 6b (19.6.94)

The leftmost crack.
FA Martin Crocker, unseconded

20 Crack Two 12m E2 5b (19.6.94)

The second crack on the left via the obvious pod.
FA Martin Crocker, unseconded

21 Crack Three 12m E1 5b (19.6.94)

Yes, the third crack gained past an overlap.
FA Martin Crocker, unseconded

22 Crack Four 10m E2 5c (19.6.94)

The rightmost crack with a grass mantel at the top.
FA Martin Crocker, unseconded



CWAR MICHEAL OS 7228 1918

Two hundred and fifty metres to the west of Pen Rhiw-ddu, approximately at the same level, is another limestone quarry. It has two pieces of rock of only very modest interest.

Ethic: Trad, soloing

To the far left is a steep wall containing parallel cracks (tree immediately right).



1 Michaelmas Daisy 8m E2 5b (17.8.2015)
From a small hawthorn, climb the parallel cracks via a hand-ledge near the top. Well protected. (Try to keep to the left-hand crack.)

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

Further right is a shield of rock yielding a low-angle pock-marked slab.

2 Michael of Kent 9m VS 5a (17.8.2015)
Climb the central, blankest part of the slab; then proceed up cracks up the tallest part of the slab (some loose rock).

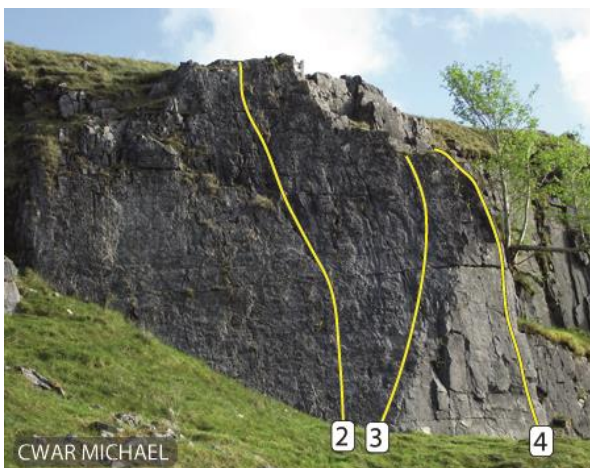
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

3 Michael Schumacher 8m S (17.8.2015)

Take the right-hand edge of the slab on large holds immediately left of the steep nose of the shield.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

4 Michael Phelps 8m VS 4c (17.8.2015)

Climb the right-hand edge of the steep nose of the shield to finish up large flutings.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)



CLOGAU BACH OS 7201 1927

West again 200 hundred metres, but at a lower level, is another limestone quarry with a fairly continuous back wall. It is quicker to approach by parking on the minor road below (first turn left after the right-hand hairpin in the A4069).

The left-hand half is broken by ledges; stakes above suggest use by outdoor activity providers.

Ethic: Trad, soloing

In the centre is a square-cut arête identified by a vertical crack in its right-hand side high up.

1 ****Menuett** 9m VS 4b (17.8.2015)

Elegant; climb the arête past opportunities for good gear.

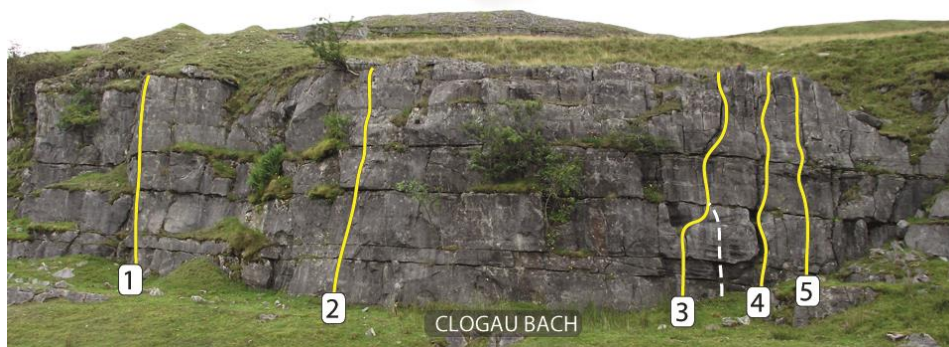
FA Martin Crocker (solo; climbed before?)

Ten metres right is a blunt rib down and to the right of a hawthorn at the cliff-edge.

2 ***Fugue** 9m E1 5b (17.8.2015)

Climb the rib past two deep breaks which offer good cam protection. Belay on the tree.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)



The crag ends on the right as an attractive fluted wall with three well-protected routes.

3 ***Toilet Bowl** 7m Severe 4a (17.8.2015)

Pull into the toilet bowl; step right. Jam the right-kinked crack (the vent pipe) to the top.

Variation **Taken Short Start** 5b Climb the steep wall right of the toilet bowl to the first break.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo; climbed before?)

4 ***All in a Flush** 7m VD (17.8.2015)

Climb the deep crack and the thinner one above to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo; climbed before?)

5 **That's me Done (for Now)** 6m VD (17.8.2015)

Climb the wall past two breaks and the cracks above. See you!

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo; climbed before?)

