

Climbs above Troedyrhiw

Martin Crocker

CLIMBS ABOVE TROEDYRHIW

The climbing here is trad leading and bouldering on quarried and unquarried Pennant Sandstone. There are two sets of crags each with its own approach: that to the north comprises the two quarries of Troed-y-rhiw with the unquarried mountain edge of Mynydd Cilfach-yrencil high above, and that to the south comprises the unquarried tiered crags of Craig y Pwyll.

TROED-Y-RHIW QUARRIES and MYNYDD CILFACH-YR-ENCIL

Approach

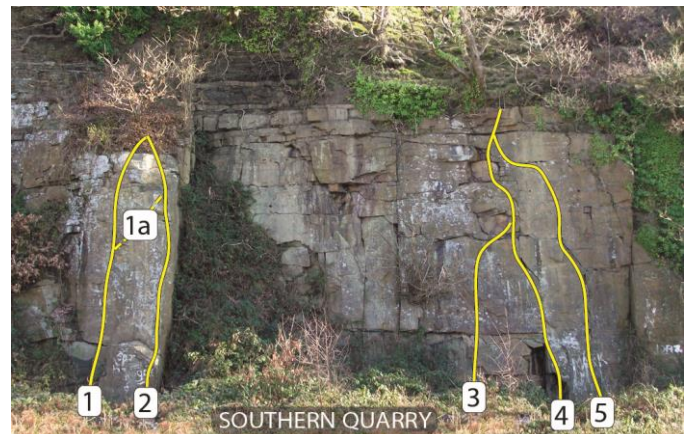
Park in a car-park on the A4054, next to Troedyrhiw Community Primary School. The car-park is accessed via Phyllis Street, which – coming from the south – is the first left after Bridge Street on your left; all very obvious. On the opposite side of the A4054 take the lane left (north) of the shop which right angles left behind houses. Sixty metres after the bend take a path up a bank on the right, cross a tarmacked path (line of disused tramroad) and continue up and left (north eastwards) to enter the southern quarry. The northern quarry is 200 metres to the north.

THE SOUTHERN QUARRY OS 07375 02721

West facing and less prone to seepage than most sandstone quarries. Overall not bad, though you may have to flatten a bank of brambles to get to the base of the routes.

Ethic

Trad, soloing (though new bolt routes on quarried sandstone acceptable)



In the centre-left of the quarry is a fine arête. Descent from the two routes here is by abseiling from a small oak tree above. There is an unwelcoming ledge under the arête at 2 metres.

1*Illegal High 8m E5 6a (1.11.2015)

From the left-hand end of the ledge, reach up left and take finger-edges with long moves. Make a stiff pull on a small sharp hold on a flake with left hand straight for a sloping hand-ledge at the top; pull up to ledges and the tree. Do miss the ledge if you fall.

FA Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

1a Variation: **Crunch Time**

E4 6a (1.11.2015) the final move can be avoided by following edges diagonally right to the top of the arête: easier, but with the ledge to hit if things go awry.
FA Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

2 ***Crockpot Theory** 8m HVS 4c (1.11.2015)

Much easier than it looks. Follow the arête; no gear.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

To the right is the main wall of the quarry.

3 **Eat Less for More** 12m E3 5b (22.11.2015)

This would be more amenable if it weren't for the collapsed block under the route. Start 2 metres left of *Gross-out*. Make an awkward move onto a little ledge. Follow finger edges above to jugs; bear slightly right and make a long reach for a break (first gear – at 8 metres). Hand traverse right to join *Gross-out* or move up and right over a bulge to join it at a higher level.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

A crack leads from an alcove at the base of the crag to a large tree at the top; this is:

4 ***Gross-out** 12m E1 5b (22.11.2015)

Can be over-protected at will, Lawrencefield-like. Follow the crack, and abseil off the tree (an *in-situ* sling on a branch facilitates the exit).
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

5 ***Pee to Power** 12m E3 5c (22.11.2015)

Fine climbing with an amusing untaxing run-out above good gear. Climb the crack right of *Gross-out* to where it ends: stash bomber gear. Take edges and finger-pockets directly above (keeping left of an arching crack) to gain a large pocket (peg). Swing left to finish up *Gross-out*.
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

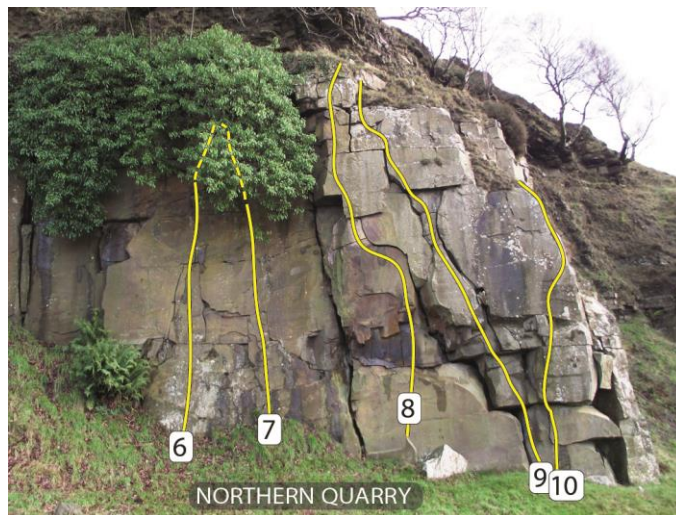
THE NORTHERN QUARRY OS 07375 02969

Like the southern quarry this is west-facing and holds an equally quiet ambience. There is quite a lot of rock in the quarry, Australia Wall being the bonza. The remainder appears to be of no real interest, though a bolter might persuade himself it's better than a ham sandwich.

Ethic

Trad, soloing (though new bolt routes on quarried sandstone acceptable)

Australia Wall is the crack-seamed buttress in the right-hand side of the quarry. West-north-west-facing; the rock is good and the lines even better. Mature silver birch trees above the crag provide the belays (and abseil descents).



The short sheer wall part hidden under a cascade of ivy left of a deep unclimbed corner-crack provides two routes. The retreat is from slings on the ivy (the branches/roots are 6" wide, so – crikey mate – don't panic).

6 **Welsh Open** 7m E2 5b (15.2.2016)

Climb the left-hand and more definite of the two cracks in the sheer wall; wire protection throughout.
FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

7 **Ronnie's 146** 7m E3 6a (15.2.2016)

The right-hand, hairline crack 1.5 metres left of the deep corner-crack. Two pegs. Not hard for the grades.
FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

8 ***Thunder from Down Under** 9m E2 5c (15.2.2016)

Excellent and safe; the left-hand deep crack in the main buttress. Step off Queensland, gain the crack; and swing along it as it curls leftwards. Make a long move up over a narrow strip roof past the scar where Australia slipped from the Asian plate (peg), and finish up a rib. Tree just above.
FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood

9 ***Ya Sheila!** 9m E2 5c (15.2.2016)

Climb leftwards into the right-hand main crack and jam up it, leftwards, to the top. Tree just above.
FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood

10 **Gone Walkabout** 8m E1 5c (15.2.2016)

The right-hand arête: a solo. Start under the left-hand side of the arête; move up to an angular jug in a scoop; then make hard moves up and right onto the arête. Finish straight up more easily. To escape either scramble to the trees and rap off or otherwise hit the frog and toad.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)



MYNYDD-CILFACH-YR-ENCIL (445m) OS 07375 02721 to 07835 03881

Although almost a kilometre long much of the rock is broken by ledges and is – well – scrap. Still, there are several interesting spots and the site is great on a windless winter's afternoon with the sun out. At 1500 feet altitude the fine open views northwards across Merthyr to Pen-y-Fan will assist visitor satisfaction.

Approach

From the quarries simply slog up the hill to the crag; leg-pump guaranteed.

Ethic

Trad, soloing (bolts on unquarried sandstone unacceptable)

The climbs are described from right to left; the first are located on an inset rectangular slab near the right-hand end of the crag.



1 **Orbital Warp** 7m S (20.1.2016)

Climb the grubby corner and short crack right of the inset slab.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

2 ***9th Planet** 7m E1 5c (20.1.2016)

Climb the centre of the slab to a wobbly flake in a wide break. Place small cams in the solid flake on the left; then crimp slopers in the rippled wall to a mantel exit.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s roped solo)

3 **The Man who Killed Pluto** 7m HS 4a (20.1.2016)

Climb the left arête of the slab (small cams in the flake in the wide break). Very agreeable.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

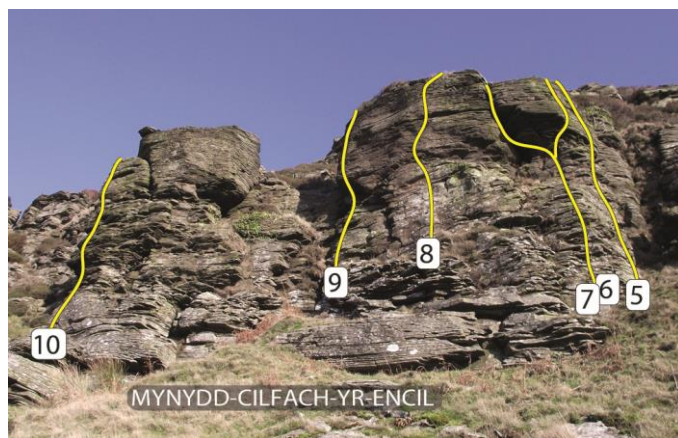
Left of the inset slab is a tall rib.

4 **Tales of Gothic Horror** 12m S (20.1.2016)

Follow the rib onto a ledge at three quarters height. Step up left onto an exposed prow to exit onto scrambling ground.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

Some way left is a relatively impressive buttress.



5 **Windy Barack** 8m VS 4b (1.11.2015)

Climb the right-hand arête of the buttress (just left of a narrow gully).

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

6 **Wailin' Palin** 9m HVS 4c (20.1.2016)

Probably E1 as a solo. Climb the rib just left until under a bulge (this point is 2 metres right of the overhanging crack of *Stump for Trump?*). Ease over to positive holds and then finish on jugs.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

7 **Stump for Trump?** 10m VS 4c (20.1.2016)

Climb the rib of *Wailin' Palin*, and step left under the crack. Take the crack strenuously to the top (cams 3.5/4 provide excellent protection).

FA Martin Crocker (o-s roped solo)

8 *Dracoraptor 12m E1 5b (20.1.2016)

Low in the grade. From a rubbly shelf at 3 metre, ignore the loose crack and climb a bold steep wall just to its right. Move up to a short right-slanting crack and gain the fine flake above. Climb straight up the headwall, but swing right to exit.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s roped solo)

9 Warmest November Day Ever 9m HVS 4c (1.11.2015)

Keeping left of some flakes, trend leftwards and pull up to a rectangular niche. Reach left to the left arête and climb it on good holds to the top.

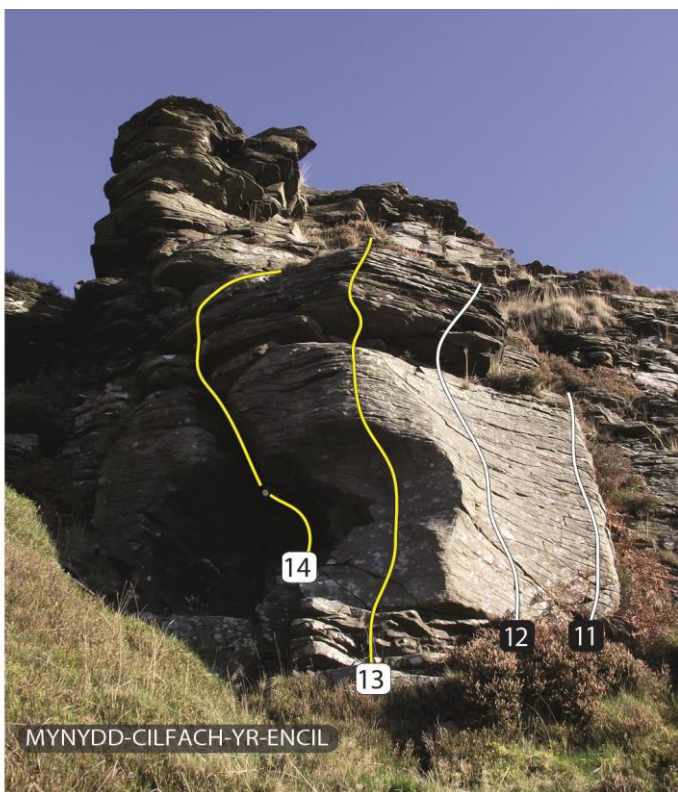
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

10 *Rocking Flake Arête 7m VS 4b (1.11.2015)

Take the arête past a couple of flakes near the top – fun.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

Left of a gully is a distinctive white slab with a concave bulge.



1 V0- (4c) The right-hand rib.

12 **White Wall** V1 (5c) The centre of the white wall, past a big layaway move. Traverse off right to avoid the headwall.

13 Concave Bulge 6m E1 5a (1.11.2015)

Climb the bulge and rounded rib and pull up past a dodgy flake to get hands on top of the headwall. Swing up left using the heather to pull over.

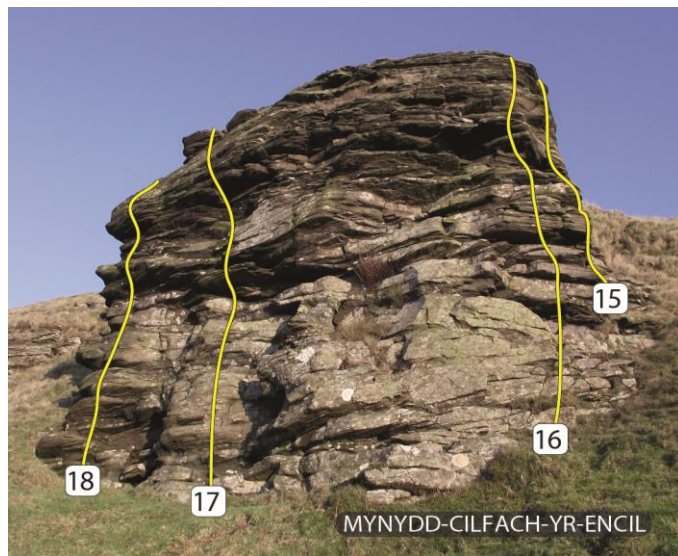
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

14 Milk Bottle Crack 6m VS 4c (1.11.2015)

Climb the strenuous crack and groove, stepping right at the top onto a heather ledge. A continuation up the buttress to the left looks possible. *In-situ* jammed milk bottle thread (subject to ethical derogation).

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

Heading northwards there is no shortage of rock, but most is unappealing sprawl. About 600 metres north of the main area is a 7-metre high buttress which is *just* – but only just – worth putting on your rock shoes for. The climbing is indeterminate; the following are perhaps the strongest non-lines.



15 6m Diff (20.1.2016)

The crack far right.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

16 7m HS 4b (20.1.2016)

The right arête past various sloping shelves.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

17 7m HVS 5a (20.1.2016)

Start at a flake in the centre but trend left through the bulges; harder than it looks.

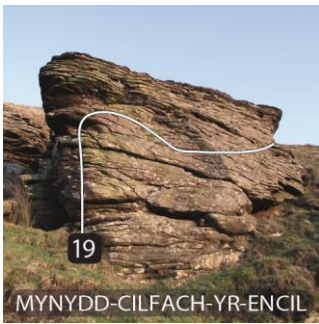
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

18 6m VS 4c (20.1.2016)

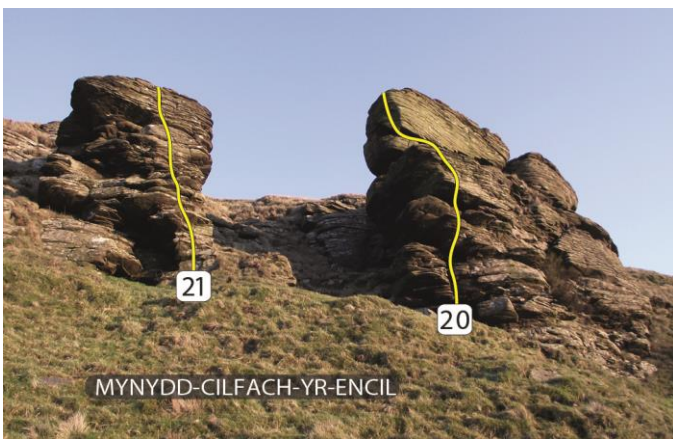
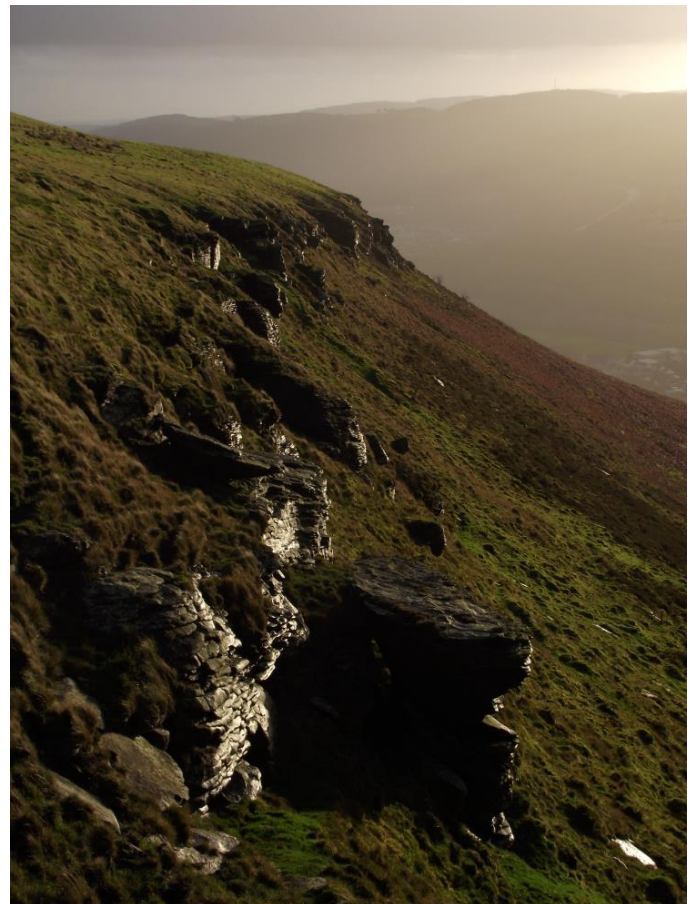
The left arête with a tricky finish.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

Two hundred and fifty metres further north, past various craglets that just can't get their act together, is a decent small boulder and – 15 metres north again – a buttress either side of a grassy gully.



19 V2 (5c) Traverse from high left to right across the boulder; the crux being the delicate rippled slab on the right.



20 **Tales of the Hills** 6m HVS 5a (20.1.2016)
The buttress right of the gully, finishing up the short steep step overhanging the gully.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

21 **Heads of the Valleys** 5m VD (20.1.2016)
The front of the flying buttress left of the gully.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)





CRAIG Y PWYLL

A fascinating, complicated climbing site with a mix of good bouldering and trad climbing, conveniently close to the road (well, except the stuff scattered way up the steep hill). These are the west-north-west-facing unquarried Pennant Sandstone crags overlooking the southern part of Troedyrhiw. (No offence, but please note I've only included the best and more obvious boulder problems and may even have got some names wrong – the full spread is best left to more authoritative sources.)

Approach

The crag is visible on the right as you enter the southern limit of Troedyrhiw on the A4054. After a terrace of eight or so properties on the left take a sharp turn right (opposite a bus stop) and park at a left bend in the lane – plenty of space. Take footpaths uphill from the bend in the lane to a pool and concrete 'pavilion' (the 'lido' – an inter-war attempt at a swimming pool and leisure complex; shame it still isn't in operation). The southern crag is 50 metres above and beyond the pool.

Ethic

Trad, bouldering, soloing (bolts on unquarried sandstone unacceptable)

Apart from Frog Rock (page 10) the crags and routes are described from right to left.

SOUTHERN CRAG: THE LIDO OS 07676 01861

Good rock and a variety of challenges, including a South East Wales must-do slab, make this a high class hangout. The ivy will need management from time to time (outside the bird-nesting season).

Up to the right are two boulders, the lower of which (Sketch Block) is home to a few attractive problems up to V2.

1 *sic itur ad astra* 7m E3 5b (23.11.2015)

The rib beneath *Snow Jest*. Climb the rib at first on its left side, and then finish on its right side. Take care the fragile holds. Scramble up or down the gully.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

2 *It is a Crocker* 7m E4 6a (7.12.2015)

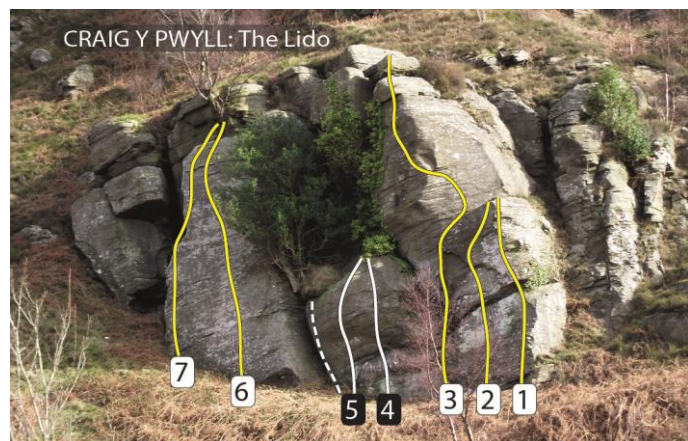
The leaning wall under *Snow Jest*, marking a return to old pastures. From a ledge at 3 metres make a very tenuous move straight onto the wall and holds in a left-facing 'overlap'. Reach a good layaway for right hand and then rock up right onto the arête. High and with a ledge to hit – this is not a boulder problem and more of a cracker than a Crocker.

FA Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

3 **Snow Jest* 12m E6 6b (4.4.94)

Suspicious that this would catch on in the same way that *Beau Geste* did were unfounded. Never mind. Climb the right-hand crack on to an off-balance shelf 7 metres up. Above is a bulging tower: place a key Rock 5 or similar in a slot, and turn the arête to plonk yourself on the leaning face on the left. Crank like a good 'un to a break and finish on the right. Committing.

FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood



There are two substantive boulder problems in the 5-metre high leaning wall between the two cracks. They feel high (because they are), but at least the landing is soft. The descent is via the (Severe) crack on the right – sometimes ivy-afflicted.

4 ****Unforgiven* V3+ (6a)

Use an undercut to gain a high fingerhold; then more of the same – almost campus style – to the top. Brill! The sit start makes it harder still.

5 *****Ain't No Crocker** V4- (6a/b)

Right of the left-hand crack; use a high sloper to grab an incut above. A second incut on the left precedes a throw for a rounded hold on the edge of the shelf above. Follow small holds in the shelf rightwards, boldly, to the top. Brill mark 2. Sit start possible.

There is a host of eliminates on this wall too, which will keep you amused for hours and sore for days. Maybe the better of the lines is the sit start left-hand arête: *Crock Bloc* V3 (6a), though wet after rainfall.

To the left is the pièce de résistance (forgive the mixed languages), which – alone – is worth a fling from Bristol for a quick headpoint. A tree at the cliff edge couldn't be more expertly positioned.

6 *****Solo Para Tus Zapatos** 10m E5 6a (26.12.91)

Named in honour of a Montanejos route. Why, we don't know because they have bugger all in common. It was climbed during a Boxing Day trip with the Newbridge family. Take a direct line up the centre of the tapering slab, with things getting all rather thin and edgy towards the top. No gear. Note the correct spelling. FA Martin Crocker (solo after top-ropeing)

7 ****Grains from the Blackvein** 10m E4 5c (20.5.2012)

Excellent – and a possible mood-setter for its partner. Climb the left-hand arête until able to step delicately up left into a scoop. Shut out the fear; then make tenuous moves up the steeper upper part of the arête to the top. FA Martyn Richards, Andy Sharp, M Shewring

There is a slanting wall to the left with some problems, but with an ankle-twistingly steep landing; over to you.

Melvin Doo Boulders

A cluster of nice boulders 300 metres north east of the pool: just follow the path along the stream. Good in winter, since they sun up readily.



On the first boulder, which is left of the path is:

8 V0- (4c) Traverse the slabby south face of the boulder – mossy.

On the next boulder, immediately right of the path are:

9 *****Melvin Doo** V5 (6b) The cream of the problems. Sit start the undercut south face, improvise; then pull out on a sculpted jug on the left arête.

10 V0- (4c) The right-hand side of the slab.

11 *V1 (5b) The left-hand side of the slab.

12 *V1 (5b) Sit start the right arête of the leaning uphill end of the boulder.

13 V0- (4c) The left arête of the leaning uphill end of the boulder.

There are other eliminates here including the diminutive adjoining slab (V0-, 4c).





NORTHERN CRAG OS 07756 01963

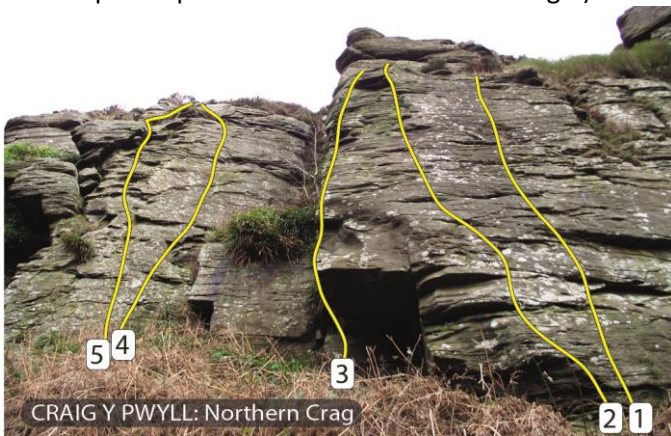
This is the tall, rambling and rather vegetated cliff way up left from the pool. It is divided into two tiers which are separated by a steeply sloping grassy terrace. Pruners and thick track-suits are advised if the brambles have got the upper hand.

Lower Tier

Near the right-hand end of the lower tier is a 20-metre high pillar featuring a hawk's nest in its left wall (and potential, probably).

Twenty metres left of this is a square 9-metre high slabby wall and left again another, recessed, wall.

The next three routes are on the square wall. There are cam and nut belays on a commodious ledge above it. (To descend scramble easily down left, or maybe construct a second pitch up the short arête above the ledge.)



1 Somebody Down there Looking Up 9m HVS 4c (16.1.2016)

Sparsely protected. Starting 3 metres right of the arête climb the centre of the slabby wall to the ledge. FA Martin Crocker (solo)

2 **Troed y Who? 10m VS 4c (1993)

Very nice indeed and there's gear. Start 2 metres right of the arête. Move up, trend left past a slot, and gain a flake crack just right of the arête. Climb the arête to a mantel finish. FA John Harwood (solo)

3 *? 9m E1 5c (1990s?)

The left arête; superb rock. Using a fingerjug above the initial overhang and a pocket on the left, make a tricky move onto the edge (peg on the left). Continue delicately and finish straight up the arête. Cam and nut belays on a commodious ledge. FA Unknown

The next two routes take the recessed wall.

4 *Return of the Eagles of Death Metal 15m E2 5b (16.1.2016)

A fine route up the centre of the wall; there is some (cam) protection but it is very spaced. Pull up onto the recessed ledge. Make a hard move to a solitary sidepull on the bare wall. Climb up to a good slot, and finish up and leftwards on the easier slab. Peg and cam belays 10 metres back. FA Martin Crocker (solo); climbed before?

5 Certain Death 18m HVS 4c (16.1.2016)

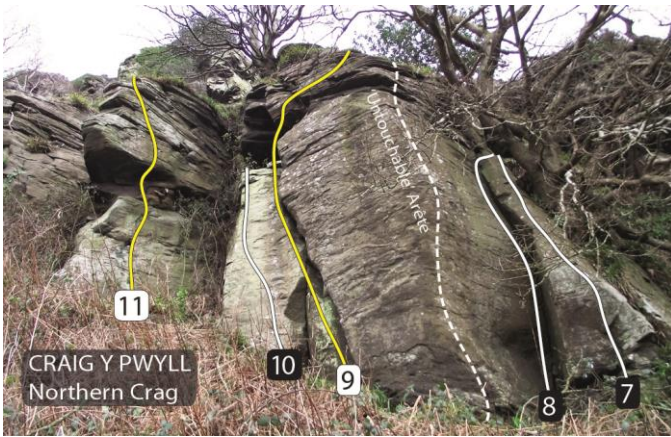
Poorly protected. Climb past the left end of a recessed ledge and trend left to just short of the wide crack to the left. Climb straight up and pull up on a jumble of jammed blocks, so gaining a ledge on the left. A short wall and a grass ramp lead to peg and cam belays 10m back. FA Martin Crocker (solo); climbed before?

Some way left, past possible lines, is a sizeable roof at the base of the crag.

6 Off-gem 5m E2 5c/6a (V2/3) (6.3.2016)

Strenuous, as might be expected though the holds are mostly good. Climb up to the roof and use thin black flakes in its underside to stretch round for a good pocket. Cut loose – or otherwise – and haul over. FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Eight metres left and directly above the trio of boulders in the valley below is the crag's (second!) best line: 'Untouchable' Arête an as yet unclimbed 7-metre arête offering only micro-edge finger-splitting angst. E7 6c (V8) perhaps? Immediately to its right is a groove and sub-arête.



7 V1 (5b) Layback the right-hand side of the sub-arête; avoid using the tree until the arête runs out completely.

8 V2 (5c) Squeeze – no, ooze up the narrowing groove right of the arête to an apparently solid undercut flake. Now you can step right and clamber down the large tree.

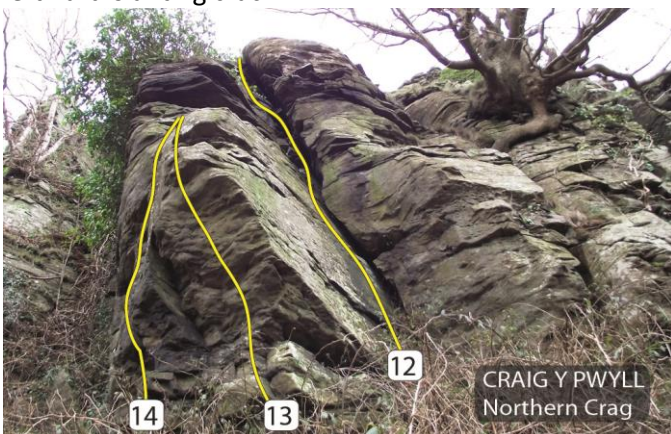
9 **Davis Re-match** 10m HVS 5b (1993/6.3.2016)
Battle up the wide crack on baggy fist jams to a niche. Reach up carefully for holds over a bulge; then exit diagonally right along a foot-shelf. Very protectable, by obvious means.
FA John Harwood (solo)/Martin Crocker (solo)

10 V1 (5b) Start at the foot of the wide crack; then step up left onto the lime green arête and climb it. Swing left to descend.

Ten metres left of 'Untouchable' Arête is a rib with an overhang at 4 metres, left of a bramble-filled corner.

11 **Paws** 8m E2 5c (16.1.2016)
Climb the lower rib; stretch round the overhang for a triangular finger-pocket for right hand, and then reach up left for a big hold. Swing out left and finish easily.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Sixty metres left of 'Untouchable Arête', near the left end of the lower tier, is a buttress split by a wide leftward-slanting crack.



12 Unig 10m VS 4b (1993)

The wide crack: two wide for gear, and spoiled by a grotty earthy finish.
FA John Harwood (unig)

The next two routes take the black buttress and prow left of the crack; they're short but sited above a fair old drop.

13 Upwards (to pass them on their way back down) 6m E2 6a (V3) (16.2.2016)

The prow left of the crack. Climb the underside of the prow via a hidden two-finger pocket under a small roof, trending left onto the shelf. Reverse the crack.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

14 Fading Star 6m E1 5a (V0+) (16.2.2016)

Left of the prow, use a jug and a flexing flake on the left to climb the bulging wall rightwards to a shelf in the left wall of the crack. Reverse the crack.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

UPPER TIER

A steep and narrow square-cut pillar at the right-hand end of the upper tier offers three good routes in a mountainous locale. Either walk in from either end or (probably best) abseil in from the large holly tree above the pillar.



15 ***Troubador** 18m VS 4c (19.1.2016)

The right-hand arête. Excellent holds for the most part, though the protection is a little spaced. Climb the arête and finish steeply over a bulge. A few easy steps lead to the holly tree. (VS 4b if you climb the wide crack right of the final bulge.)

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

16 ***The Last Resort** 18m E2 5b (19.1.2016)

Follow the crack in the centre of the tower to a small roof. Reach up right (good cams in horizontal crack just over roof), and step up over the roof using the right arête. Now there is a second roof: climb straight over it on positive holds to the exit of *Troubador*.

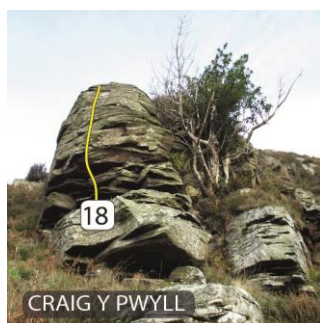
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

17 ***When Hell Freezes Over** 18m E2 5b (19.1.2016)

The left-hand arête; bold in its centre. Follow *Troubador* to the roof. Climb the left arête very steeply (cams to the right on *Troubador*); then the face immediately left of the arête to exit up a short crack.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

There is a small buttress 500 metres on from, and quite a bit higher than, the undercut block of *Melvin Doo*. Continue northwards up the valley from *Melvin Doo* taking the right-hand path across the hillside alongside the stream. Look up to your right and you'll see a small buttress with a holly tree on its right.



18 ***Icy Plunge** 6m E2 5b (21.11.2015)

Climb the bulging rib with a couple of tricky moves at half-height; a solid top-out. Short, but the soft landing is very steep – hence the grade.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Above and right of this buttress, on the skyline (i.e. at the top of the hill), is a large overhanging blob (Eagle's Rock), an unmistakable feature visible from afar. The next route is on the small buttress just down to its left.



19 ***Less the Eagle** 7m E3 6a (19.1.2016)

A grit gem that refuels the inevitable state of exhaustion to get to it. Start at the lowest point of the wall. Trend leftwards to the right end of a flake in the bulge. Swing left along the flake a few feet; then make powerful moves up a short rib to a sloping top. Falls forgivable since there's bomber cam protection in the flake.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

FROG ROCK OS 07725 01697

A superb lump of sandstone dislocated from the remainder of the crags; it is situated on the bracken-clad slope to the south, though it is reached from the same car-parking area. Approach as for the lido to begin with but – instead of going up to the lido, follow the major path south-south-eastwards up the hill, above woodland initially, until Frog Rock can be seen about to leap on you above. Zig zag up to the Rock. (If you delve into local history you will find that the approach path appears to be the route of Alan Rees 25000 motorcycle ascents of the hill – quite the local celebrity.)

Note the ground is fairly steep below the west face of the Rock (which is getting on for 5 metres high) and if you come on your own you may find you wish you hadn't! Keep your E grades hat on.

1 V1 (5b) The right-hand line via two breaks to a rounded top out.

2 **V3 (5c/6a) Climb the centre of the face – feels E2!

3 *V2 (5b) Start up the prow on the left, but traverse right along a break a metre onto the face. Climb up direct. Feels E2!

4 **V2 (5c) The prow on the left direct with a gripping sloping mantel exit – feels E2!

5 V1 (5a/b) The engaging break-line, left to right, tougher than it looks.

