



Frome Valley Sandstone bits and pieces

by Martin Crocker

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There's no point in my reproducing the *Avon & Cheddar* Frome section because it has been completely superseded by *Frome Valley Sandstone*, a comprehensive and quirky 2017 guidebook from Frome Valley activist Mark Davies. This, therefore, is merely a list of some minutiae I hoovered up when out and about over the preceding few years, some of which may be new.

By 2019 I'd climbed 99% of the routes in the valley, leaving a few handfuls strictly to my old timers' imagination or to the dustcart. The crags here deserve more attention; and a realistic strategy might apply the following decision rules: (a) forget the place in the winter except in all but the coldest and driest spells, because it is often dank and wringing wet: best reopen your 'Frome account' when fresh dry spring weather returns; (b) don't discount the routes on appearances alone – the rough rock is inherently enjoyable to climb; (c) come equipped to re-brush the routes and remove the odd re-established bramble or patch of ivy (subject to satisfactory public safety measures in place, where appropriate); and (d) take the grades of some of the easier (E3 and below) routes with a pinch of salt: local practice has generally been one of close inspection and prior top-roping, and so many such routes are more serious than their adjectival grades suggest.

Cover pic: **Snuff's Enuff**, in 2003. Pic: Beverley Crocker

FISHER'S WALL AREA, HAMBROOK

***Fallen Heroes** 18m E4 5c (6.6.2019)

A solo traverse of Fisher's Wall, fortunately easing from left to right as the drop increases. You could protect it on lead from *Nature's Big Problem* onwards, but that would make you weird. Start with a V1 boulder problem up the left arête to a jug (left of *Bronson*). Ninja rightwards along the shelf above the scooped roof past a rickety section at *Nature's Big Problem*. Continue along the break, less steep now, to the right arête and finish of *The Old Ways*: exposed!

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-rope practice of left-hand section)

Battle of Bad Knee V5 (23.5.2018)

The hanging slab of *No Stone Left Unturned*, direct. The best of the trio, though subject to anorak bouldering 'rules'. Gain the sloping jug above the centre of the roof. Left hand on undercut, right on crimp; then reach with right hand for a fat sloper and power over. No holds on right arête including horizontal 'pinch'.

FA Martin Crocker

THE STREAM BLUFFS, HAMBROOK

The *Geocache* Wall is good for warming up your tendons and shoulders before you bugger them up on the Ring Road Boulder.

Geocache Eliminate V3 (6a/b) (?/12.4.2019)

From a sit start immediately right of the wide (descent) crack, make awkward moves to stand up on a foot-ledge. Good footwork and a crimp over the lip of the strip roof seem vital. Finish direct right of the arête. Nowhere near as good from standing, as a route (VS 4c).

FA?

Geocache Traverse 6m VS 4c (?/23.3.2018)

Traverse leftwards across the wall to exit up the right arête of the wide (descent) crack.

FA?

RING ROAD TOWER, HAMBROOK

Ring a Ring o' Roses is the real name of MJC1; **We All Fall Down** is the real name of MJC2; and **Eternity Ring** is the real name of MJC3.

MJC Infinity 6m (14.1.2019)

Hop onto the ledge a metre right of *Eternity Ring*. Then hop back off and go home. Only joking: gain a slight curving flake and reach/lunge for the top and a mantel exit.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after clearing off the ivy)

MJC for Five 5m E1 5c (V1) (14.1.2019)

Route or boulder problem? Pop your left hand into a slot a metre right of *MJC Infinity* and reach/lunge for the top and a mantel exit (!).

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after clearing off the ivy)

***The Fabricate-a-Name Game** 8m E5 5c (14.1.2019)

A right-to-left traverse of the leaning wall, using a finger-rail. Scary, especially since the complex crux is near the end – and high up. Start as for *Eternity Ring*. Step up (obvious foothold) and commit to the finger-rail. Follow it leftwards making full use of the slot on *We All Fall Down* to pick up a smaller rail. Swing left and exit up *Ring a Ring o' Roses*. Would be better with 3 pegs at E2/3.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-rope practice; which didn't preclude a near-cropper when a foothold sheared off on the solo)

THE ANVIL, HAMBROOK

La Zingarella 6m E3 6a (V3+, f6a+) (29.5.2018)

Tight, and with a traumatizing slopey top-out. Move up the right-hand side of the *Ric's Roof (Left)* rib and stretch for a thin dinner-plate just above and left of an orange mark. Forge up to slopers over the lip of the widest part of the roof and weld yourself over.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-rope practice, in light rain – had to pre-position a coat over the final slopers)

****Rockin' the Anvil** 9m V4 (f6b+) (29.5.2018)

Amongst the Anvil's best. A mega-pump along the lip of the lower roof. Double-dyno to a projecting hold at the right-hand end of the roof. Hand-traverse left, all the while keeping to the lip of the lower roof, to the projecting jug and E1-finish of *Ric's Roof (Left)*.

FA Martin Crocker

STEP GROUND BLUFF, BROMLEY HEATH

***Lush Higgidy** V3- (f6A) (?/14.1.2019)

A fun left-to-right lip traverse of the *Higgledy* block. Start on a low shelf, stretch to the lip, which is followed by swinging low around a rib, thus finishing up *Jiggery*. You need to stick to the line of holds just over the lip (and no higher) at this grade.

FA?

SCUDAMORE BUTTRESS, BROMLEY HEATH

***If You've Got It, Shake It** 10m E3 5b (2.2.2018)

This is a good, solo alternative to *The Whither*, though it is afflicted by a crumbly start. Take the shallow decomposing scoop; then power up the edge of the arête to join *The Whither*. No gear.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

King of Clay 12m E4 5b (2.2.2018)

A f5+ bouldering traverse, but 7 metres up! Pumpy. Start up *We Say Birds...* to the break, and swing right into *Nemophilist*. Now hand-traverse the lip of the high roof rightwards, all the way into *The Whither*. Phew: a strong right as well as left arm required!

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-rope practice)

SCANTLEBERRY BUTTRESS, BROMLEY HEATH

Scantleberry Wall 6m VS 5a (?) The leaning wall left of the arête; swing right on the cliff-top tree.

LANCE BLUFF, OLDBURY COURT ESTATE

'Awww He Won't Hurt You' V3 (f6a) (?/8.3.2018) Sit start the bulge right of *Gormless'*...with a set of snarling gnashers attached to your leg.

FA?

KINGS MILL BUTTRESS, OLDBURY COURT ESTATE

Sand Song 9m E2/3 5c (13.7.2017)

A really good filler-in. Start up *Sand Stoned* to a pocket at 5m. Swing right into the centre of the wall via a blunt flake. Make a long reach to a break and continue to the top.

FA Martin Crocker, Simon Fletcher

APEX BUTTRESS (later named The Gompa, which is fine), OLDBURY COURT ESTATE

The Embarrassment of St George 9m E1 5b (6.7.2018)

For God's sake it's only a bunch of blokes (or young ladies) kicking a ball about on a patch of grass.

From the short flake on *Dzong*, hand-traverse the lip of the roof leftwards (cam above) before a BIG span left gains a long pocket (nice fern here) immediately right of *'Suburbs*. Go straight up the slab and reach up left to the cliff-top holly tree.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

BUNKER BUTTRESS, OLDBURY COURT ESTATE

You can traverse the break at f5, if you like.

MEZZANINE BUTTRESS, SNUFF MILLS PARK

Mezzanine B 6m E4 6a (5.6.2018)

The centre of the right-hand prow on the upper floor. Move up to a spike for right hand, under the bulge. Rock up left for a finger-jug; then take slopers direct over the bulge to a very airy mantel. If it weren't so easy to escape this would be E5, given the 12m fall potential. No gear. Avoid holds on the right arête of *L'il Kim Jung*.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

Unclothing the Maiden: A good start at 5c is to climb straight up the initial rib (first gear at 6m).

TERRACOTTA WALL, SNUFF MILLS PARK

The End is Guy V4 (f6b) (24.10.2018)

The finger-crack left of the corner-crack of *Bouldering Bores*. This dirty little grub's main function is to help give 'Frome climbing' a bad name. From a single mat (max.) undercut powerfully to a good hold at the base of the crack. Finger-jam away and reach up left for a hidden exit root.

FA Martin Crocker (with apologies)