



**Llangattock
Update
2014**

Martin Crocker

The Llangattock Escarpment: Update

This no-frills update comprises post-guidebook (2003) routes, for which information is available, and some existing routes re-described. Several topos complement the text, but please note they mostly only show a selection of climbs for their given area. Any existing routes re-described will have been re-led (some re-cleaned where necessary), and reference to the SWMC guidebook will still be needed for further detail including first ascent information. The routes are described south to north.

Llangattock is a beautifully sited traditional climbing cliff, and the new climbs described add substantially to its character. However - as those who climb here will know - the climbing is of a serious nature, and there is much loose rock - especially at or near the cliff top. The BMC's Participation Statement (www.bmc.co.uk) sets out that anyone participating in climbing must accept complete responsibility for their own well-being and safety.

Bolt Policy: No Bolting

Thanks to John Harwood and Jonathan Crocker for their company at the crag and for the former's beliefs in maintaining paper records that step up to the mark when computers break down. Action pics by Jonathan.

Use of this Update

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Cover Shot: *Greetings from the Unemployed* (E2); photo: Jonathan Crocker

Peaceful climbing.....

Martin Crocker

March 2014



Lonely Shepherd Area

There are three minor climbing sites at the southern end of the main escarpment (if you include the Lonely Shepherd) as well as various other undeveloped quarry faces. The Lonely Shepherd is a distinctive feature of the local landscape: a small pinnacle at the 430m contour level which appears prominent, straight ahead on the skyline, when approaching from Gilwern via Llanelly. The three sites are indicated on OS maps as lying on Access Land.

Roadside Quarry OS Ref: 220139

Comprising a series of arêtes in its lower tier, the quarry is a convenient place in which to spend a few hours in the company of your bouldering mat. Bring a cool head too as the 'bouldering' here gets pretty high – as high as E5 in several cases. Facing SSE the crag gets more sun than the rest of Llangattock put together and it is quicker drying.

Headpoint ropes can be arranged on trees at the quarry's top, but care is needed with the rubble beneath the cliff-edge on any abseil. From all the routes described it is possible to scramble off leftwards along a sheep-track above the lower tier.

Approach

The quarry is located approx. 400m east of the T-junction between the minor road contouring under the escarpment and the road coming up from Llanelly. There is a commodious pull-in (doubles as a passing-place) under the quarry: 5-second walk-in obligatory.

Routes are described left to right.

The First Arête

Sustained like Sustrans 6m E2 6b (V5) (7.10.07)

Gain the large hold in the smooth wall left of the arête from the left, and continue with another hard move.

***Green Mind, Atomic Heart** 6m E2 6b (V5) (7.10.07)

Tackle the front of the blunt arête – the best route here.

The Second Arête

5c Problem (V1) (7.10.07)

Mantel onto a hand-ledge 4m left of the arête and use edges on the left to pull out on trees.

5c No Problem (V1) (7.10.07)

Climb the face past a sharp, hollow flake and pull past an aged tree-trunk lying prostrate on the ledge.

Crowded by Ghosts 7m E5 5c (V2) (7.10.07)

Very bold – attaching a V grade is plain silly. Start as for the previous route, but trend right on good finger-edges to reach the obvious stuck-on pudding left of the arête. Step up and right to exit on the arête.

***Agorophobia** 7m E5 5c (V2) (7.10.07)

The crux is near the top – don't fall off that V2 bit! Take the arête to a hand-ledge 5m up. Precarious moves lead to the top. (There appears to be some gear and a thread at the crux which could make this route a not unpleasant E3.)

The Third Arête

High on a Cone of Grass 6m E1 5c (V1) (7.10.07)

From the top of the cone left of the arête, enter the slight right-facing groove and pull past a scrawny hawthorn at the edge.

Box Jelly Fish 7m E3 5b (V0+) (7.10.07)

'Enough to give you the quivers.' Follow the arête, finishing delicately on fragile holds.

Tentative Master 7m E5 5c/6a (V3) (7.10.07)

A line of bolts would make the (flowstone) holds feel more solid (don't do it!); climb the sheer wall 2m right of the arête. The crux is gaining the top, at which a swing left leads to the *Box Jelly Fish* exit.

The Fourth Arête

Wonder Glue 6m HVS 5a (V0)

Romp up the final arête on chunky glued-on flakes; then reverse it to escape!

First Ascents: Martin Crocker (solo above a mat, some of the scary ones after top-roping; *Wonder Glue* on sight).

Darren Disgwylfa: The Lonely Shepherd OS Ref: 219143

On its east side a 4m pinnacle, but on its west side, this mighty protuberance attains its full 6m manhood. There are at least 4 ways to the top – which prove surprisingly technical. The best way is the NW rib starting at its lowest point: about Hard Severe 4a. See 'Fence Quarry', below, for approach details.



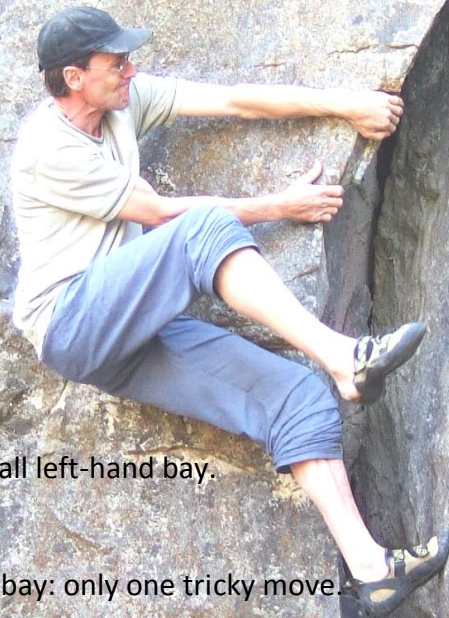
Darren Disgwylfa: Fence Quarry OS Ref: 218145

A pit with a view, this is the small quarry which is filled with abandoned rolls of fencing, 200m north of the pinnacle of the Lonely Shepherd.

While only attaining a height of 6-7m, the rock is strong and the lines stronger still. There are good nut/cam belays in the rock wall above if leading/headpointing/top-roping. The cliff faces east.

Approach

Without causing an obstruction, park in a suitable pull-in adjacent to the T-junction. Take the track that runs leftwards uphill opposite the T-junction. The Lonely Shepherd will be visible up to the right; pick a way up through its flock to the pinnacle. Turn right (north) and follow the edge of the escarpment to the pit, just behind.



Crack Attak 5m Severe (14.4.07)

The striking hand-jam crack in the small left-hand bay.

Defensive 6m E1 5a (14.4.07)

The fine arête on the left of the main bay: only one tricky move.

Barbed Wire Boobs 6m VS 4c (14.4.07)

Follow the crack 2m right of *Defensive* past two threads.

Maccaferri 6m E2 5c (14.4.07)

Immediately right of an unclimbed v-groove (right of *Defensive*) boulder straight up a calcite covered rib to a series of good holds.

Herris 6m E2 6a (14.4.07)

Much easier than it looks – once you get started. Two metres left of *En Garde!* make a powerful move to a good hold. Follow spaced good holds up the wall onto a grass terrace.

***En Garde!** 6m E1 5b (14.4.07)

The route of the quarry: the off-width succumbs to laybacking, squeeze tactics, Don Whillans, or not at all.

Old Fashioned Prayer Meeting 5m E1 5a (14.4.07)

Climb stuck-on fragments on the wall right of *En Garde!* – a tentative exit cupping grass-holds.

First Ascents: Martin Crocker (solo, the E-grade routes after top-roping)

THE FAR EASTERN EDGE

Invert Bay

The Day after Labour's Black Wednesday 6m E1 5c (27.4.06)

Boulder up the short, black, square-cut arête on the ridge that forms the left-hand boundary of the crag; there is a small tree at its top.

FA: Martin Crocker (on-sight solo)

The next three climbs tackle the steep wall high up under a large tree at the top.

Reunion 20m E1 5b (27.5.86)

An interesting finish, though somewhat escapable. Climb easy slabs 4m right of a vegetated corner onto a flat ledge. Move up past a break to finger-cracks (right of an unclimbed groove) and follow them to finish 3m left of the tree at the top. (It is also possible to start the route up the corner.)

Class of 66 20m E2 5b (27.5.86)

Tricky to protect. Follow *Reunion* to the flat ledge. Pull up right over a bulge and move up to a shallow groove in the steep wall. Climb the groove and exit steeply onto grass just left of the tree.

Rock in a Slot 20m E2 5c (5.9.99)

Perhaps the best of the trio, in reality providing 8m of climbing. Either follow *Class of 66* to the foot of the steep wall and then step right, or reach this point by a scramble from the right. Make sustained technical moves up the sheer brown-streaked wall (2 pegs, 1 *in-situ* wire) to the tree at the top.

There are two climbs on the buttress with overhangs in the centre of the crag.

***Alien Summer** 15m E2 5b (5.9.99)

Quite a reliable climb, though the direct start is a more obvious solution. Climb the right-angled corner in the left side of the buttress, and swing left on the horizontal break. Take the cracks above, bearing left to scramble past a tree to the terrace.

Variation: Direct Start: Climb the right side of the compact blunt rib to the horizontal break under the cracks; delicate, and rather more elegant than the original.

FA: Martin Crocker (on sight), Ian Parsons 30.4.06

***School's Out Forever** 15m E3 5c (24.9.02)

Fine climbing with reasonable protection, though the loose stretch up to the terrace needs a very light touch. Start 4m right of the corner of *Alien Summer*. Work up the initial wall past a couple of undercuts to the break under the first overhang. Pull round into a groove (*in-situ* wire, peg), and then teeter up a second little groove on the left. Work blindly left under or over a suspect block roof (*in-situ* wire, peg), and take a rest on ledges to the left. Continue slightly rightwards on friable rock past a tree to the terrace and tree belays. (A second pitch is possible at 4b, which climbs the groove right of the steep wall behind.)

In Midge Air 12m E3 5c (29.6.08)

Entertaining and committing. Start 6m right of the *Alien Summer* corner under a grey flowstone wall. Climb the wall delicately to a break with a sorry little rowan tree (Friend 4). Stretch for a slot over the bulge above the tree, and pull up into a groove. Take the groove and heave up on jugs until standing in balance under the capping shale band. Lower off a pre-placed rope – good trees above.

FA: Martin Crocker (unseconded)

The tier above the buttress with overhangs has one independent route. It climbs the smooth face under a hawthorn at the top of the wall and is located straight above the trees on the terrace above *School's Out Forever*.

***No More Teachers** 7m E4 6b (27.4.06)

One of Llangattock's most technical titbits. Link opposing layaways in the smooth wall to gain better, flowstone holds at 5m. Continue on positive holds to a good exit at the hawthorn tree. There is a wire placement at half-height, though the capacious platform and its soft mossy covering make a solo ascent viable.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

The right-hand half of the crag is dominated by the left-facing arête of *Edge of Silence*, below which is a cave at ground level.

Sound Barrier 20m E3 6a (5.9.99)

Testing peg-protected climbing on the face left of *Edge of Silence*, though reached by a mucky scramble. Gain the vertical crack in the face and follow it with difficulty (4 pegs) to easier ground. Escape left past a hawk's nest (but avoid the route altogether if it appears occupied).

Sound of Silence 20m E5 6b/c (29.6.08)

Super-thin face climbing; eliminate but not feeling so. Follow *Sound Barrier* and clip its second (knife blade) peg, dropping back down to the break. Step right and balance up the sheer wall on minimal holds to gain a finger-flake (positive but weak): peg runner, 12" hero-loop. A footholdless lock gains a jug, and then some technical moves (peg runner) lead to an easier finish rightwards towards the arête.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Edge of Silence 20m E4 6a (18.8.98)

Worth a star if the hawthorn is under control! Scramble leftwards up ledges and, from a good wire-slot, move diagonally rightwards under the hawthorn onto a shaly ledge under the thin crack in the left side of the arête. Take care to protect a hard move to start the crack (especially if the tree's thorns have prevented placing a sling around it!); then follow the crack (3 pegs) pulling up right onto the arête 3m below the top. Take the arête to the top.

Cottonwood Café 25m E3 5c (1986)

Needs a steady head; start at the cave. Climb up to enter the narrow corner in the lower arête with difficulty (wire placement on the right). Move up slightly right to get established on ledges. Step left into an easy corner and then left again to follow the easier upper arête to finish as for *Edge of Silence*.

Wrestling the Polar Bear 25m E3 5c (1990)

An engaging crack is marred by broken ground above. Start at the cave. Climb the overhanging crack right of the lower arête, using some holds immediately left, to ledges. Scramble over short walls to the top.

The following three climbs take the smooth square wall right of the cave under the big left-facing arête of *Edge of Silence*. The rock is perfect.

***Bid the Return** 12m E5 6a (4.93/30.4.06)

A very committing move with (good) gear quite a way beneath your feet. Start up an easy groove containing a flake; then step right and move up to a break – good wires. Balance up into the narrow left-facing groove above, and make an even more balancy move to reach a flat hand-hold. Swing round right to pull up to ledges. Without bolt: Martin Crocker (after top-roping, unseconded)

***Celeb Factor** 10m E4 6b (V5) (30.4.06)

A brilliant highball. Start 1.5m left of the narrow groove on the right. Make sustained hard cranks straight up to the thin break under the overlap (peg). Stretch over to good holds and finish easily.

FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping and with a mat; unseconded). The route contains an old bolt stub at 4m – its history is unknown.

Due Another Cromwell 10m E2 5c (17.4.06)

Climb the narrow groove with a thin crack in the back that is close to the right edge of the smooth square wall. Bear leftwards over the overhang to ledges and higher tree belays.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Lib Dem Bay

A minor wall but with a major asset that governs the back of the bay.

Biopsy Turvy 6m E2 5c (6.5.07)

Trend leftwards across a slab, and then extend from a crimp to a small sharp flake. Use a finger-hold to the right to gain a grassy break and a big hawthorn to abseil off.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Ming on a Spring** 8m E5 6c (6.5.07)

Then dedicated to aging Lib Dems with up-and-down careers: a high-tech testpiece. Blast up the wall 2m right of the groove to reach a blind flake, and a long ('don't fall now') move to the break. Finish easily; and pull out with care. The ropes are baby-bouncer arranged on a peg in the roofed groove on the left and wires in a diagonal block crack 3m up on the right.

FA: FA: Martin Crocker (after top roping; unseconded)

EASTERN EDGE

Nic of Time Bay

The most distinctive feature of this cliff is a fine arête on the left which is flecked with white lichen.

Lost in Time 10m Very Severe 5a (24.9.02)

Climb flakes and a runnel just left of the arête.

***Nic of Time** 10m Hard Very Severe 5b (24.9.02)

One of the better routes of its grade at Llangattock. Hard opening moves up the arête lead to large holds; follow them to the top.

Drama Queen 10m E3 5c (17.4.06)

Climb the left-hand side of the isolated arête which is 15m right of *Nic of Time*. A small wire protects the difficult move over the overlap. Once on top of the arête, take care passing a perched 'thread' of blocks.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

At the right end of the bay is a compact slabby wall bounded on its left by a corner-crack. It contains two slight flake-grooves in its first few metres.

***The Lark Ascending** 8m E4 5c (17.4.06)

Tackle the arête right of the corner-crack on opposing layaways. No gear above 3m.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

The (One-) Armed Man 7m E3 5c (17.4.06)

Climb the left-hand groove past a slightly rattling flake; then step right at the top to exit. No gear. (Holds on the following route are not used.)

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

Go With the Flow 6m Very Severe 4a (Trad)

Climb the right-hand groove and fine flowstone holds above.

Grenoble Bay

This is the next bay eastwards which is identifiable by a cave (Price's Dig) at three-quarters height on the right. The tallest part of the main face is tackled by the following two climbs which start at a crack in the initial wall.

Heart Bypass 25m E2 5c (25.8.02)

Climb the crack and continue up a scoop to shaly ledges (peg). Step right and then back left to gain a large thread hold (and sling). Traverse left (peg) and pull up to a crack. Follow the crack (peg, *in-situ* thread) to the top.

***Heart Route** 20m E3 5c (1986/3.9.02)

A fulfilling lead with lots of interest and quite good protection. Follow *Heart Bypass* to the large thread hold. Climb straight up (two pegs), and then move slightly right to exit up a small groove.

The remaining two climbs in the bay take the perched grey slab right of Price's Dig.

***Old Shep** 8m E1 5a (1989)

A delightful climb that holds itself together well. Scramble to the centre of the slab; then climb rightwards onto its arête (peg). Step back left and finish direct.

Wicked Lauren 7m E2 5b (1989)

Bold. From a ledge on the right of the slab, pad up a smooth waterworn runnel (peg on *Old Shep*) and use the right arête of the runnel to finish.

Main Area

Above the cluster of routes ending at the rowan tree (*Mile High Club* et al) is a short steep headwall featuring a crack towards its right-hand end. The next climb takes the crack and is reached from the cliff top by an easy scramble down the underlying rake; belay on a rock spike 5m up and left of a blocky platform under the climb.

Greetings from the Unemployed 10m E2 5b (31.7.2011)

A worthy little climb; but quite a job to protect. Climb easily up ledges to the crack (small cams of benefit). Take the crack on layaways to a clean finish on big holds. (Belay on multiple boulders or place a stake.)

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Man of a Thousand Climbs 25m E4/5 5c (29.4.07)

Extreme commitment thanks to well-spaced gear and unreliable rock: a Llangattock 'treat'. It takes a central line up the 'featureless wall', starting at the three cracks as for *The Gambler*. Take the first crack, and then follow its left-hand branch and a short corner to a hawthorn tree (which appears bedded in rubble – so don't expect too much). Pull over the bulge immediately right of the tree and move up onto the calcite wall. Tentatively climb up to a rounded boss (crucial 1.5.cam in pocket on left), and then follow flutings above to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

MilkMaid 25m E4 5c (29.4.07)

A pleasant eliminate; needs care to protect in its upper reaches. Start 2m right of *Backsliding B*. Climb a slim compact groove to a break, and pull over a slight bulge on jugs. Keeping right of a scrawny hawthorn surmount the next bulge (small thread), and then climb straight up the flowstone wall past a pink 'sow's tit' to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Day out with Death** 25m E5 6a (25.4.2011)

The tower between *Vendetta* and *Fighting Cock*; all the holds are there, less so the gear. A couple of skyhooks were used to supplement protection on the first ascent. Make the 'very awkward' step into the small groove of *Fighting Cock*. Swing immediately left into a leaning groove (peg), and fight for good fingerholds on the left, so gaining *Fighting Cock* after its traverse left. (Rather contrived and fingery this bit; the remainder is no harder than 5c.) Pull into the corner of *Fighting Cock*. Step out left above the roof onto the face of the tower, and move up to a jug (short peg and begrudging rock-spike around which a thin tape can get a partial grip). A long and nerve-wracking run-out up the face now follows: delicate and sustained but for the most part no harder than 5b. Exit slightly leftwards up a slab.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Fighting Cock** 20m E3/5 5c (1984)

The narrow corner in the buttress left of the Winning Wall: a strong feature - requiring a squabble at the start and finish. Place on lead a knife blade in the crack at the top of the corner for the E3 grade; even then it is bold and blind to exit (E5 without the peg). From a long turf ledge make a very awkward step into a small groove (twisted small wire – there's nothing else), which leads to the loose bands. Traverse left 2m and enter the corner past bombproof gear. Climb the corner (RPs and micro-wires), until it steepens ominously – place the peg here. Long strenuous moves lead straight to the grassy bank above. Have an abseil rope draped down the unstable slope above (and mind your heads).

Note: *Wonderlands*. This climb hosts the only remaining purpose-placed minimalist bolt runners that have yet to be eliminated. Since the cliff is subject to a *No Bolting* policy, the solution must be to eliminate these too – quite a challenge!

The next two routes merit a pre-fixed rope, with retreat at the break above the good climbing and before the headwall of tot.

****Mad Hatter** 25m E5 6a (1984)

An uncelebrated flowstone gem; not overly serious provided the knackered old peg is backed up (with another placed 1.5m down to the right). Start on a grass mound 8m right of the left-hand end of the wall (and diagonally down left of a tree 6m up). Pull up and right onto a projecting ledge. Bear right to a calcite fusion (rock spike and thread). Climb up past a couple of undercuts to a second calcite fusion (*in-situ* thread, good wires) and gain the boss on top. Make a bold rock-up to gain a good high hold (back-up peg here), and a long reach to clip the old peg (that originally flew a 3-foot sling to make it clippable). An elastic sequence above reaches a giant jug at the break and the lower-off rope.

Stay Sharp 25m E4 6a (1982)

Well worthwhile; a crucial, bouldery section is peg-dependent, however. The route accesses the narrow leftward-trending corner high on the wall. Climb a vertical crack onto a loose ledge; then climb up and move left into an unstable niche under the narrow corner. Move up onto flowstone (poor peg), clipping a second peg (long sling) off a dodgy flake. Powerful moves gain huge holds and an easier finish to a break and the pre-fixed rope. Note: the route is probably best started up *Not in the Honours List*.

***Not in the Honours' List** 25m E5 6a (14.6.09)

Bags of character, on intricate flowstone. The gear is relatively reasonable. Start down and right of a large tree, 2m left of the crack of *Stay Sharp*. Follow pockets (peg) onto a cushioned ledge. Pull up and left (two small threads) to join *Stay Sharp* at its unstable niche. Swing right into a thin crack (peg). Move up (peg), and gain a flake up to the right (cams). Move back left and climb flowstone (peg) past various good fingerholds and wire placements. Abseil off a good hawthorn slightly right.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Hit Man** 25m E5 (1987)

A great wall climb with a fairly clean entry that escapes the loose band. The top wall is sequency. The route has been led without the minimalist bolt (left in) but with two peg runners (removed). Start 2m right of a shattered crack that leads up in the direction of a hawthorn tree in a break at 7m.

1 15m 5a Climb a flake crack onto a ledge. Continue direct up the wall: steep but on good widely spaced hand-ledges. Belay on flat ledges in a broad scoop above, taking ropes up to bomber wires 2/3 metres higher.

2 10m 6b With protection from the belay nuts, climb very thinly and blindly up flowstone to an *in-situ* thread. Step left (peg/bolt), and move up to a bulge (peg, if bolt not clipped). Snatches above (peg with short sling) lead to larger holds and an easy exit onto the grassy slope.

Without clipping bolt: Martin Crocker, John Harwood 31.7.2011

Descent into Madness 25m E4 6a (26.6.2011)

One of the more sustained routes on the wall, featuring multiple hard sections with rests between. It takes a direct line to climb the full crack of *Culmination Crack*, finishing as for that route. Take a slight groove up the overhanging wall 2m left of *Cold Snatch* on a series of large but suspect undercuts. A peg at 6m is the first gear (but the ground is soft). Pull up to a wide break. Swing right along the break and take the smooth face using a thin crack on the right for the odd hold and gear (vital 0.5 Friend in crack initially). Above, continue up broken ground left of a massive perched flake to the highest of a series of ledges (long tape), junction with *Culmination'* (which climbs up and then diagonally right). Traverse right and when standing on the perched flake (peg) work up the hairline crack using a good hold on the right and then with even more difficulty (peg), now in common with *Culmination'*, to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Mean Green: peg missing (and route needs re-cleaning.)

***Liberator** 30m E4 6a (12.6.86)

A big league lead; varied and with loads of character. It forges a line up the left-hand side of the roofed section of the wall via thin orange grooves and a hanging twin-crackline. RPs useful for the lower section. Start 5m right of *Cold Snatch* at a grooved rib (the shallow groove is *Mean Green*). Take the crack right of the rib (peg) to gain a break with difficulty (0.0 Friend). Step right and climb the slimmest of corners in the orange rock to reach a wide break (Friend 4 to back up the rust above). A thin crack right of the arête (peg) leads to flat holds out left which enable a good ledge to be reached (junction with *Big Bright Green...*); *in-situ* thread & peg-traces. Move up right into a sentry box (peg, which can be backed up), and take the left-hand crack direct (*BBG...* chickens out right somewhat) until a crack slants left across the wall towards *Cold Snatch*. Follow the crack for 2m and either carry on into *Cold Snatch* or take the *Thunderbolt* finish at E4 5c: i.e. reach a small stal undercut in the face above and – using a layaway with your left hand – make a long reach to jugs above; swing left and pull up to a flat grass ledge.

Thunderbolt finish: Martin Crocker (26.6.2011)

***Fifty-five Club** 30m E5+ 6a (3.7.2011)

A staggering and sustained line through the bowel-activating (and shaky-looking) overhangs right of the Winning Wall (and just left of *The Roaring Eighties*). Care is required with anything coloured orange! Start 3m right of *Liberator* under an open pink groove. Follow the delicate groove to its close at 9m (peg). Traverse right 2m stepping up onto a good ledge below the overhangs. Rock-up to the first roof; and launch diagonally rightwards (peg) to grab a shelf. Place cams (including a Friend 3.5 equivalent), stretch over a bulge to jugs; and using superb fingerholds on the left (peg) reach a jug and a ledge at the base of a shallow groove in the grey headwall (a smashing place for a stance, but the gear isn't too good here). Take the groove to a peg; then climb diagonally left into a hanging crack. Follow the crack and step left to – unbelievably – a clean, solid, and well-protected exit ramble up flat ledges.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood



Fifty-five Club (E5/6)

Jonathan Crocker

***It's Curtains!** 25m E5 6a (6.5.07)

A powerful route with an exciting crux on flowstone curtains. Protection is adequate but flowstone-reliant in the upper reaches. Start at the cave left of *Angel in my Pocket*. Climb across the cave roof from the right (*in-situ* thread), and pick up huge stal holds (thread). Take the stal to a small cave. Pull up on delicate holds (peg) and swing left to the line of 'curtains' (peg). Pinch, jam, and layaway the curtains to finish exhaustingly past two small *in-situ* threads.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Darker Angel** 25m E4 6a (31.8.03)

An impressive pitch with continuously difficult climbing. Follow *Angel in My Pocket* until 6m above its overhang. Clip the (orange) peg above, and make an obvious traverse leftwards. A hard move after two pegs gains a vertical line of ascent which is followed steeply (*in-situ* thread) to the top.

FA: Tony Penning, John Harwood

Nerve Test Slab

The first three routes on the slab start at a good nut belay under its left-hand corner – thereby eschewing the introductory wall of crud. Stake required for a decent belay at the top.

Dodgeball 20m E3 5c (20.5.08)

The left arête of the slab; bold. Gain a big sidehold on the right-hand side of the arête, and make a long scary move up a thin groove in the arête to a ledge. Continue up the arête, exiting delicately right immediately beneath a huge sitting block (use at your *peryl!*). Scramble out.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Nerve Test 25m E2 5b (27.4.82)

The reasonably protected route of the slab; quite good too. Traverse 2m right along a break taking care with whatever you're standing on. A hairline crack 2m right of the arête points the way: follow it on improving holds to the top of the slab. Scramble out.

Coward's Way 25m E4 5c (20.5.08)

Run-out, though the hardest section has gear. Follow *Nerve Test* rightwards but continue another metre, before climbing up onto sloping ledges. Overhead is the faintest of cracks (the right-hand of a pair, *Nerve Test* takes the left-hand crack). A balancy section a long way above gear leads to a hidden hold over a slight bulge and a good pocket above (wires). Make technical moves straight up; then swing left to the exit of *Nerve Test*. Scramble out.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Chwar Pant y Rhiw

PINNACLE BAY

Ten metres right of the large hawthorn on the terrace is a rectangular wall climbed by the next route.

Grumpy Old Men 25m E2 5b (8.6.08)

Climb straight up the grey wall, keeping just to the right of a tiny hawthorn at 6m, to a break: assorted small wires. Good fingerholds on the headwall lead to a precarious exit past earth-mounted blocks onto the terrace. Scramble up and rightwards to the top. A pre-fixed rope to lower from just beneath the terrace would make this a very pleasurable route (not on first ascent).

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Immediately before the break in the cliff is an open chimney above the half-height ledges. The next two routes share a common entry and start at a crack midway between a narrow vertical cave and the break in the cliff.

Seventy-nine Pints 20m E3 5b (8.6.08)

The left arête of the chimney; good climbing - if a little bold. Climb the crack to a break, step left; then work nervously up to a ledge under the left arête of the chimney. Take a short crack which lands you on the arête proper. A bold move straight up the arête enables a sling to be draped on a flake to the right (in the chimney). Pull out direct onto heather.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Chimney Route 20m E1 5b (8.6.08)

An impressive line; the chimney itself is VS and well-protected and is potentially reachable from the break in the cliff to the right. Follow *Seventy-nine Pints* to the base of the left arête. Sidle right into the chimney and climb it to an amiable exit to the right.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

The next buttress is steeper than the rest and underlies a commodious terrace hosting a hawthorn. This tree provides a sound belay and an appropriate end-point for the next seven routes. The vertical groove and crack right of centre is taken by *Wildest Dreams*. The first two routes climb the subsidiary grey wall that forms the left wing of the buttress.

Man about the House 6m HVS 5b (1984/85)

A nice little route on good rock; a good wire placement is where you need it, though the route's soloable too (at E1/2). Climb the grey arête and exit with care onto the ledges.

Jailbird 7m E1 5c

Climb the crack that bisects an overhang at 4m; well-protected but surprisingly hard.

The Creaking Flakes 12m E2 5a (?)

An infamous route that acquired its name before ever being led. There is no gear, so leave the rope coiled. Start at a rib under the left-hand side of the mid-height roof. Climb easily, and then make a delicate move up and left across a slab, so gaining the flakes (the horizontal one has the potential to do more than creak: do not use it!). Carefully reach over the bulge to large holds in a scoop and mantel over (crux). Step right to exit up a short arête.

Entertainer 15m E2 5b (7.9.85)

Unusual, committing, and high in the grade. Start immediately left of the thin crack of *Wildest Dreams*. Climb up a flake that forms an inverted-V, so gaining a hand-rail under the mid-height roof. Hand traverse left 2m and make a strenuous pull (peg) to flakes above, and a finish up a short arête.

***An Audience with Carl Ryan** 12m E4 6a (24.5.08)

A right old chuckle. Follow the *Entertainer* to the hand-rail. Reach up right for a weird jug, and make fingery moves straight up to finish. Bold, but some good gear under the crux will mean any fall is into free air.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

***Wildest Dreams** 12m E3 6a (1982)

A test-piece with good gear; the peg can be backed up with micro-wires if desired. Climb the groove and thin crack making a very difficult move through the bulge (peg – long clip!).

***Visions in Blue** 12m E4 6a (20.7.85)

Another compelling problem; low in the 6a grade. Start 3m left of the corner of *Rambling Sid*. Make difficult moves up a flake using a wobbly undercut to gain a break (peg; micro-cam for back-up). Swing left and make sustained moves on layaways up a steep crack.

High Frequency 20m E2 5c (1983)

Worthwhile, and it stays clean enough. A metre left of the cave, climb bulging rock until better holds lead right above the cave into a corner. Climb the corner to the shale band and a tree. Finish up pleasant cracks in the wall above.

(1) *Julia Andrea 25m E5 6a (8.5.84/1986)

A big lead with some committing sections. Start under a slim groove below and slightly left of a tree on the half-height terrace. Climb the groove (peg), and pull out right on pockets. Take a thin crack above and pull warily up to the tree on the terrace. Make blind moves over the bulge on the right and gain welcome good wire placements in vertical cracks in the face. Move up to a shallow corner (peg), and then make fierce moves straight over the bulge above to reach the top.

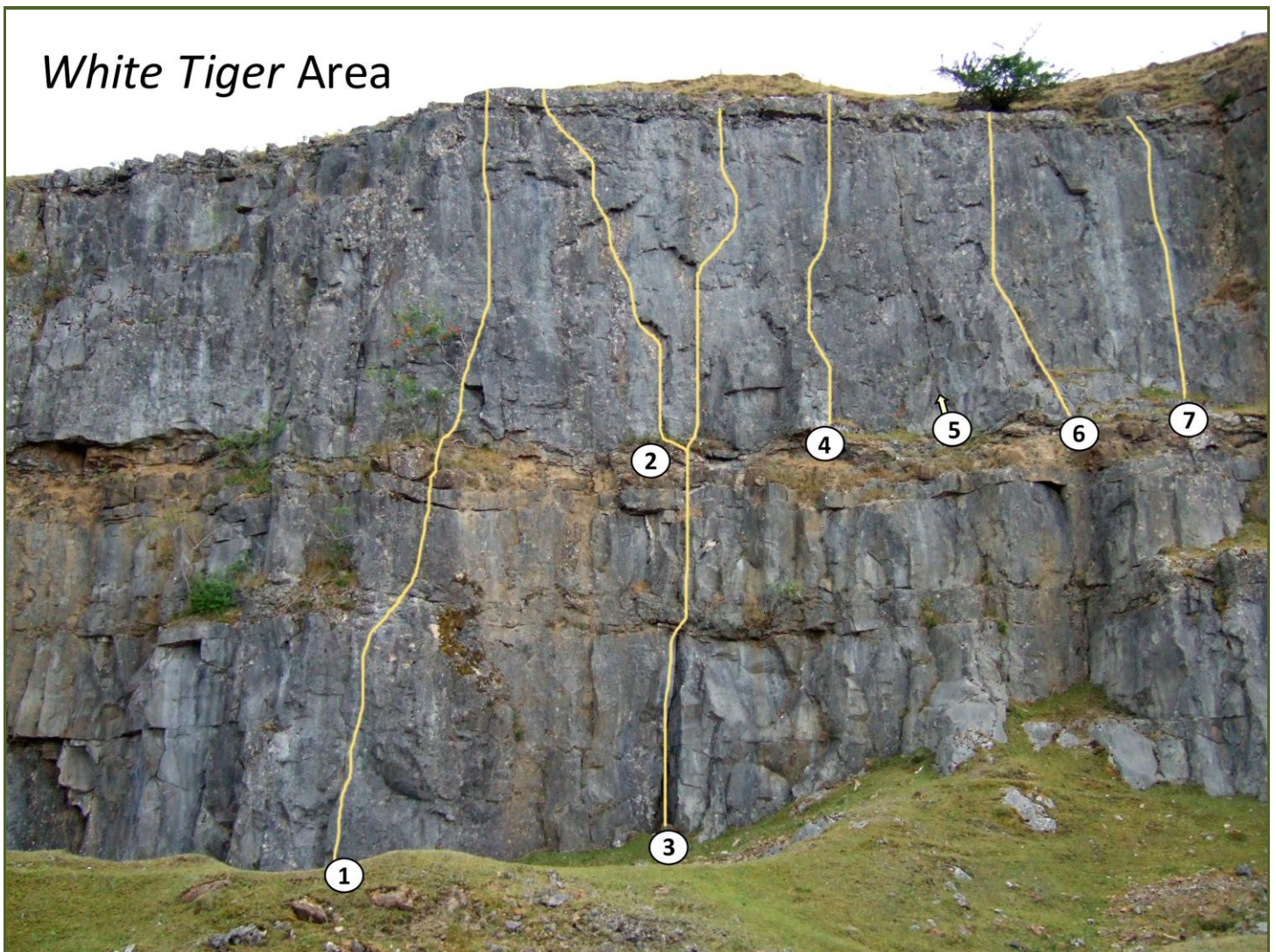
(The original gained the thin crack under the tree direct - now dirty. The initial groove was climbed as a variation start by I Waddington and provides by far the best approach.)

The next two climbs start up an obvious narrow corner, 6m right of *Julia Andrea*.

(2) Courting Danger 20m E4 5c (1.5.06)

Serious. Climb the corner to a block roof. Step out right and clamber carefully onto a shale-supported pedestal ledge. From the left end of the ledge take a slight flake crack and then spaced flat holds to a rightward-rising overlap (peg). Climb up left with difficulty to a short fluted crack above a second overlap (thin rock-spike runner) and pull out on good holds.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood



(3) White Tiger 20m E3 6a (1983)

Interesting and sustained face climbing: well worth doing. Follow *Courting Danger* to the pedestal ledge. Climb a flake crack and then swing right and up to a second one (peg). Make hard moves to reach a finger-slot up to the right (good wire), and then continue direct with no let up.

The original route traversed out right onto a ledge on *Wild Life*, before trending back left to the slot. Direct Version: Martin Crocker, John Harwood (1.5.06)

(4) Wild Life 10m E3 6a (25.6.86)

Steady, scantily protected climbing leads to a hard well-protected exit. Start from wire belays at the left end of the terrace, 4m left of the obvious vertical crack (of *Don't Walk over my Head*). Pull up onto a projecting ledge (hidden peg out left). Climb the face bearing slightly right to a short thin crack (old peg; but good wires). Move up and finish with a powerful move.

Line (5) in the topo is *Don't Walk over My Head*.

(6) Don't Fall on My Head 10m E3 6a (8.6.08)

Start 6m left of the corner of *Brere Rabbit*. Climb an easy rib to an undercut - good gear. Probe delicately up the calcite face above (fiddly wires in a ragged vertical crack) to a jug. Belay on the hawthorn tree at the top.
FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

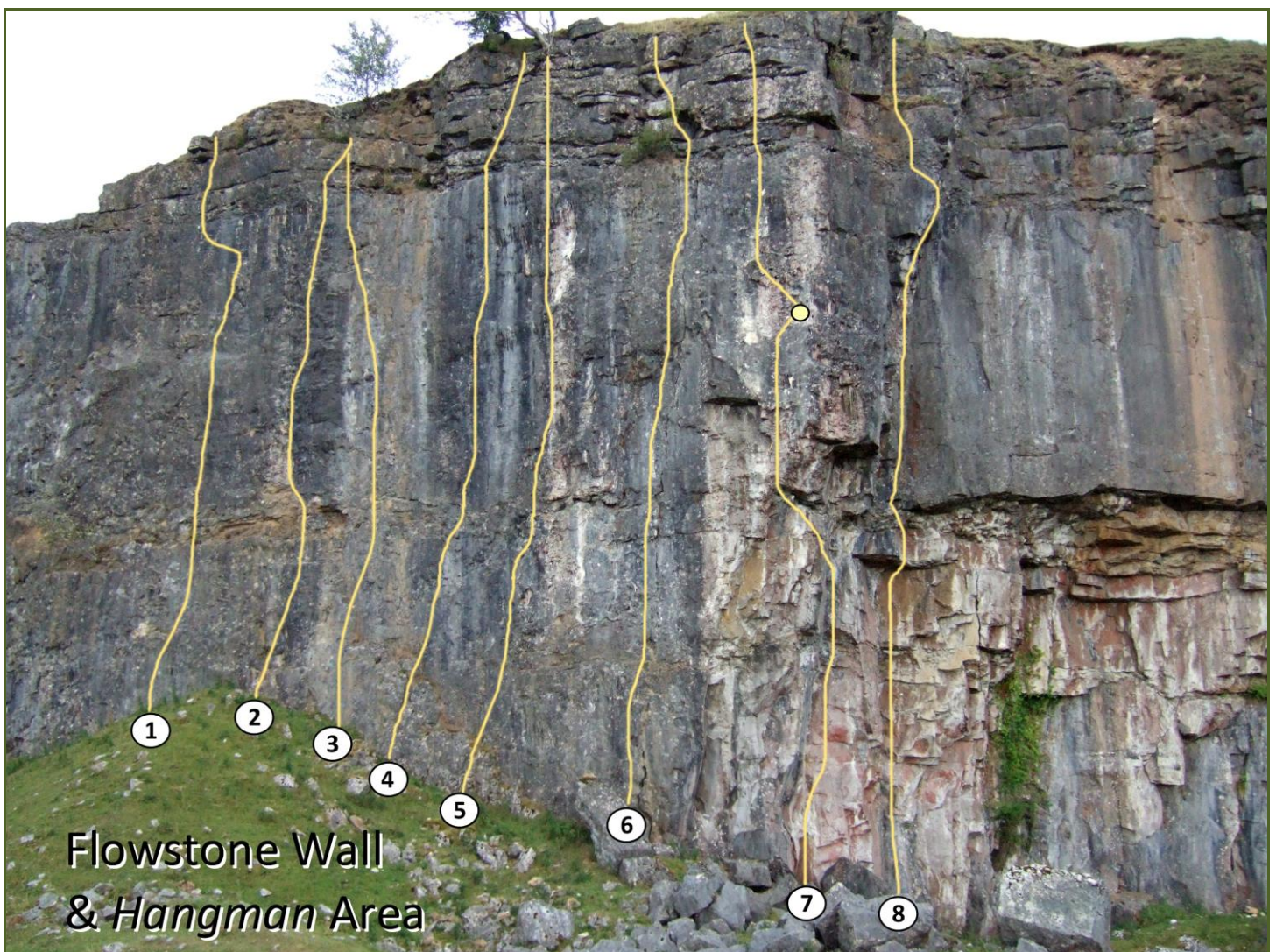
(7) Rotten Johnny 10m E4 5c/6a (8.6.08)

Headpoint grade: nastier to on-sight. Climb the sheer face 2.5m left of the corner of *Brere Rabbit* making run-out moves into a very slight left-facing groove. A pair of OK wires at half-height imbues a modicum of stoicism.
FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping), John Harwood

Flowstone Wall

Free Runner 20m Hard Very Severe 4c (26.6.84)

Start a metre left of the top of the grass cone. Climb up to ledges at 4m and then step left above the small tree. Follow flowstone holds above with care and continue up a pocketed flowstone curtain (*in-situ* thread) to finish left of the protruding block at the top.



(1) Stal of Wonder 20m E4 5c (7.5.06)

Fairly bold in places, though the spaced gear is fairly robust. Start a metre left of the top of the grass cone, as for *Free Runner*. Climb up to ledges at 4m. Work up the face above, keeping immediately left of an incipient crack-line (peg); and then proceed delicately to a hidden stal boss slightly up to the right (sling). Step up and then left to a short diagonal crack (good wire), and finish 2m right of the protruding block at the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(2) **Bridlevale Wall 20m E2 5b (15.5.84)

The most attractive of the routes on the wall that takes the sumptuous black flowstone curtain right of centre. Start at the top of the grass cone. Climb up to unstable ledges at 4m. Move up onto the curtain and follow it straight to a weakness in the short final wall and a tree on the edge.

(3) *Stal of Light 20m E3 5c (7.5.06)

Interesting and protectable climbing, possibly overgraded. Start 4m right of the top of the grass cone, under vertical brown streaks. Climb the flowstone past a circular pocket at half-height and two *in-situ* threads. At the steep band near the top, step left and then move up to the tree at the top as for *Bridlevale Wall*.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(4) *Wild Touch 25m E4 5c (5.10.83)

A challenging lead with no particularly hard moves (but - *cliché* - lots of them) and a committing start and finish. Start a metre left of *Cry Havoc*, under a discontinuous crack in the grey flowstone wall. Climb a slight flowstone rib and pull up to the crack and better protection. Take the crack which rears up to the break near the top and forces some rapid-fire athletics to big blocky finishing holds.

Line **(5)** on the topo is *Cry Havoc*.

(6) **Passage of Time 25m E1 5b (12.6.79)

A reliable introduction to the wall, and a fine line. Start under the ragged crack near the right-hand end of the wall, where there is a large block against it. Step off the block and move up to a crack. Follow the sustained crack over a bulge to the large tree at the top.

Edge of Time 30m E1 5b (15.5.84)

An exposed variation finish to *Passage of Time* up its right arête. Care is required at the exit as there is a landslide in progress. Follow *Passage'* for 15m and then traverse right above the level of a small roof into a flowstone niche left of the arête (threads – possible belay). Climb rightwards up slight groves in the arête to finish right of huge blocks*: fairly straightforward but poorly protected. (*Collapsed in 2007.)

(7) **Goddamn Sexual Tyrannosaurus 35m E6 6b (4.6.06)

An outstanding route that conquers the bulging right-hand arête of the flowstone wall: one of the finest hard climbs here. At the bottom of the grade, and on-sightable by G&SEWales talent. Start at the left-hand of a pair of narrow corners (the right one being *Hangman*), under the arête.

1. 25m. 6b. Follow the corner past a somehow-jammed jug to its close (two pegs). Traverse left 2m to a good shake-out position under a large bulge; cams useful. Extend for a high sidehold (peg with short sling), power up, and then boldly take positive stal holds above until a step right gains nut belays (belay of *Edge of Time*).

2. 10m. 5b. Move up left onto the big stal scab (threads). Climb the face above (peg) and finish direct past shaly breaks up the headwall.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Line **(8)** on the topo is *Hangman*.

More Fool You & Fool's Executioner. There are some very old bolts (or remnants thereof) at the shared overhang of these two free routes which derive from the original aid route hereabouts. There are plans to re-clean and re-climb the routes in 2014 without the bolts (in harmony with the *No Bolting* policy).

**** All Dumbed Down 30m E6 6b (5.8.07)**

One of the most sensational lines in SEWales; this is the hanging roofed-groove left of the corner of *IQ Test*. Protection is pretty good. Start 6m right of *Acid Rain* at a flake crack. Gain the sharp suspect flake at 3m, swing right onto a rib and continue to the first overhang (peg). Make powerful moves round (peg, long clip) to breaks and jugs (cams 1-2). Swing right and stretch over the narrow shale band (it is - or at least *was* - not too bad) to finger-holds (peg). Make great moves through overhangs (wire) to jugs-to-beat-all-jugs in the base of the hanging groove. Swing right onto a rib, which is followed (peg) to lower-off at the level of a horizontal break under the rubble-slope (bong with maillon only - back it up with pre-fixed rope).

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Colorado Dreaming 30m E3 6a (2003)

A difficult line (peg) between *Maggie's Gate* and *Hundred Years War*.

FA: Tony Penning, Nic Mullin

***Natural Born Coward 25m E6 6b/c (5.8.07)**

The arête between *Average Hand* and *5 Miles Out*, with grit-like ambience. Climb the crack between the two, but move right at the bulge to join *5 Miles Out*. Make a move up this; then traverse left onto the arête. Step up left onto a ledge (peg) just right of *Average Hand*. Now climb the arête, at first on its left side; then direct (above two moderate knife-blades and a good back-up peg just right) with a very precarious sequence to step left onto a good flat hold. Climb the left side of the arête (peg) to a flat ledge under the rubble slop; lower-off a pre-fixed rope.

FA: Martin Crocker (after top roping crux section), John Harwood

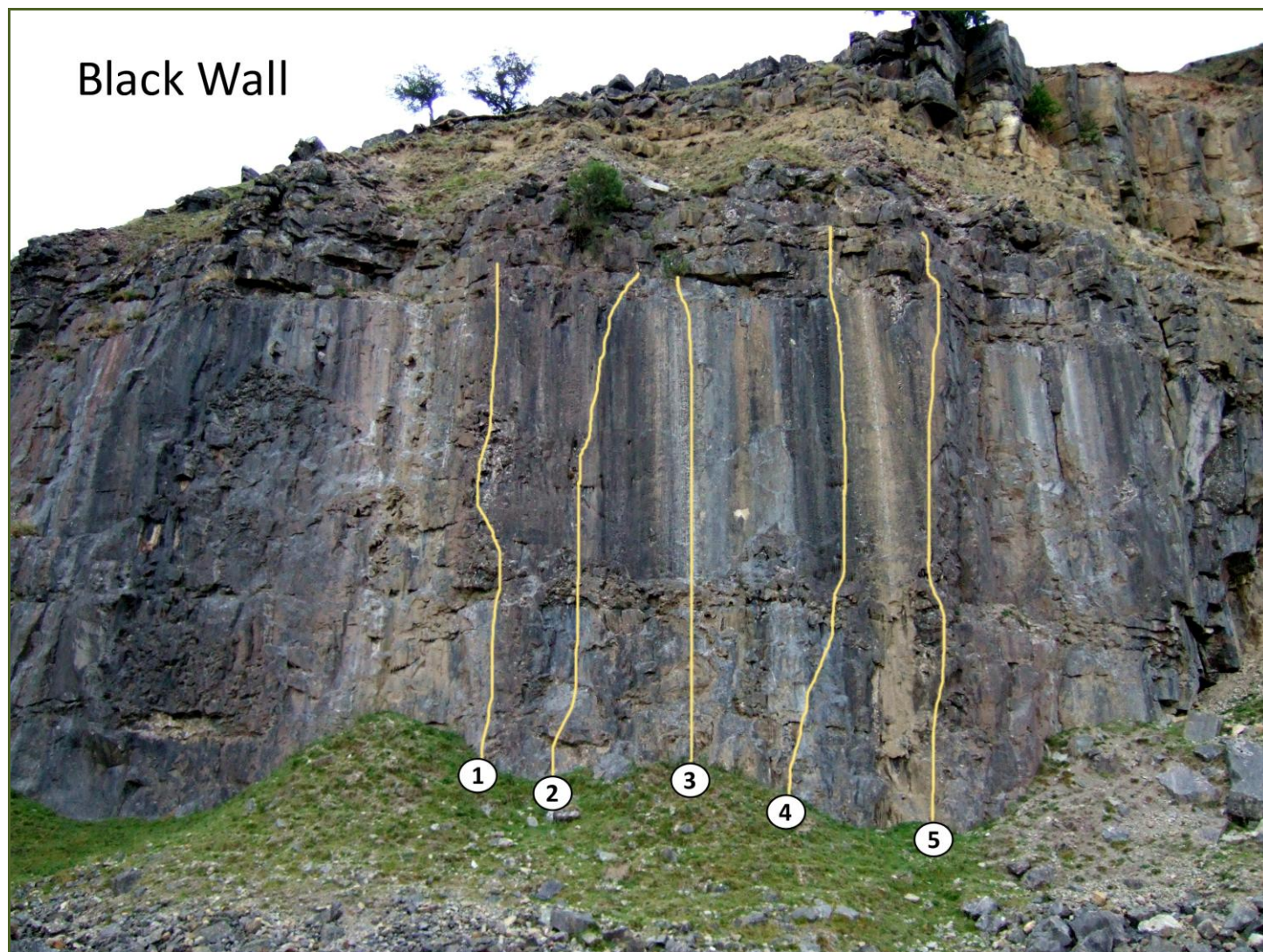
All Dumbed Down (E6)
John Harwood climbing



Jonathan Crocker

Black Wall

Close to the right-hand end of the crag (before it becomes an avalanche cone!) is a rectangular black wall covered in flowstone: The Black Wall. The right-hand half is sheer and, at first sight, seemingly bereft of holds. Unfortunately the slope above the wall is not in the best of condition and full body armour is required if abseiling down in order to check out the routes or – recommended – to back up the abseil points.



(1) Look Up – To See what’s Coming Down 20m E1 5b (11.6.2006)

A reasonable route up the flowstone rib in the centre of the wall. Start on the right-hand slope of a grass cone, and in the centre of the wall. Climb the right side of the lower rib, trending left and up onto a matrix of calcite-cemented blockwork (threads). Continue up the rib (*in-situ* thread slightly right) to a 2-peg abseil point under rubble.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Line (2) on the topo is *Funky Flowstone Route*.

(3) **Blue Cascade 20m E5 6a (11.6.2006)

A beautiful flowstone feature - this is the frozen butterfly-blue cascade in the centre of the sheer right-hand half of the wall. Protection is better than it looks: mainly small wires – but remember – calcite is soft! Climb easily to the cascade. Using a narrow flake-line to its right, climb the flowstone to a rounded boss on the right wall. Pumped brainless, make a final hard move to cup a stalactite and retreat from a 2-peg abseil point.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Lines **(4)** & **(5)** on the topo are *Black Adder* and *Skin Tight*, respectively.

Chwar Pant y Rhiw (North)

It is possible that most climbers interested in Llangattock were under the misconception that climbing on the cliff right of The Black Wall was not allowed without a permit. The assumption appears to have originated from the 1983 guidebook which may have led people to believe that the extension to Chwar Pant y Rhiw occupied the Craig-y-Cilau National Nature Reserve. There seems to have been little interest in investigating the position, though there is evidence of some route activity from the 80s or 90s. Notices fixed on the southern perimeter of the NNR make it clear that that the 250m of cliffs running rightwards from The Black Wall to a ridge overlooking the wooded bowl of Craig-y-Cilau lie outside the NNR.

The cliff, which is a fairly continuous run of 10-20m high walls at the base of the scarp face, commences the other side of an avalanche chute, and 60m right of the Black Wall.

Near its left-hand end is a brown flowstone wall which sports an unrecorded climb leading to a hawthorn tree and to its right a flowstone fissure which also appears to have been climbed. Between the two is a compact grey wall containing a slim groove.

***Fledgling Nation** 20m E4 6a (18.6.2006)

Superb and elegant climbing in the immaculate grey groove; a second star is robbed by its shaly start. Start 5m left of the fissure. From a ledge on the left quick-step rightwards across the shale band (peg) to gain a thin crack. Follow the crack into the groove (peg). Intricate moves, always with good wire protection and often with nice finger-edges, lead to a break at its close. Swing right (peg) and then traverse right 3m to a hawthorn tree at the top of the fissure. Abseil descent.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Right of the fissure is a grey buttress peppered with calcite concretions and flakes. The main irritant is that a pre-fixed rope is required to belay and to abseil off (though there are substantial hawthorn trees at the top of the scarp to achieve this easily).

Concretion 2006 20m E3 6a (18.6.06)

Take plenty of slings – you'll find out why! Start 3m right of the fissure. Climb a tricky narrow left-facing corner to a resting place. From a sharp cemented flake (thread) continue straight up the calcited face past numerous small stalactites, and exit up a short corner on the right.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

The groove in the right-hand side of the buttress contains a peg: no further details are available.

Twenty metres right of the fissure is a bulging broad grey rib undercut by a roof 4m up.

Rip Torn 15m E4 5c (18.6.06)

Climb into a niche containing a cemented flake (thread) left of the roof. Make committing moves up and slightly right, using a fluting above the roof. Cling for a while on a brown rib; then immediately step back left onto slabbier rock and follow this to an easy exit onto a grass slope. Either scramble up to belays on outcrops at the top of the scarp, or – better – belay and abseil from a pre-fixed rope.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

To the right is a monstrous undercut bridge of rock running along the cliff-edge, the eventual demise of which will be felt across the Earth. The next three routes climb just left of the left-hand end of the bridge. They all converge on a large thread just below the top (*in-situ* 11mm rope), from which an abseil could be made if you renew the rope.

***At the Earth's Core** 12m E1 5a (13.5.08)

The compelling V-groove with calcite blobs: a neat line. Follow the groove, stepping onto its right arête at 6m (thread – first gear). Climb easier pocketed rock above to the thread.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

All you can Eat – and More 12m E2 6b (13.5.08)

Boulder up the right arête of the V-groove to its thread. The first blob in the groove is out of bounds.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

Pont Wan Fawr 12m E4 5c (13.5.08)

No gear. Start below the left-hand end of the bridge. Take a blunt rib past an open pocket for the left hand; making awkward moves straight up to concretion clusters at 7m. Trend diagonally left to the thread of *At the Earth's Core*.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

Fifty metres right of the fissure is an unmistakable organ-pipe formation of flowstone.

**** Bach** 20m. E2 5b (18.6.06)

An incredible feature; one of the finest alfresco flowstone formations in Britain (*yadi-yadi-ya...*). Climb the initial wall to a ledge. Pull up onto a hanging tongue of flowstone; a crescendo on the organ pipes leads to a crux move to gain the top. Well protected with medium nuts, cams, and threads. Either scramble up to belays on outcrops at the top of the scarp, or – better – belay and abseil from a pre-fixed rope.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Twelve metres right is a clean blue flowstone face below two rowan trees.

***Circamedia** 15m E5 6b (13.5.08)

Gain a good slot for cams under the blue face. Intricate climbing (*in-situ* thread – long clip!) on spaced pockets leads past a second *in-situ* thread eventually to large holds and easy climbing to the rowan tree: abseil off. Take note the wires are placement-specific and twisted.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist, after top-roping)

Fifty metres right of *Bach*, the cliff reduces to 5-6m in height and a chimney at the right-hand end of this section provides a quick way to the top of the scarp at Very Difficult standard.

Thirty metres left of the chimney is a buttress with a sheer grey wall demarcated by a distinctive crack on its left and a sharp leaning arête on its right.

Not the Nature Reserve 12m E1 5b (19.7.07)

Deceptive, but safe. Climb the crack past a steep and awkward section; then climb rightwards across the slab to finish.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

***Cartwheel to Crickhowell** 12m E5/6 5c/6a (19.7.07)

Terrifying. Start in the centre of the grey wall twist crack and arête. Smear diagonally rightwards onto a small triangular ledge close to the arête. Stretch left to a short calcite rail, and – using calcite flutings above – step delicately onto it. Move up and swing right to exit.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

***Alf Bridges** 10m E5 5c/6a (19.7.07)

A superb line, and a highly exposed solo. A ‘jump’ would land you in Llangattock Farm - a mile below. Follow the edge of the arête, useful hold on the right, until a series of layaway holds just left gain a finger-pocket and mammoth finishing jugs.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

Twenty metres left of the chimney is a short arête.

S'all Downhill from Now 6m E1 5a (19.7.07)

Layback up the right-hand side of the arête and exit up a scoop.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

Fifteen metres left of the chimney is a superb and smooth compact wall: the home for three highballs.

***Thirty-two years at Llangattock** 6m E2 5b (V0+) (19.7.07)

Start up the left-hand rib, make a trying layaway move to stand on the flat hold in the centre of the wall on the right, and exit on a stal in cut.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

*****Zulu Demente 11** 6m E3 6c (V7)

The all-essential Llangattock highball, soloed originally without mats. Inch up the left edge of a brown streak past a one-finger undercut to gain the flat hold with left hand. Make fierce moves straight up; then gain the stal in cut of the former route slightly left. (It is possible to come in to the flat hold from the left rib at V6 overall.)

FA: Martin Crocker (solo; both variations – the V6 first.)

Twelve metres left of the chimney is a groove.

Alternative Descent Difficult 6m (19.1.07)

Follow the groove, trending leftwards past an unpersuasively jammed flake.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

The remaining two morsels on these walls start from the top of a grass mound 6m left of the chimney.

V1 5m E1 5c (19.7.07)

Work straight up the sheer crinkly wall to a steep top-out.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

V0+ 5m HVS 5a/b

Reach a flake and exit past a tiny niche just under the grass slope.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

Right of the chimney crack-seamed grey walls extend as far as a dominant right-angled arête.

Tumble-Flyer 6m E3 5b (26.5.07)

Layback the right arête of the chimney and exit direct.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

The next route here takes the right-hand of two cracks in the slabby grey face right of the chimney.

On-Sight the Rock - with the Pat Littlejohn Rock Smock 12m E2 5b (15.10.06)

Take jugs right of the crack for 4m. Move left into the crack and make a few hard moves to a superb hold.

Follow the fine finger-crack above to the top. Tree belay 12m higher.

FA: Martin Crocker (on sight, unseconded)

***Café Wah** 12m E4 6b/c (26.5.07)

An arête delicacy on prime rock and with a high level of safety in this form. Start up the previous route, but step out right onto the face. Move up to a side-pull on the arête. Make a very sustained and thin sequence up the right-hand side of the arête to an at-first-glance holdless finishing move from a finger-pocket. The gear on the upper arête is a side-runner cluster in the '*Rock-Smock* crack to the left, placed from the obvious foot-ledge, and easily reached with a step left at the 'side-pull'.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Fifteen metres right of the chimney is a steep face undercut by a roof. The next route takes the shallow groove left of the roof.

***Storm in a D-Cup** 15m E2 5b (24.5.08)

Steady and technical with well-proportioned gear. Enter the groove awkwardly and follow it as it slips up slightly leftwards to a straightforward exit. Tree belay 15m higher.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Warm Up, or F... Up! 12m E4 6a (26.5.07)

Pull over the roof immediately left of a thin crack and step right. Continue with a bold move to jugs and a good wire placement. Trend leftwards into the centre of the face and finish up parallel cracks. Tree belay 15m higher.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Twenty metres right of the chimney is a clean grey 'pillar' that has a hawthorn tree overhanging its left-hand edge at the top.

Expletive Deleted 12m E4 6a (6.8.2006)

Take a hard thin crack in the sheer wall of the 'pillar' to reach a friendlier area (peg on left). Move up to the continuation of the crack in the headwall, and follow it strenuously (using the left arête at one point) before exiting using a tiny hawthorn on the right at the top. Tree belay 15m up the slope.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(1) Whitebeam Wall 12m E2 5b (24.5.08)

Clean and interesting; this is the better-than-it-looks orange wall left of the overhanging buttress (under a cliff-edge copse). Start under a huge hanging block in the buttress. Pull into and up a slight right-facing corner in the bulges. Haul round on flakes, move left onto the face just below a small whitebeam tree, and take cracks to the copse above: abseil off.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

(2) Le Dejuener sur l'Herbe 15m E2 5c (13.8.2006)

An impressive line on surprisingly good holds, up the overhanging buttress just left of the right-angled arête. Start from a grassy picnic platform. Swarm up left through the overhangs into a groove. Swing out left into a crack in the front of the little buttress and climb it to the top. Tree belay 12m up grassy slope.

FA: MJC (unseconded)

(3) *Mercaptans 12m E5 6a (26.5.07)

Excellent, despite modest looks. Low in the grade. Step up onto the ledge above the right-hand side of the platform. Work up past a rust-coloured patch of lichen over the right-hand side of the roof, and into a shallow groove (awkward-to-place wires). Make committing pulls straight up to large holds. Follow the good holds and solution slots to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(4) **Naturism 15m E4/5 5c (13.8.06)

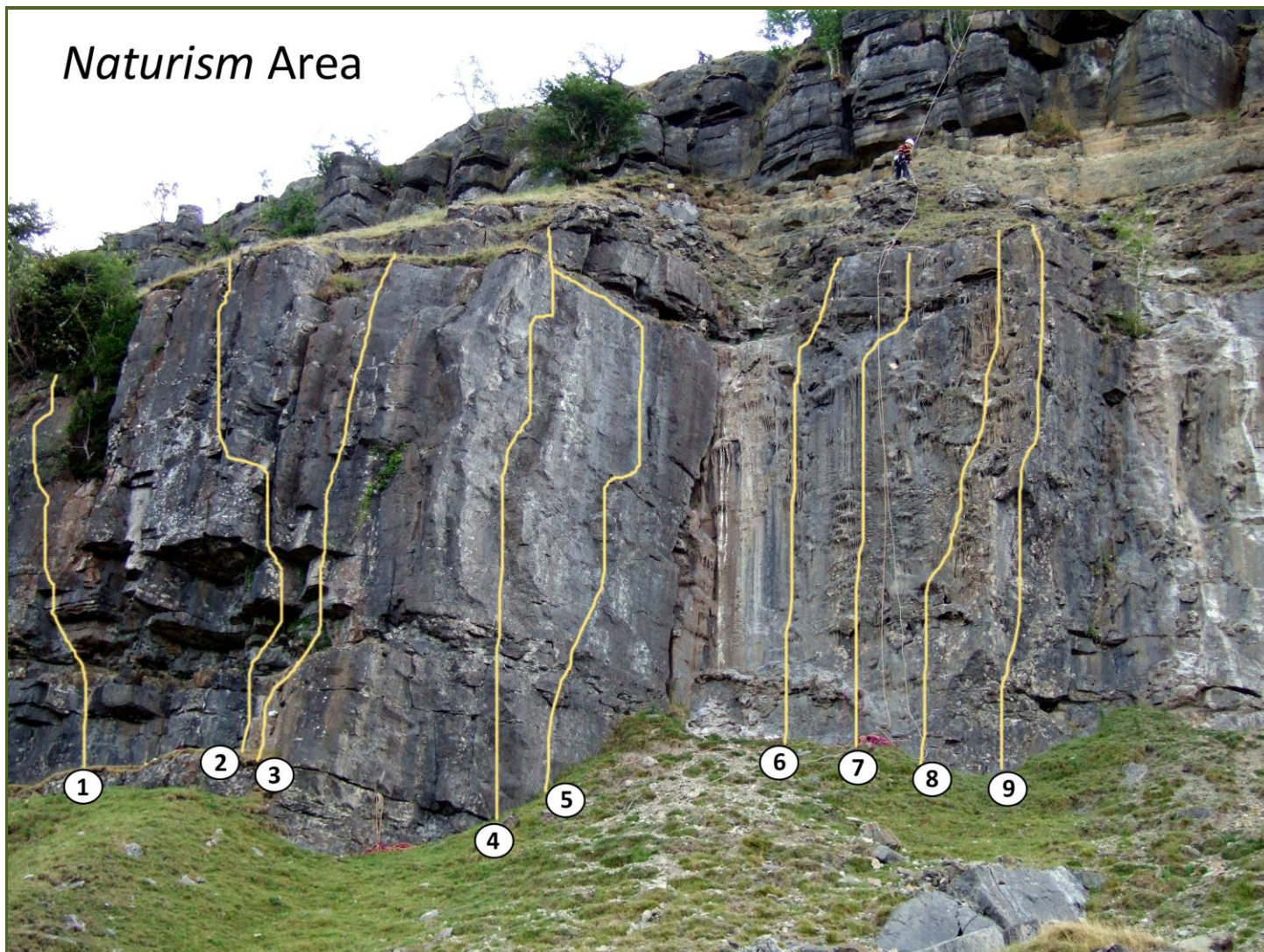
A superb natural line; this is the shallow groove in the right-hand side of the right-angled arête. The limited gear is well spaced, and panic is to be avoided. Enter the groove and follow it (peg) to a jug at half-height (wire low right in flake). Delicate moves using calcite holds up left lead to a hand-ledge 2m below the top – good wire on the right. Exit; belay in the rock-wall immediately, or walk up the grass to a good tree.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(5) Bare All 12m E3 5b (13.5.08)

Starting 3m left of the corner climb into a short left-facing groove. Reach a pedestal ledge (first gear), and mantel up. Follow the crack; and hand-traverse left to the exit of *Naturism*.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)



Stal Walls

A series of calcite-covered walls runs from the right-angled arête of *Naturism* to the far end of the cliff. The next three routes climb the well-hung flowstone sheet right of the right-angled arête of *Naturism*. All belay on a thread (*in-situ*) and nut belay 5m up the rubble slope above the wall. From here a sheep track leads across to the stable grass slope above *Naturism* and a good tree belay.

(6) **When Dinosaurs Die** 12m E1 5a/b (13.8.2006)

Climb the pocketed flowstone line 2m right of the corner on the left. From a good thread at its top, bear diagonally rightwards past a small ledge to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(7) ***Plied Piper** 12m E1 5a/b (13.8.2006)

Starting 3m right of the corner, mantel up onto a stuck-on boss, and proceed to the fine 'organ pipe'. Play the pipe, and then bear rightwards past a small ledge to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(8) *Threads *ad nauseam* 15m Very Severe 4c (13.8.2006)

Climb the right arête of the flowstone wall on its left-hand side. Various good thread runners.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(9) *Return of Bad Man 15m E2 5b (13.5.08)

Top-quality stal: climb the right-hand side of the arête on good sometimes hidden holds; small *in-situ* thread to start.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Fifty metres right of the arête of *Naturism* is an obvious white flowstone groove (*Organ Recital Area*).



(1) Phallus Talus 15m E2 5a/b (24.5.08)

Bizarre calcite formations. Start 4m left of the white flowstone groove. Climb up right, left of a hawthorn tree, to gain a thread under the cemented-on lump of calcite – first gear, bold to reach and place the thread. Heave over on the spike and climb more easily up and rightwards (thread), before stepping right to exit at the top of the white groove. Abseil off a pre-placed rope.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

(2) *Flammes de Pierre 12m Hard Very Severe 4c (24.5.08)

Lavish holds and copious protection in the white flowstone groove. Note the name and take precautions. Abseil off a pre-placed rope.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Right again is small blind cave at the base of the cliff. The next three routes start here. A pre-fixed rope is needed to abseil off.

(3) **Organ Recital 15m E3 5c (15.10.06)

Superb well-developed flowstone with jugs aplenty on the rib left of the cave. Step up onto a muddy ledge under a V-groove (peg). Swing into the line of layaways on the left (peg), and make insecure moves left and up to start the flowstone (*in-situ* thread out left). Rollick up the stal on spaced jugs (*in-situ* thread) to a straightforward exit.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(4) *Shit Pit Groove 18m E1 5b (15.10.06)

Step up onto the muddy ledge at the base of the groove. Bridge up the groove to its top using some nice flowstone knobbls on the right arête. Inch up to the grot above (peg), and step left to exit onto the slope.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

(5) **That's the Crime, Now the Punishment 25m E5 6a (15.10.06)

Excellent. Low in the grade, but with a few sketchy bits. Take a crack that rises from the cave and pull up right. Move left into a very shallow groove (peg) and teeter up to a sharp jug on the left wall. Continue up the groove (stainless steel peg) exiting pensively onto the ramp above. Step up onto a rounded ledge under the final wall (peg, then *in-situ* thread to right), and finish on smooth rock with a long reach. Exit easily past a Friend 3 placement.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***L for Letcher** 18m E4 6a (30.9.07)

An interesting groove-line; technical and solid with just enough gear (Rock 1s useful). Start 15m right of the cave under a small L-shaped roof. Climb up to gain an incipient crack that leads to the right-hand side of the roof. Enter the groove above and follow it, very sustained, to the top. Good nut belays; scramble out or do something else.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

The remaining climbs take the final stal wall, which has a small left-facing cave at its base, extreme right. The first two start under a flat wall at the left-hand end of the face.

***Cottage Loaf Groove** 18m E1 5a (30.9.07)

Take the rib that forms the left edge of the flat wall past the 'loaf' (sling) and enter a groove (thread). Follow the groove on good holds but with well-spaced gear to a step right to a good vertical crack and cam and chockstone belays.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***El Beso** 18m E3/4 5c (30.9.07)

A ballsy first wall; E4 if you can't reach to place a key wire! Climb up past an undercut pocket to reach a calcite rail (sling round 'stuck-on' on the left). Step right and move up (high wire) to large holds and then a ledge above. Follow the crack on the right (*in-situ* thread); then trend fairly easily left to the belay of *Cottage Loaf Groove*.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

The next two climbs share a common entry and belay at the top; they start 10m left of the cave on the extreme right.

***Stalwalker** 15m E2 5b (6.8.2006)

A fine pitch on mostly good holds; lots of protection can be arranged. It climbs the steepest line of stal, and passes a metre right of a ragged hole 6m up the cliff. Climb easily to stand on the left-hand end of a rightward-sloping calcite shelf. Continue straight up the stal pipes past a small flat ledge just below the top. From a larger grassy ledge just above, sidle right to a good nut belay. Walk off.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Safer for Sheep 18m E2 5b (6.8.2006)

Mostly straightforward, though the exit is steep and requires diligent climbing. Follow *Stalwalker* for 4m but hand-traverse the stal shelf rightwards to a pocket containing a delicate 'don't touch' calcite straw (*in-situ* thread). Climb up and diagonally right into a groove. Follow the left rib of the groove, and bear slightly right to exit onto the grassy ledge and nut belays.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

****Cut to the Rug** 18m E5 6a (6.8.2006)

A satisfying lead up the right-hand side of the wall which escalates in intensity. Start 4m left of the cave. Climb the initial wall and pull up left to a thin crack. Follow the crack to where it gets blanked out – peg and microwires. A nervy sequence above must be made before a peg can be clipped; then sustained moves lead straight to the top. Boulder belay 20m up the slope.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Craig y Castell

Plentiful deep stakes are in place on the cliff top between the left-hand end and *No Peg Route*.

Crackin Wall 18m E2 5b (1984)

A fine line, hard for the grade; add a star if you don't mind the wobbly finishing holds. It takes the impending crack left of the prow. Stays clean. Climb the left-hand side of the arête; then make a hard move leftwards (with feet above a roof) to reach the base of the crack. Power confidently up over a bulge and finish (shaking in some way) at a lonesome sapling. Tree belay 15m back.

****Old Kid on the Block** 18m E3 5c (2.10.2011)

One of the best pitches on the crag. This is the arête of the prow, which looks more like E5 (but has surprising 'E3 holds'). Climb the left-hand side of the arête to a bubbly break at 8m. Extend over a small roof to calcite jugs (peg), and then follow the spectacular left-hand edge of the arête to the top. Not hard for 5c, but pumpy. Tree belay 15m back.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Northern Exposure 15m E2 5b (1990s)

Eliminate but with a flowering top section on delicate flowstone. Climb the grotty broken wall midway between *Left Twin* and *Right Twin* past a bubbly break until the wall smooths out. Fix equalised wires in a horizontal break (if only to back up the peg above on the left), clip the peg, and pull up rightwards onto the flowstone wall. Take the wall direct (thin calcite thread possible) to the top. Stake & tree belay.

FA: L Davies

Note: *Storm* appears to be in a highly turbulent and dangerous condition.

Typhoon 20m E4 6a (16.10.2011)

The roof right of *Storm*; low in the grade. Climb a finger-crack right of *Storm* for 6m (as for *Tempest*), but move left under a bulge and climb steeply up leftwards to the roof (good cams possible). Clip a peg at the lip and then make an explosive move over to grab a jug. Step up and left; then climb the rectangular headwall on surprising holds (peg) to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Tempest E1 5b (1984)

Worthwhile, especially when you find that the detached-looking block in the roof is tied in (at least it was in 2011). The route stays clean. Climb a finger-crack right of *Storm*, continuing slightly rightwards up a groove to a small ledge under the overhang. Hang the block as much as your courage will allow, and then finish leftwards up the pleasant wall above.

Beware of Crocodiles in the Trees 18m E1 5a (5.93)

Well protected and stays clean. Starts at a distinct 5m-high vertical crack. Climb the crack to a break. Make an awkward move over the roof above and gain a hawthorn tree up to the right. Finish up cracks bearing leftwards to a large tree at the cliff edge.

***Tales of the Unexpected** 18m E2 5c (18.5.85)

A hard-for-5c roof-problem and a good line overall. Start 3m right of the 5m-high crack. Follow a shallow groove and swing left beneath the roof; wire in pocket. Move up (hard-to-clip peg on lip; good wire a few inches above), and make a fingery move straight through the roof. Continue up a pleasant groove to the top. Variation: **The Rain Man** 12 5b (8.93). A musty, manky variation over the roof. Start up the shallow groove but step right and surmount the roof (poor peg). Move left to the original route.

Histrionics 20m E3 5c (27.5.2012)

Breaks through the high square-cut roof left of the corner of *Duty Free*. Some interesting climbing, but with trouser-fillingly loose rock under the roof. Climb the unprotected arête left of *Duty Free* (probably *The Descendant*), and continue up a crack, trending right to a weakness in the roof. Pull round awkwardly; and climb an exciting crack-line to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***How to Stuff a Wild Bikini** is probably E3 6a; well-protected and it stays clean.

Right of *Rowan Route* is a fine arête above half-height with a muddy-orange groove to its right. *Stayin' Alive* follows the arête. The three routes beyond that climb up or adjacent to a smooth rectangular wall down and right of the arête.

***Stayin' Alive** 18m E4 5c/6a (20.5.2012)

Excellent bold climbing on the arête; start under a flowstone crack down and left slightly of the arête. Take the crack and pull up to the break. Follow deep flake cracks rightwards to a ledge under the arête. Using holds on the arête take the left-hand side (peg) until a hard layback move gains jugs and then footholds on the edge. Finish straight up (peg) to a handy rowan tree at the cliff top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Lime Juice** 18m E1 6a (1984)

Excellent and clean, and the testing bouldery start is above a bed of luxuriant moss. Spaced, off-set holds lead up a shallow groove in the centre of the wall to pockets and a mighty todger at 6m. Pull up to a break and then take a short groove onto a little grass ledge. Follow the thin crack in the headwall to a sloping exit mantel.

Variation: **Fresh** 18m E1 5b (1985) Take the disappearing crack in the right-hand rib of the wall to the break; step left for some *Lime Juice*.

Castell Main XXXX 18m E2 5b (1986)

Varied and interesting; protectable all the way (in spite of appearances!). Take plenty of slings for threads. Climb the shallow corner right of the rectangular wall, over a small roof; useful stal hold (sling) on the right wall. Trend rightwards above the corner to a wide break under a steep flowstone wall (thread). Climb straight up the flowstone (threads and nuts) passing a small tree just below the top.

(The first ascent stepped left above the corner towards *Lime Juice* and the back right onto flowstone; straightened out by: Martin Crocker, John Harwood 16.10.2011)

Right again is a high square arête undercut by two roofs and some flowstone.

***ITMA 18m E4 6a (20.5.2012)**

A fine section up the square arête, notwithstanding the serious flowstone climbing to get there. Start at a slim grey groove down and right of the arête (reportedly the start of *Fisher's Folly*). Climb the groove and mantel up left onto a narrow ledge. Take the flowstone above (thread) to gain fused-in spikes under the roofs. Jug-haul over the roof; then make a fingery pull-up onto the arête (peg). A technical move leads to good finishing-holds.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Sheep Whispers 15m E3 5c (27.5.2012)

The blunt arête just right of *The Hobbit*. Not over-protected and somewhat escapable higher up. Climb the bulging arête to larger holds. At a break swing right, and surmount an awkward bulge (good wire). Take the wall until forced to follow the groove of *The Hobbit* to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

***Castell Craig 15m E1 5b (1986)**

A very enjoyable climb that stays clean and can be very well protected. Climb up to a bulge (peg) and pull hard to reach better holds above. Bear rightwards to reach a finger-crack and follow the crack (peg) to large concretion holds. Top out without duress. Tree belay 30m back (spare rope required).

***I Should Smile 18m E3 5c (3.7.85)**

Not hard for the grade, and the climbing is great once past the dodgy zone at 7m. Start right of a block under the corner of *Red Mike*. Tenuously follow a line of weakness in a black flowstone wall to the break at 7m. Pull up onto a striated rib above, climbing straight up over a bulge onto a fine headwall with a tough move. Good holds lead to multiple trees at the top; abseil off.

The next three routes remain clean and readily on-sightable.

Road to Nowhere 18m E2 5c (1985)

The thin bulging crack right of *Diarrohoea Crack*; fingery and more of a battle than it looks. From a big block hold at 8m, finish as for *Crack of Gwent*.

***Crack of Gwent 18m E2 5b (1985)**

Climb the finger-crack strenuously to easier-angled ground. Take the short arête above to the right-hand end of a grass ledge hosting a few saplings. Swing right and follow a solid arête to the top.

Developing World 18m E4 6a (1988)

A sustained and fierce eliminate; surprisingly safe considering it once had a bolt runner. Make difficult moves to reasonable small holds over a bulge; here stretch left to place good nut runners in the crack of *Crack of Gwent*. A hard move straight up past the old bolt stub gains a thin break (wires); continue direct up the technical steep face to easier ground. Swing left to finish up *Crack of Gwent*.

Without bolt: Martin Crocker, John Harwood 27.5.2012

***Milk Tooth** 18m E4 6b (4.11.07)

An impressive pitch through the high overhang, marred only by a suspect cracked shield* that needs careful handling – or none at all. Start 5m right of *Crack of Gwent*. Climb a rightward-tending flake crack in order to stand up on a hanging tooth of rock currently defying the laws of physics. Move gingerly up past the shield above (*in-situ* thread) to gain good holds and a peg runner. Grope round for a finger-slot (Rock 7) and cut loose for a hand-ledge. Easier climbing leads to a large tree at the cliff edge. * *Note*: in October 2011 the cracked shield was found lying on the ground.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Twelve metres right of the grass ridge at the right-hand end of the main crag is a smooth rectangular wall. There are two routes here, each of which retreats from trees at 8m.

Elaine 7m E4 6a (4.11.07)

From a rounded undercling reach a sketchy crack in the left side of the wall, peg. Gain a hand-ledge above in a scoop and mantel up to the trees.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Lilian 7m E3 5c (4.11.07)

Climb straight up the right-centre of the wall (keeping just left of a shallow groove under a tree) to reach a break – peg, removed. Swing left to the mantel of the previous route.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

Footnote

Over the last ten years there has also been sporadic activity on other inland limestone traditional crags in South East Wales. Hopefully this output can be reported in a coherent update in a year's time or so.