



Climbing in the Brecon Beacons National Park

Part 2: Upland North of Merthyr Tydfil

Martin Crocker

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

Front Cover: *No Mercy*, first bolt-free ascent. Pic: John Harwood

Dedicated to Brian and Betty Vincent

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

Free Guidebook

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



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Print at Will

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

Copyright

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

Climbing in the Brecon Beacons National Park Guidebook Series

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

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

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

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

Grading

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

Bouldering and first ascent style

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

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

Ethics

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

Stuff to Take

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

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

Rescue

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

Access

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

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


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

Guidebook Disclaimer

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

BMC Participation Statement

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

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

Abbreviations Used

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

Part 2: Upland North of Merthyr Tydfil

Unlike the other parts in this series, this guidebook is to the well-established, if under-rated, semi-suburban limestone crags north of Merthyr. The climbing here perhaps even beckons a re-evaluation after being nudged from the ‘things to do in SE Wales’ list in by sandstone, bolts, and ‘what’s trending’ on our beloved social media.

Accessibility doesn’t guarantee an easy time mind you, and – if lead-climbing – many of the routes will feel serious. (Just check out the overuse of the ‘bold’ adjective in the Morlais section.) A fair alternative is top-roping, the basis for many an adventure-activity provider making these crags the first taste of climbing for thousands of youngsters. Incorporated here is an attempt at a full guide to Twynau Gwynion but merely an update to avuncular Morlais. Eyes in the back of your head are an asset hereabouts; Merthyr Tydfil’s unemployment rate is consistently one of the highest in Wales, so don’t leave valuables in your car or cars that are valuable.

Thanks to Peter Blackburn and John Harwood for their assistance.

Recent History

The time-honoured crags like Twynau Gwnion and Morlais have long histories where a range of the usual 20th c. players in the Gower and South East Wales area have potted, excelled, or even tested the waters to the point of controversy (read: bolts!). That history is set out elsewhere but it didn’t unveil the soul of the mysterious and under-rated Twynau Gwnion. Many locals visited the crag in the 1960s and 1970s, mostly to ‘train’, though only a small proportion of the routes were recorded. *Corrugation* showed the quality of the climbing here: bomb-solid, fluted limestone set in a magnificent position. Significantly, in its early guidebooks, the SWMC assigned only numerical grades to the ‘routes’, creating the perception that this was a lightweight bouldering crag only.

Neighbouring Baltic Quarry earned a footnote in the SWMC 1973 guidebook, but appeared too loose for most tastes. That didn’t deter Martin Crocker and Matt Ward from visiting the place in 1987, for some soloing and mini-routes. The same year Peter Blackburn took up residence in Pontsticill and started exploring his local crags, especially Twynau Gwynion. Here, together with colleagues and students of various outdoor-activity-providers, he climbed many existing and new lines, taking advantage of then being able to drive to the foot of the crag. In more recent years he spruced up Bay One, in the process staking out the cliff-top ‘with angle iron from old bunk beds’. And diehard Crocker returned to Baltic Quarry (and Tyle’ R-Bont Quarry), continuing where he’d left off 30 years earlier.

By the 90s Morlais had developed a somewhat schizophrenic personality. While chattering troops of outdoor students abseiled and scabbled up and down with joy, its bare walls (a hard trad bastion made so by Andy Sharp, Tony Penning, John Harwood, and Phil Thomas in the 80s) saw little footfall. Unlike many crags in SE Wales, Morlais had not succumbed to sport climbing populism, though it still was not completely free of bolts. One such foreign object seeded a fixation of Crocker’s: to rid *No Mercy* of its bolt runner, which he only managed to do on his third visit in 2010. Elsewhere on Morlais, together with trad cheerleader John Harwood he scrutinized the Upper Tier, while evergreen technician Andy Cummings solo-headpointed *Padawan* which was left with a whimsical bouldering grade. Crane your necks over *Padawan* and ponder.

TWYNAU GWYNION OS 0669 1019 – 0650 1105

Insufficient effort has been made in the past to extol the delights of one of SE Wales' tranquil gems. As tall as many post-90s-bolted sandstone crags, the outlook is hard to match, the climbing clean and – as an extra bonus – there's somewhere safe to park. Much of the crag is W- or NW-facing and it dries quickly. This section includes all the known routes.

There is a good range of climbing here: a mix of classic boulder problems from the 60s and 70s, some testing solos, and good protectable climbs in the S to VS grades. The quarry is used by outdoor- activity-providers, but most of the time it is pretty quiet. Chill.

Approach

The best place to park is along the Francis Terrace road in Pant in the vicinity of the Pant Cad Ivor Inn. (An alternative is to park in the extension to Tal-Yr-Efail adjacent to the crossroads with Francis Terrace.) From the crossroads walk uphill NE along Tal-Yr-Efail, continuing through a farmhouse (snarling man-eating sheepdogs) on a RoW to a Water Works. Bear left on the open hillside to intersect a major track coming from the SE. All the quarried bays are visible and accessible from this track, the first (Bay One) after a very short distance.

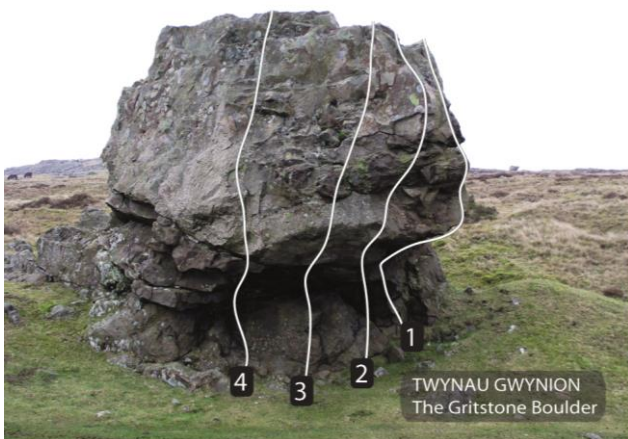
Ethic

Bouldering, soloing, top-roping, and trad leading. No bolts; bolting not permitted.

All the climbs are described from right to left as per the usual direction of approach.

The Gritstone Boulder OS 0672 1027

Twynau's 'secret' weapon; well not that secret since it is visible 100 metres away from the top of Bay One. The limestone visible in the quarries bays is overlain by a thin band of Twrch Sandstone which has been quarried to leave the shape of a boulder (we aren't fooled). It is 4 metres high and solid. Unfortunately the highest face is too easy-angled to be of interest but the arêtes at either end offer more muscular fare. The problems were first described on the South Wales Bouldering Wiki, where there is a plan too (www.swbg.co.uk).



On the right-hand (S) arête:

- 1 V3 (6a) The right-hand side of the arête, with a big rock-up left.
- 2 *V4 (6a) The arête direct – superb. Start from crouch and make a huge reach round the roof to jugs. Layback the rib.
- 3 V3 (6a) Start from crouch and use a large sloping undercut for right hand to reach jugs over the overhang: bound up these to the top.
- 4 V1 (5c) A shallow grey groove on slopers left of the arête.

On the left-hand (N) arête:

5 V1 (5b) The flat front of the arête via a pocket.

6 *V4 (6b) Start from crouch low left and – using the obvious crimp for left and sloping pinches for right – gain the high jug on the rib.

An exploration of the adjacent Twrch outcrops will only serve to disappoint, though one low boulder 100 metres to the SE might offer a few sit-start nasties for compact guys with killer core.



Bay One

This is the sunniest and often most sheltered of Twynau Gwynion's crags, its main patrons being outdoor groups. Anyone who just walks on by will be missing out. Multiple stakes provide belays at the cliff-top. If considering leading here, note that much of the climbing is poorly protected.

Near the right-hand end of the quarry is a buttress containing a white groove. Right of *White Groove* is a short wall above a half-height ledge.

1 V1 (5c) The right side of the wall from a layaway; escape right.

2 V1 (5c) The left side of the wall in line with a thin crack, without using big stuff to the left. (*Crock's top tip*: first check the crucial fingerhold in the ledge at the top is clean.)

3 ***White Rib** 8m HVS 5a (1960s)

The rib right of *White Groove* entered direct and without recourse to the blocks to the right. No gear.

4 ***White Groove** 8m HVS 4c (1960s)

The compact groove with a delicate move at 6 metres; some gear possibilities, but bold.

5 **Right-trending Crack** 8m VD (1960s)

Follow the right-trending crack (often muddy from abseilers' boots).

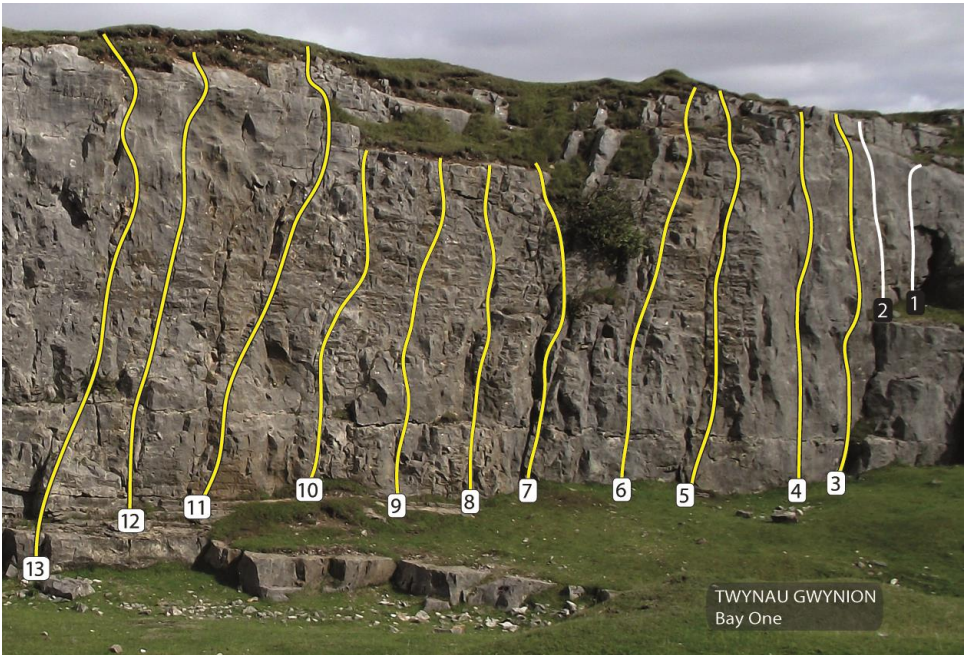
6 **Right-trending Slab** 8m VD (1960s)

Start below a hawthorn tree and take a rightward slabby line which eases with height.

7 **Hawthorn Crack** 8m D (1960s)

Start below and left of the hawthorn tree. Climb the obvious groove with a steep start.

8 **Groovling** 8m VD (1960s) Take the obvious well-protected crack to a decisive exit over the bulge.



9 Funnel Vision 8m S (1960s)

Start 3 metres right of a right-trending crack (Route 11) and climb the indifferent wall trending rightwards to a steeper finish.

10 Short Slab Left 8m HS 4a (1960s)

Mantel onto a ledge and take an indistinct seam/crack rightwards to the top.

The wall reaches its maximum height in its centre; the next three routes start adjacent to a small rock step in the grassy cliff-base. (There is a micro-hawthorn clinging to life 3 metres above.)

11 *Right-trending Crack 2m HS 4a (1960s)

Follow the crack rightwards on large holds to a good flake just below the top; step left to exit. Bring a nut-tool to clean out gear placements if leading.

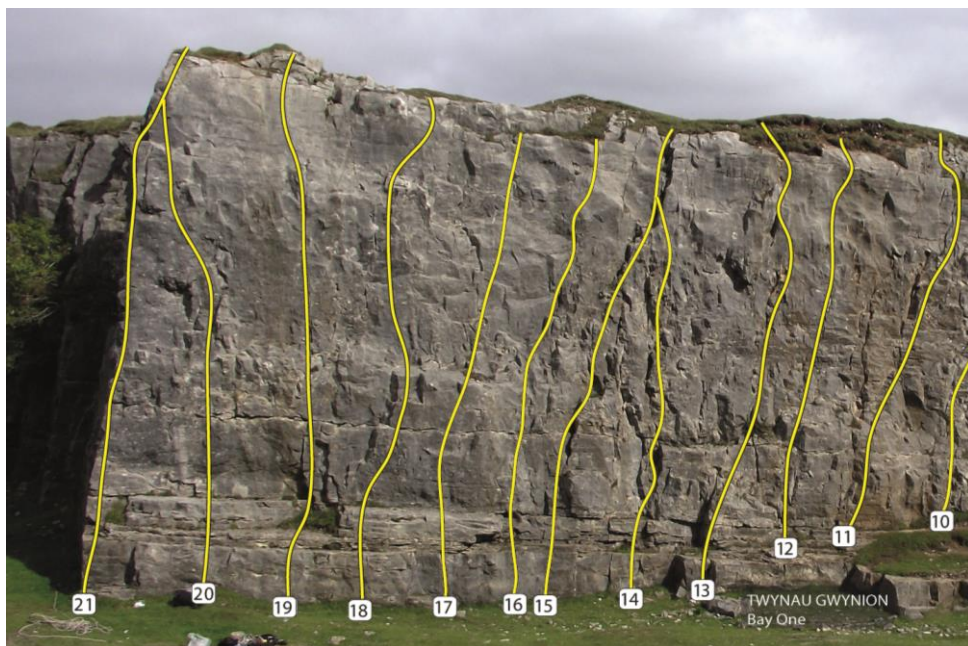
12 Lillith 9m E5 5c (5.9.2013)

The only gear is very low down, making this a solo. It takes a somewhat eliminate line up the scalloped face right of *White Wall*. Climb easily to the right of the hawthorn, and use widely spaced good holds before a long reach must be made up left for a sharp hidden fingerhold. Step up right into a scoop and exit with a terrifying sloping mantel.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

13 *White Wall 9m VS 4c (1960s)

The tallest face has a fairly obvious line. Climb past the hawthorn and take the line of large hollow-feeling scooped holds. Make a steep pull up and left to finish. Adequate protection.



14 **The Pilgrim** VS 4b 9m (1960s)

Start a metre right of a right-trending crack (Route 15) and follow a vague groove (eliminate, bold).

15 **Right-trending Crack 3** 9m VD (1960s)

Climb the crack to the top; mostly big holds.

16 **The Flanker** 9m S (1960s)

Step steeply up the right side of a shield of rock. Easier but interesting climbing leads via a vague groove to the top.

17 **The Shield** 9m HS 4a (1960s)

Climb directly up the middle of a steep shield of rock onto ledges. Continue with interest up the centre of the slab.

18 ***White Wall Left** 9m HS 4a (1960s)

Rather nice. Start 4 metres right of the arête. From a ledge follow a rightward-leading ramp onto a flat ledge at 4 metres. Place some decent small wires in thin cracks to the left; then move delicately up the face to large flake holds. Pull up right to exit.

19 ***Argh!** 9m E2 5c (1999)

Start 3 metres right of the arête. Climb straight up the thin cracks until a long reach and a balancy rock-up must be made onto the smooth final slab. (Avoid the large holds on *White Wall Left*.) There is a tight variation called *Urgh!* (E3 5c) up the concave wall immediately to the left.
FA Peter Blackburn, Emma Flaherty, Anna Shepherd

20 ***J'arrive** 9m HVS 4c (1999)

A steep line 2 metres right of the arête. Climb up ledges; then take the large sideholds above to step up onto a ledge on the arête. Adequate wire protection.

FA Peter Blackburn, Emma Flaherty, Anna Shepherd

21 ****Spare Rib** 9m E1 4c/5a (1960s/70s)

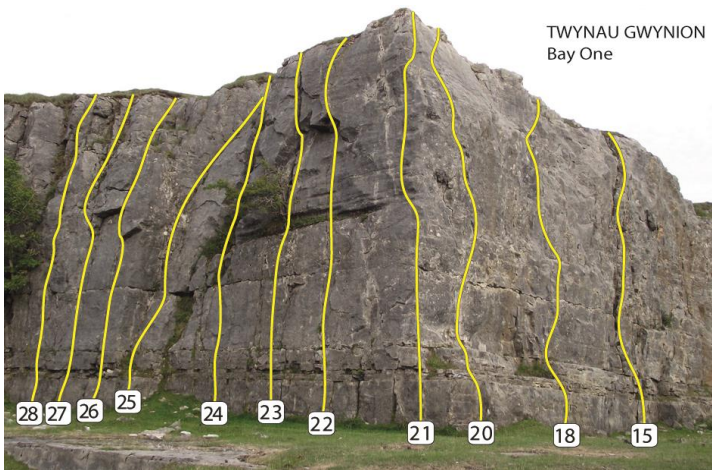
One of the best routes at Twynau which looks more like an E5 (it got 5c in an early guidebook)! The temptation to give it HVS or even VS should, ideally, be resisted. Climb the fine arête with technical moves between remarkable holds, mostly staying on its left side. No gear; very bold.

Round to the left of *Spare Rib* is a diminishing wall. The existing routes were cleaned up and new ones added in 2017, but care is still required with the rock, especially at the top.

22 ***Group-chatter Fills the Distance** 9m E1 5b (20.9.2013)

Take a clean vertical crack left of the arête onto a narrow ledge (just right of a hawthorn). Move up the hairline crack and make tricky moves over a small overhang to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)



TWYNAU GWYNIION
Bay One

23 **Hawthorn Crack**

9m VS 4c (1960s)

Climb a thin crack past a wobbly hold to the hawthorn tree. Follow the deep crack above to the top.

24 **Gully of Grass** 8m S (1960s)

Climb cracks onto a grass tongue and exit from the gully on rock. Caution required.

25 **Time-honoured Corner** 8m HS 4a (1960s)

Follow the right-facing corner to a slightly loose exit.

26 **Crack of Pant** 7m S (1960s)

The right-hand and better of the twin cracks leads over an overhang of jammed flakes. Care needed.

27 **Crack of Dowlais** 7m S 4a (1960s)

The protectable left-hand crack; the rock degenerates with height.

28 **Spring Roll** 8m S (24.6.2017)

'Not a classic' and care is needed with loose rock at the finish. Start right of the tree in the cliff and follow the broken crack directly.

FA Paul Tucker, Peter Blackburn

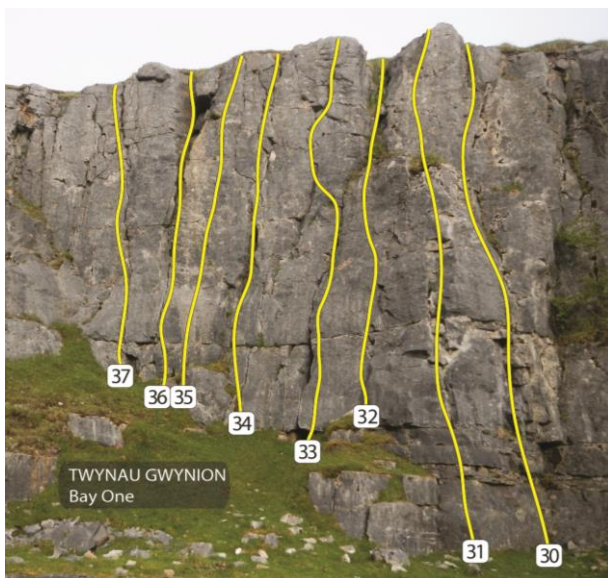
29 **Simba and Me** 8m VS 4c (24.6.2017)

A climb that will improve with traffic. Start in the corner and climb to the ledge. Taking care with loose rock, step up delicately to gain better holds in the groove. Continue more positively to the top.
FA Peter Blackburn, Paul Tucker

The remaining routes are on the final buttress, left of the tree in the cliff.

30 ***Coral's Bow** 8m HVS 5a (24.6.2017)

Start halfway between the recessed corner and the arête. Make steep moves up until a long reach reveals a positive hold allowing access to the fine groove. Continue up the interesting crack above.
FA Peter Blackburn, Paul Tucker



31 **Twin Peaks** 9m VS 4b

(24.6.2017)

Climb the arête directly to grassy ledges. Climb the short wall above in a good position.

FA Peter Blackburn, Paul Tucker

32 **Slab and Crack** 8m VD

(29.4.2017)

Start halfway between the crack and the arête on the right. Step up the crack on the right and then climb the centre of the slab to a ledge. Exit up a vegetated groove.
FA Peter Blackburn, Kelda Jones

33 ***Crack of Gold** 8m HS 4a

(29.4.2017)

Climb the well-protected crack. At half height step left and follow a steep crack to the top.

FA Peter Blackburn, Kelda Jones

34 ***Crack of Lightning** 9m HVS 4c (29.4.2017)

Ascend discontinuous cracks; then make bold moves up past an open groove, finishing with interest.
FA Peter Blackburn, Kelda Jones

35 **I'll Write Your Name** 9m E2 5c (24.6.2017)

Climb the wall right of a recess via a fingery sequence. The finish is steeper but on improving holds.
FA Paul Tucker, Peter Blackburn

36 ***Trumpet Crack** 8m VS 4b (29.4.2017)

Follow the crack and groove: more awkward than it looks.
FA Peter Blackburn, Kelda Jones

37 **Cream Crack** 8m HS 4a (29.4.2017)

Follow the steep left-hand crack directly on good holds.
FA Peter Blackburn, Kelda Jones



There are some passable bits of rock further left, the tallest part being a flat grey face terminated on its left by a knife-edged arête. On the little buttress right of the arête are two minor problems:

38 **Little Crack** 5m V0- (4c), yes, the crack; and 39 **Little Arête**: 5m V0- (4c), yes, the arête.

40 **Track ‘em, find ‘em, kill ‘em** 7m E3 5b (29.11.2014)

Only 4 metres of climbing, but it’s above a big drop. Scramble onto the half-height ledge; then layback the sharp arête to the top. Mind the rocking-block handhold, especially.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping until the holds stopped falling off)

A small tower on the left brings the worthwhile rock to a close.

41 **Face West** 6m VS 4b (29.11.2014)

Climb flake cracks in the right-hand rib of the tower. Not really a boulder problem.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

42 **Face North** 5m S (29.11.2014)

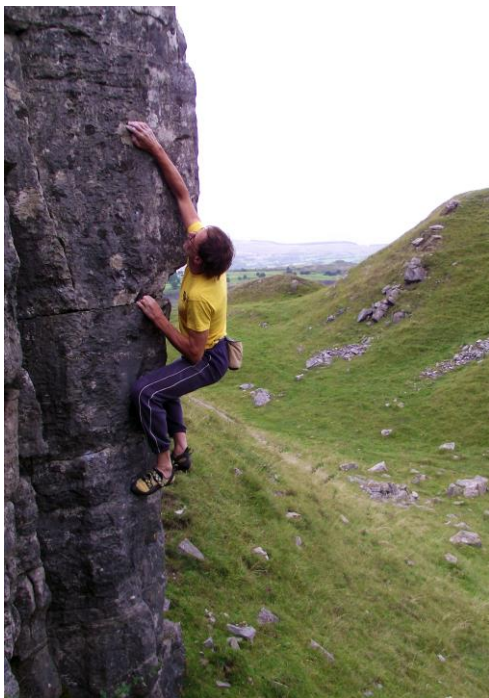
Take the left rib of the tower.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)



Bay One and a Half

A previously thwarted cliff, although there is some interesting highball action here.



At the right-hand end of the line of separate buttresses is a short pillar.

1 Pillar of Pedants 5m V2/3 (just 6a). From a good fingerhold gain another high on the arête. (*Pillar of Pedants* pic by Jonathan Crocker.)

2 It's a Flute 6m S (1960s)

Climb the next wall via the obvious and rather fetching fluting.

Considerable potential for easier climbing follows. At the left-hand end of the line of buttresses, immediately before a descent gully, are two wide cracks.

3 Slammin' 6m E1 5b (20.9.2013)

Climb the tower between the two cracks; the good holds expire at a small overlap (gear possible).

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

The crag changes orientation left of the descent gully and converts to a series of flat terraced walls.

The first wall left of the gully has two neat problems.

4 V3 (just 6a) Ignoring the square block in the grass, finger-pull up a slight line of pocketed rock. Mantel out.

5 V2 (5c) The sweet little line just left, from a sidepull for your right hand.

Ten metres left is a flat wall with a break but without any other meaningful holds (but when did that stop anyone).





Bay Two: Crack-seamed Wall

The first batch of routes is located on a NW-facing crack-seamed wall in the right-hand side of the quarry, popular with outdoor groups. Most are plentifully protected, cams being especially useful in the horizontal breaks. All in all this is a commendable venue for easier naturally protected climbs.

1 **Short Crack** 7m S 4a (1960s)

Climb the first crack; easier and well-protected once the crack is gained.

2 **Short Wall** 7m E1 5b (7.1988)

Solo direct up the bare wall between the first two cracks; there's a delicate move at half height.
FA Peter Blackburn (o-s solo)

3 **Black Crack** 9m S 4a (1960s)

The crack with a prominent small roof at 6 metres. Climb the crack and pull around the roof all pretty much on good holds.

4 ***Flowstone Wall** 10m VS 4c (1960s)

Climb straight up the narrow flowstone face on small positive holds, finishing immediately left of a small tree. Better protected than it looks.

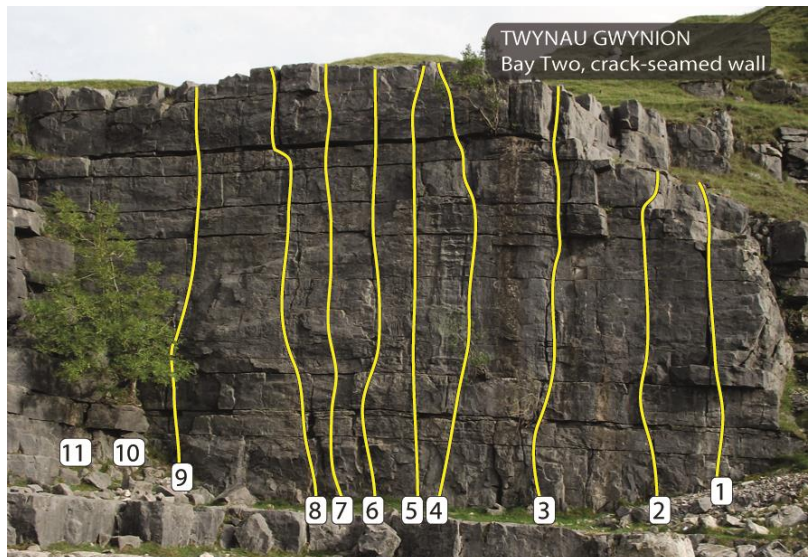
Next left are two thin cracks very close to each other.

5 **Two Half Quids**

10m VS 4c (1960s)
Pound up big holds into the crack, which is rather polished.
Exit with a mantel slightly right.

6 **Two Fingers** 10m VS 4c (1960s)

Make a hard move up the crack, and climb to the wide break at the top strenuously. Either exit direct (5a) or use a good finger-pocket on the right.



7 ***Pained Relief** 10m E1 5b (7.88)

Pretty squeezed, but worthwhile. Make bold moves directly over the difficult-to-protect compact bulge and follow an independent crack to the top.

FA Peter Blackburn, ANO

8 ***Cystitis Eat Your Heart Out** 10m VS 4c (1960s)

The best route on the face; hard for the grade. Gain a flat hold; then make a difficult reach up the crack to a stal hold. Finger-jam to breaks; then exit up the obvious short deep crack on the left.

9 **Sun's Going Down** 10m VS 4c (1960s)

Start right of an ash tree. Pull up into and follow the left-most crack in the wall to the top.

10 **Beyond the Horizon** 10m VS 5a (6.88)

From the ash tree climb the thin crack to the left of *Sun's Going Down*.

FA Peter Blackburn, ANO

11 **Behind the Sun S** (7.88) is a scramble up the descent corner and the short crack above.

FA Peter Blackburn, ANO

Bay 2: Corrugation Buttress

The most impressive piece of rock on site – keeping Twynau Gwynion in the reckoning. This is the unmistakable steep rectangular tower.

12 **Irrigation** 9m HVS 5b (14.3.2016)

The wall right of *Corrugation*. Climb the easy corner-crack onto a ledge behind a hawthorn.

Strenuously pull up to good breaks. Carry straight up and then swing left for an exposed mantel exit.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

13 ****Corrugation** 11m E1/E3 5b (1970s)

Started life as a '5b top-rope' and briefly became a nervy cult solo (E3). There is protection low down and high up, though a retro-metal-lump with long draped sling at half-height has violated the commitment. Climb the rannelled face just right of the arête of the block on horizontal ripples and scallops; from a good break near the top finish up the arête on the left.

14 ****Once Ruffled** 12m E3 5c (5.9.2013)

Climb the arête of the block mostly on its left-hand side. The good protection is in breaks quite a way beneath the balancy crux sequence.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo; possibly climbed before)

15 ***Frontal Crack** 12m Hard Severe 4b (1960s)

Take a groove just left of the arête; then follow an exposed thin crack rightwards up the headwall.

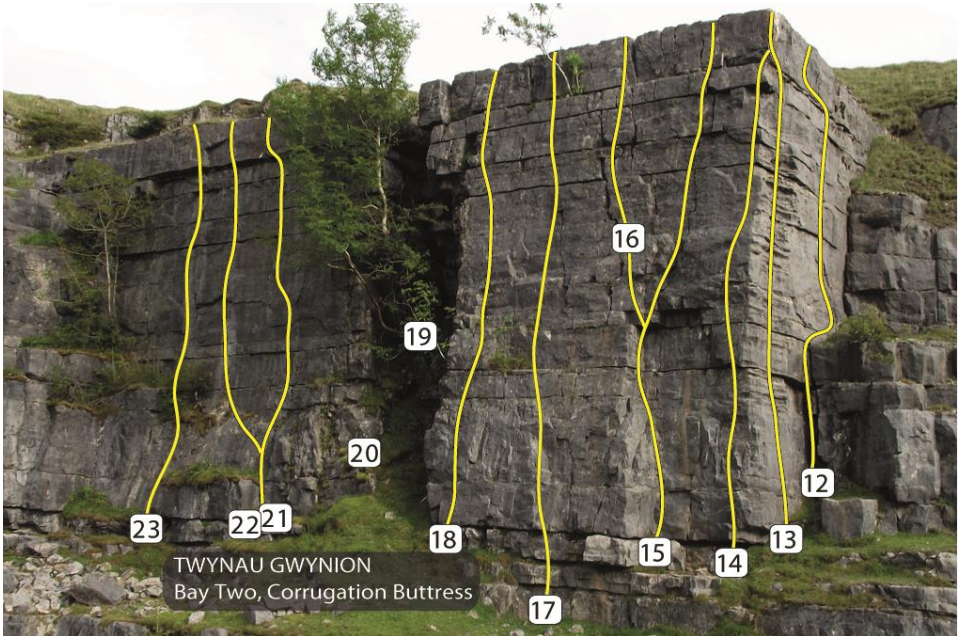
16 ***Frontal Wall** 12m Severe 4a (1960s)

Take a groove just left of the arête, and continue straight up the well-defined crack to the top.

17 **On the Border** HVS 4c (8.88)

Psychologically testing, especially if soloed, but there is gear to be found here and there. Follow discontinuous cracks boldly up the centre of the wall.

FA Peter Blackburn (solo)



18 Chimney Arête 12m Hard Severe 4a (1960s)

Not well protected. Climb the right-hand arête of the chimney to ledges. Continue up the grey face, using holds on the arête, to easier ground and the top

19 Hawthorn Chimney 8m Difficult (1960s)

Thrash through trees in the gully which splits the wall to gain access to a short chimney.

20 VSO 10m S (7.89)

Climb the obvious crackline up the left arête of *Hawthorn Chimney*.

FA Peter Blackburn, Mick Waplington

21 SWAPO 10m E2 5c (7.98)

Scramble up to the right-hand of the parallel cracks. Move up; then make a hard move off a sloper leftwards into the parallel crack. Climb the cracks more easily past a wide break to a mantel exit.

FA Peter Blackburn, Mick Waplington

22 Tweeters' Twaddle 10m E4 6a/b (5.9.2013)

The hairline crack which starts just right of a worn-out tree (orange patch near its base). Scramble to the crack. Fix gear as well as possible (opposing wires) and make a very thin move to start the crack. Continue with haste and improving holds to the wide break and a just-out-of-reach top!

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

23 UNESCO 10m HVS 5a (7.90)

Climb the next obvious crack line of the face to the left. Start just left of the worn-out tree near the base. Follow the crack trending right over the top overhang.

FA Peter Blackburn, Bob Keep

A series of short W-facing terraced walls extends leftwards to a right-angled arête. The following are boulder problems on a flat wall 8 metres right of the arête.

24 **Seamstress** V0 (5a/b) The blind vertical seam.

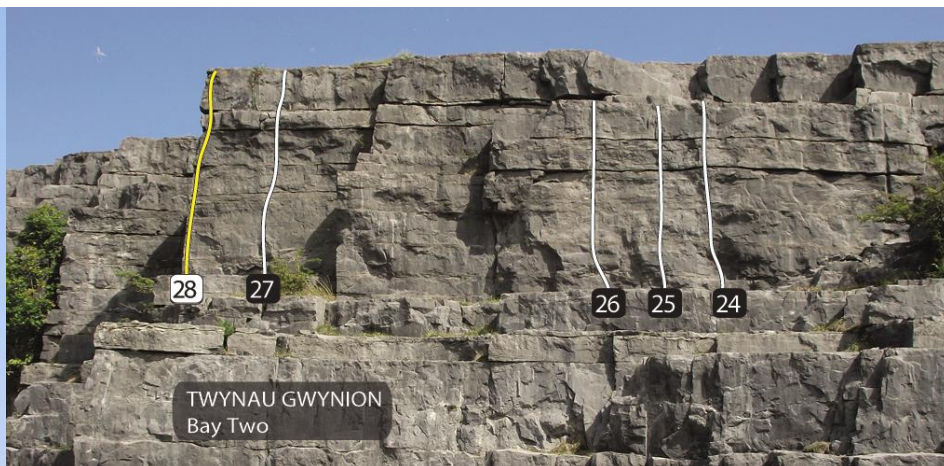
25 **Zit Zapper** V3 (6a) Immediately left of the seam, pinch a very delicate micro-nodule to reach better holds; top out.

26 **Crimpabulous** V2 (5c) Climb the wall from good but low crimps.

On the arête are:

27 **Bankers' Bonuses Bums' Up** V4 (6a) The centre of the steep face right of the arête. Reach a hollow-feeling fingerhold for the left hand and stretch for the break.

28 **Lowlife** E1 5a (V0) Climb the arête; deceiving, and risky in view of the huge drop!





Bay Three

There are two tiers in the right-hand half of the bay, which merge to form a 10-metre high wall on the left. The lower tier is a classical bouldering site above a flat grassy landing, but it is high enough to make any fall from near the top best avoided – with or without a mat.

1 **Painful Crack** 4m 4a Jam the obvious deep crack near the right-hand end of the wall; Painful, yes, if you've 'had enough of years of cramming your feet into tight boots'.

2 **Left Toes in Pocket** 4m V2 (6a) The wall just right of *Short Cleft* – without touching it! Better and V4 (6b) if you can't reach the small sharp hold from the ground.

3 **Short Cleft** 4m 4c The topless crack in the wall right of a pair of deeper cracks.



Rock Up Pic: Jonathan Crocker

4 ***The 96** 4m V3 (6a) Make balancy thin moves onto the obvious foothold on the wall just right of *Wide Crack*.

5 **Wide Crack** 4m 4a the right-hand of a pair of cracks.

6 **Grooves** 4m 4a the left-hand of the pair of cracks.

7 ***Rock Up** 4m V1 (5c) The eponymous move twixt *Grooves* and *Finger Line*.

8 **Finger Line** 5m V0+ (5a/b) The finger-crack using the pocket to its left.

9 **Five or Six or Four** 5m V1 (5b) The bare wall between *Finger Line* and *Thin Crack*; using the obvious (*Finger Line*) pocket for your right hand.

10 ***Thin Crack** 5.5m V1 (5b/c) Climb the crack: long reaches and with a bold move at the top. Possibly worth leading (HVS) in view of the good kit available.

11 **Further than you Think** 5.5m V2 (5c) Climb straight over the overlap between *Thin Crack* and *The Reach*; sustained. Possibly E2 as a mat-free solo.

12 ***The Reach** 5.5m V0 (5a) Extricate yourself from the pod using a big one. Possibly HVS as a mat-free solo.

13 **Llewelyn the Great** V3 (5c/6a) A right-to-left traverse of the face from *Painful Crack* to *The Reach*, with feet in the break and tiring arms towards the end. There and back anyone?



14 **The Fiction of Rock Facts** 10m E2 6a (5.9.2009)

Starting 1.5 metres right of *Pete's Finish*, crimp thinly up sketchy cracks (surprisingly good wire) to breaks. You can escape right onto a platform here; instead finish up the cracked arête.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

15 *Pete's Finish 10m E1 5c (17.5.87)

Climb flat ledges and the prominent crackline, finishing with a hard move. Well protected.

FA John Harwood

16 Pete's Thinnish 10m E4 5c (5.9.2009)

Very delicate; and only just adequately protected. Starting 2 metres left of *Pete's Finish* climb past a finger-pocket and mantel onto a narrow flat ledge. Take layaways up the bold face while entertaining a series of insecure rock-ups.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

17 Wrong Route 10m E3 6a (5.9.2009)

Harder than it looks, but with reasonable gear. Start 3 metres right of the topless right-facing corner. Reach an incipient crack over a bulge, and so gain a sloping hand-ledge. Continue past good slots with some concentrated smearing/swearing to a sticky finale.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

18 Friends in Need 10m E1 5b (17.5.87)

Climb the corner, and bear right above it into a crack. Follow the crack to the top.

FA John Harwood

19 Little Owl 10m VS 4c (12.5.87)

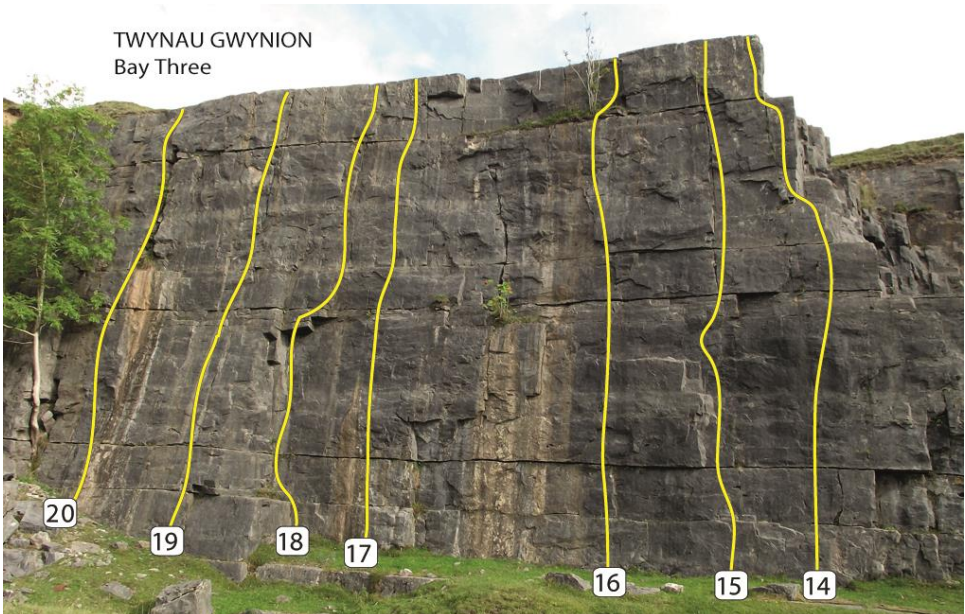
Climb the distinct crack.

FA John Harwood

20 Pleasurance 10m HS 4b (17.5.87)

No longer an obsolete noun; climb the wide crack.

FA John Harwood



Bay Four

There is a lot of good climbing in this bay, curiously unpublished before.

There is evidence that a hawk nests here from time to time, so you may find you need to reschedule your visit until outside the nesting season.

Near the right-hand (S) end of the bay is a triangular wall, with a pillar to its left. There is a stake belay in place above the wall.

1 **Bay 4 Fright** 8m HVS 4c (1970s)

Climb up immediately right of the low level overhang and go up the face above on positive fingerholds. No gear.

2 ***Tough at the Top** 10m HVS 5a (7.88)

The left-trending crack; boulder straight up to it over a bulge. Follow the crack to the top after an off-balance opening move.

FA Peter Blackburn, Mick Waplington

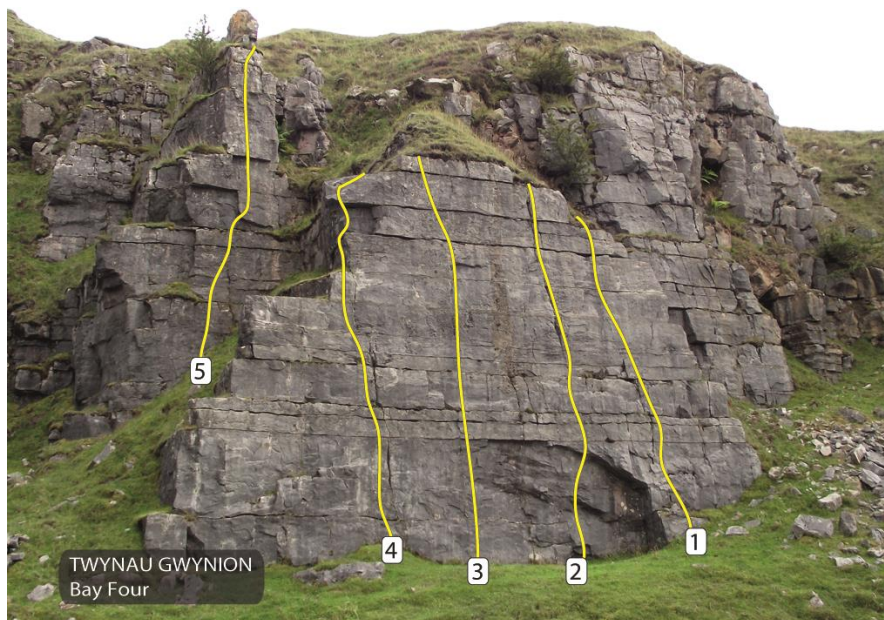
3 ***Apex** 10m E2 5b (6.1988)

The centre of the slab; which is quite well protected. Climb steeply to a thin short-lived crack with a pocket (wires and RPs). Make thin moves on crimps above to reach good breaks. Trend left, and mantel onto the left-hand arête to finish.

FA Andy Swann, Peter Blackburn

4 **Stepped Arête** 10m VD (1970s)

Climb a vague crack which leads onto the left-hand arête of the slab. Follow the stepped arête, finishing with an awkward mantel. Escapable.



To the left is a narrow isolated pillar.

5 **Log Grip** 9m E1 5a (8.4.2014)

Unusual, with spaced protection. Start in the grassy gully. Climb up past a narrow ledge to a thin break under the narrow pillar, wire possible. Hands to either side, monkey dynamically up the pillar. FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Across a boulder-field to the left is a fine 6-metre high wall, facing SW, that sports two cracks (which would be fun to lead). This provides a bunch of solos/boulder problems. Fortunately the hard parts are the starts, the ground is flat, and – besides – all have been soloed on-sight matless so they can't be too bad. (A tree and cams on the ledge above provide good belays if required.)

6 **Purulent Paté** 7m E1 5a (8.4.2014)

The wall on the right. Climb up in line with a shallow borehole to a flake at a wide break. Reach up and mantel over the capping stratum. Walk off right. FA Martin Crocker (solo)

7 5m V0- (4c) The right-trending crack with an awkward exit.

Next left is a slight corner – the descent route (VD).

8 6m V3 (6a) The wall left of the descent with a testing rock-up to start.

9 6m V3 (6a/b) The deceptive line of weakness with a powerful first move.

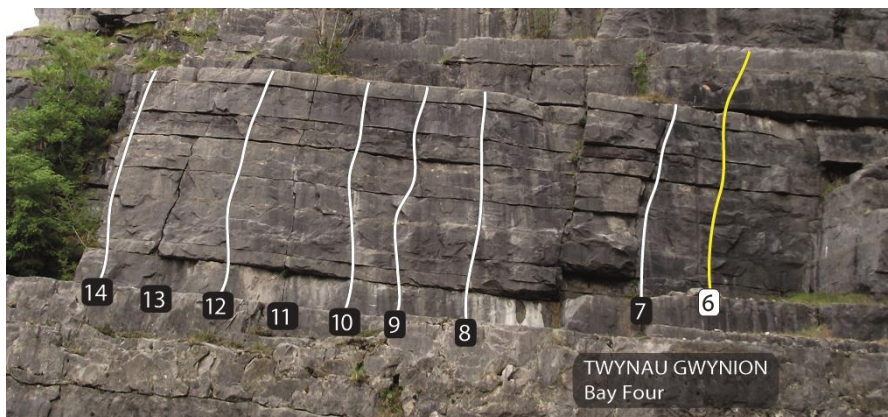
10 6m V2/3 (6a) A long reach intros the eliminate wall right of the right-hand crack.

11 6m V0+ (5b) A difficult move into the finger-crack; then plain sailing.

12 6m V4 (6a/b) Make very thin moves on edges to start the wall between the cracks.

13 6m Severe (4a) The left-hand finger-crack.

14 6m V0- (4c) The spooky left-hand arête, best taken on its right-hand side (for obvious reasons).



Immediately left of the '6-metre wall' is a NW-facing slab, the tallest cliff at Twynau Gwynion.

15 **Sunburn in April 18m E1 5b (1970s/14.4.2014)

Mostly well protected climbing up the thin crack in the NW-facing slab. Climb a grotty groove to a tree on the left. Step right below the slab and climb it via good breaks (cams) to the thin crack.

Follow the crack to a steep mantel exit onto a flat ledge. Belay here; then scramble to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (roped solo), but probably done before especially since a metal rod was found hammered into the belay ledge.

Left of *Sunburn*' is an isolated slab, also NW-facing, which is best reached by a scramble from the cliff-top.

16 Places that Appear in Dreams 7m E3 6a (8.4.2014)

Avoid the distracting holds on the right for full engagement. Start in the centre of the slab. Climb up direct (right hand and RPs in open slot), and pull hard on small holds up a vertical crack (peg) before swinging out left on a break. A final hard crank gains the top.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)



At the N end of the quarry is a SW-facing wall with a corner and arête on its right. This is the home for two old routes and no doubt some others left unrecorded.

17 Arquette 15m VS 4a (1960s/14.4.2014)

Trickier than it looks and the protection appears spaced. Climb the arête on its right-hand side, and step left at its top onto grass ledges. Stake above.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo), but possibly climbed before

18 Groupies' Corner 15m D (1960s)

Good when dry. Climb the corner – a drainage line. Stake belay on grass ledges above.

The steep left-hand wall of the corner looks classic ‘Morlais’: bare steps between flat or sloping ledges without much gear; but at least a break at 7 metres provides good cam protection on the routes. Otherwise consider them solos or top-ropes.

19 The Block 15m 4c Very Severe (1960s)

From 3 metres left of the corner climb ledges leftwards to a very slender sapling (nicer to reach IT direct off a finger-jug). Swing left along a flake crack and mantel onto a ledge. Reach the break above and move up the weakness to a bold mantel onto a ledge. Bear right and then back left to the grass ledges.

20 Spleen Fury Returns 15m E2 5c (14.4.2014)

Start 4 metres right of the obvious crack (*Balance*). The hard start is unprotected. Make an extensive stretch to reach the right-hand end of a flat but smooth ledge, and get onto it with difficulty. From the break bear leftwards up a groove to reach a small holly tree. Scramble to the top.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

21 Sex and Drugs and the Mile End Wall 15m E2 5c (14.4.2014)

A steep route which reaches the holly tree by climbing the roof below it. Start a metre right of *Balance*. Take weak flakes to the good break under the little roof. Gain a crimp above and – using the arête on the left – reach to a hand-ledge. Swing right to the tree and scramble out.
FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)



22 Balance 15m HVS 4c (1960s)

Climb the crack which leads up to the left-hand end of the little roof under the holly tree; first gear. Finish up an easier groove to grass ledges.

23 **Out of Balance** 15m E2 5a/b (14.4.2014)

Unprotected. Start 4 metres left of *Balance* on a rock platform. Gain a finger-jug up and left of a small roof, and stretch up right for a tall rounded vertical layback edge. Use the edge to get hands on a narrow ledge. Mantel nervously rightwards to the exit of *Balance*.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

24 **Valet** 15m Mod (1960s)

Take the shattered crackline towards the left-hand end of the wall; step left onto ledges and then finish easily rightwards up a ramp.

25 V0- (4c) The steep wall a few metres left of *Valet*, via a tiny bottomless groove.

Bay Five

This bay is situated at a similar level to Bay Four, and just to its N. A fluted pillar snuggled in the back of the bay rescues this part of the quarried escarpment from obscurity.

Right of the pillar are some smaller walls either side of a chimney.

1 **14th April** 6m E2 6a (14.4.2014)

Keeping feet out of the chimney undercut powerfully up the rib to its right to a handrail. Strenuous moves above lead to an exit on the arête slightly left.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

There is a 4c problem up the rib left of the chimney.

2 **Fluting Fantastique** 7m E1 5a (14.4.2014)

Would be worth a star out of the shadows. Climb the right arête of the pillar to the tree at the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

3 **His Royal Cuteness** 6m E1 5b (14.4.2014)

Start as for *Fluting Fantastique* but climb diagonally leftwards into a crack (contouring above the rising slope). Reach up left for a sidehold in the left side of a shallow flute and climb the flute to pull out on a small tree. A non-route.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)



Bay Lost Count

The bay furthest N, just above the main track. There is a quite impressive sharp arête high on its left.

1 **Alien Heartbeat** 8m E1 5b (29.11.2014)

Make a hard move up the tip of the arête; then follow it to a short exit corner. A good wire placement makes roping up well worthwhile, especially considering the potential to pull on a loose hold at the top and chuck your life away.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

TAF FECHAN

Popular in the 60s and 70s, the climbing in the quarry now seems beyond hope. Neglected and derelict, the quarry was filled with ponies in 2016, its picnic-quality grass bottom quickly being churned into mud and compost. I haven't been back since; maybe it has improved. For more information on the climbs here, please therefore refer to the SWMC guidebook.

BALTIC QUARRY and TYLE' R-BONT QUARRY

Baltic Quarry and Tyle' r- Bont Quarry lie high on the hillside overlooking Pontsticill. Recent high quality developments on the higher Main Face of Baltic Quarry complement those of the 80s on the shorter walls in the Northern Bay and 'Southern Bay' (which are mostly solos – possibly now to be treated as 'highballs').

The quarries are *not* situated on Access Land (the boundary of which commences above the fence at the cliff-top) and ownership is unknown. No access problems have been noted, but do take heed of the potential for nesting birds of prey in the Main Face (see below). Both quarries have been designated an SSSI because of their exposures of Lower Carboniferous limestones and fossil soils.



Approach

1. From Twynau Gwynion to the S, though this is rather long-winded (especially if carrying a bouldering mat!).
2. From the road between Pant and Pontsticill Reservoir. It is only a 400-metre walk along a RoW from the Dŵr Cymru Welsh Water (DCWW) Water Works S of the dam to the quarry; the problem is finding somewhere suitable and secure to park. One option – which has not met with disfavour to date – is to park in the turn-off to the Water Works itself. If you choose to do this, ensure you station your vehicle close to the road and without causing any obstruction. The other option is to park at the Pontsticill Reservoir dam: less secure given the Pontsticill area is a mecca for the break-in brigade.

The RoW starts opposite the Water Works and rises NE towards the Main Quarry. Two hundred metres after passing through a tunnel under the Brecon Mountain Railway, break right away from the path to intersect the crag between the Main Quarry and the Northern Bay.

Ethic

Soloing, highballing, trad, sport. Bolting of new routes acceptable.

Main Face OS 0656 1176

Mostly a perished wasteland but with two splendid walls. Despite the 'bolting permitted' local policy, there are only two sport routes here. The best routes have been developed trad.

Access. There is a bird of prey's nest, possibly a raven's or Peregrine's, just left of *Dizzy and Rascal*. The birds no doubt return each nesting season, so please avoid the Main Face during the period mid-Feb to 31 July inclusive.

Bolts

The bolts here are unrated industrial 12mm sleeve anchors with fixe alloy hangers; it is your decision and yours alone if you choose to use them. **No fixed gear is infallible.**

At the left-hand end of the quarry is a leaning black wall featuring an ace crackline and a couple of sport routes; unfortunately it seeps after any substantial rainfall. Scramble to grassy ledges under the routes – various nut belays. **Please note the bolt belay for routes 1 and 2 is not *in-situ*; a drill battery ran down the hill and dismembered. Hopefully COVID will ease and allow its fixing.**

1 **Lair of the She Wolf** 12m F6c (23.10.2016)

Scramble to the highest grass ledge (possible belay here next to a good nut slot). Step up right and easily clip the first bolt. Continue slightly rightwards on small holds (two more bolts) to a break and a two-bolt belay shared with *Dirty Girl*.

FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

2 ***Dirty Girl** 15m E4 5c/6a (19.10.2015)

Very sustained climbing up the left-hand crack. Start under a small roof. Pull past the left-hand side of the roof to a jug. Move up, stretch to clip the peg and gain the crack. Follow the crack, intricate and well-protected, before a thin less-well protected section (a few micros and small cam go in) must be followed to a break and a two-bolt belay just above. Abseil off.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

Sport *project*: the wall between routes 2 and 3 looks good, and doable at about F7b; but wait for a dry spell outside the nesting season.

3 ****Bad Boy** 18m E5 6a/b (19.10.2015)

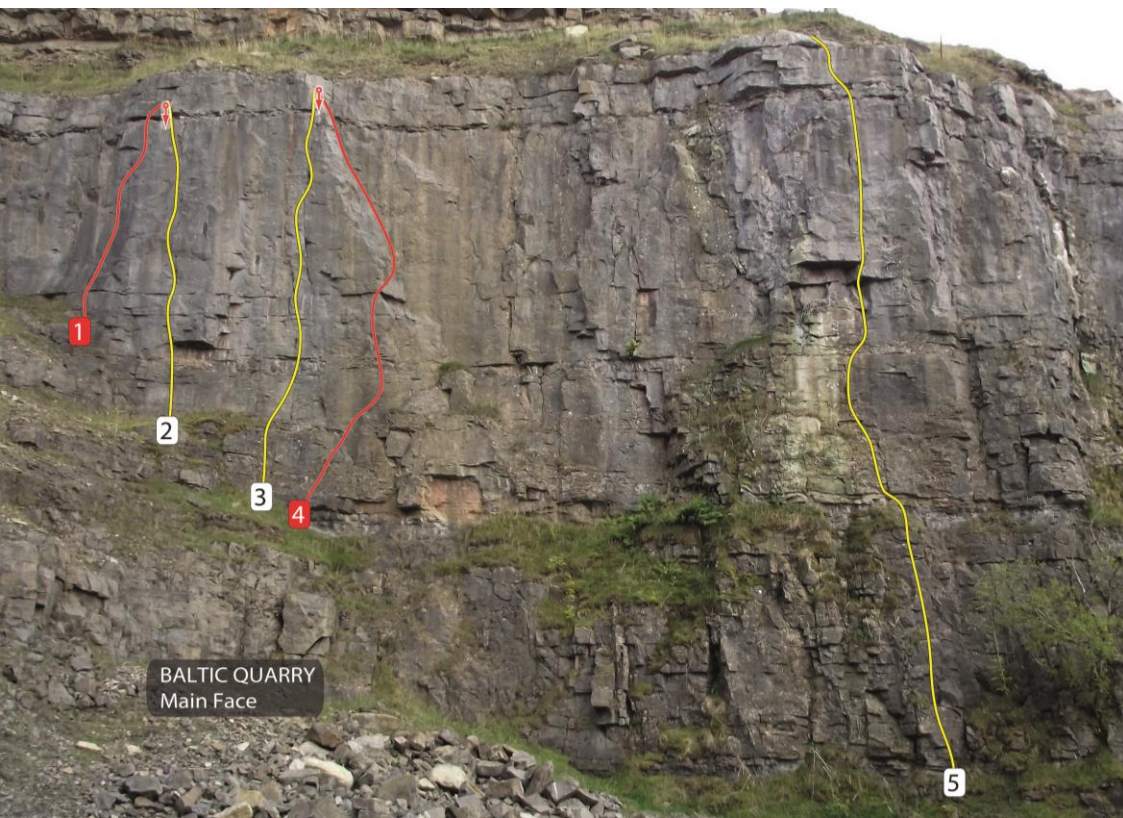
Stunning: the right-hand crack, into which gear can be laced with gay abandon. Start from nut/cam belays under the crack. Use the mossy ledge above and left to traverse right into the crack (tough move starts it). Big holds above lure one to where all that remains is a tips' crack. Make hard moves up the crack (jug on right arête helps), continuing dynamically to the break: two-bolt belay above. FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

4 ***No Hope for the Jungle** 18m F6a (23.10.2016)

The major left-slanting groove in the wall. Start as for *Bad Boy*. From the nut belay climb diagonally right and mantel onto a ledge. Take the juggy rib above until a delicate step right into the groove must be made. Follow the groove which ends in a thin move. Two-bolt belay shared with *Bad Boy*. FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

5 ****Dizzy and Rascal** 28m E5 6b (29.9.2014)

A quarry grandee: its leading route is an impressive line up the centre of the tower. The gear is OK but peg dependency is quite high. Start 3 metres down and left of a small ash tree in a mossy bay. Climb flat ledges past a cam placement at 7 metres (first gear) to a grass ledge. Gain a second grass ledge via a snappy orange wall. Take a crack, swing right onto the wall (peg) and pull up to roofs under the main tower. Stretch around for decent flake holds and make sustained moves (peg) to a rest under a leaning section. Make powerful moves up the wall (peg, plus long reach-to-place obvious Rock 1 in thin vertical crack) to jug-lines. Gain the juggy top edge; then make a fantastic exposed mantel out to the left to exit on a solid little slab. Fencepost belay 18 metres back. FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood (The route was first cleaned in 1987, but 'forgotten about'.)



Northern Bay OS 0647 1158

The right-hand end of the Main Face morphs into a succession of lower walls. There are two prominent arêtes hereabouts and a vestigial one extreme left.

1 Miniscule 6m VS 5b (28.2.87)

The vestigial arête started on the left.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

2 Political Correctness Gone Mad 12m HVS 4c (1.11.2014)

Climb the slight left-trending groove left of *Taff's Not Well* to a good crack (runner!). Use the two small rowan trees to exit right to the top of the arête.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

3 *Taff's Not Well 12m HVS 4c (28.2.87)

Climb the tall, unprotected left-hand arête; delicate in the middle.

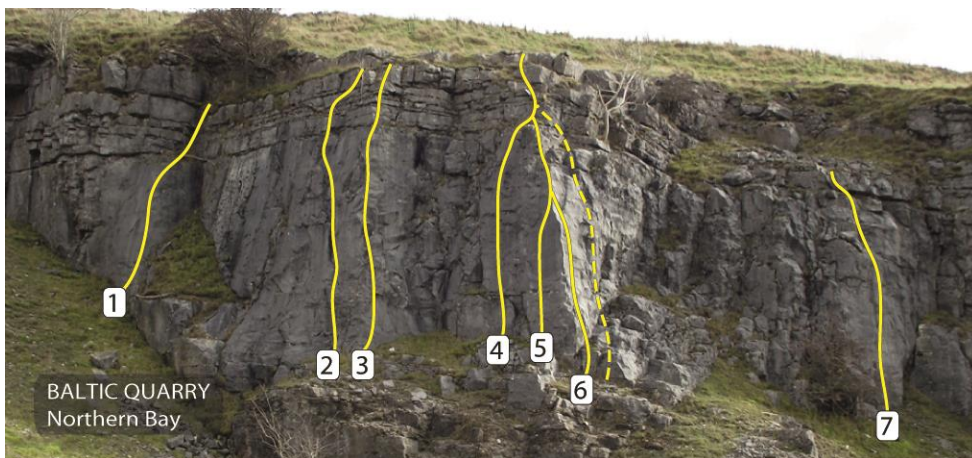
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

The rock around the right-hand arête is intensively developed – without a runner in sight.

4 Out in the Distance 10m E1 5a (1.11.2014)

Climb the dark wall two metres left of the arête over a small overlap. Unprotected.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)



5 *Leans to the Left 10m E1 5a (1.11.2014)

Layback the left side of the arête (possibly better than *Rediscovery*).

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

6 *Rediscovery 10m E1 5a (28.2.87)

Follow the arête on its right-hand side; unprotected but fine rock.

Variation: **Reservoir Bogs** E2 5b (1.11.2014); take the seam just right of the arête.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

7 **Andy Borehole** 6m VS 5a (28.2.87)

Pop up the tall borehole in the smooth wall right of *Rediscovery*.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

8 **Holiday Fever** 9m E1 5b (5.6.1988)

Start 9 metres right of *Andy Borehole*. Climb a thin crackline to a sapling.

FA Adrian Gostick (solo)

Between *Andy Borehole* and Arch Face is a cheerlessly uninspiring wall. The first of the two routes here climbs a sky-high borehole right of a break in the cliff (large hawthorns above at the cliff-edge).



9 ***Monkey on my Back** 8m E4/5 6a (20.9.2014)

An engaging romp up the tall borehole. Using the arête for left hand and borehole for right, ape up past a crux move at a thin break (wire?) near the top. Scramble out. E3/4 as a lead?

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

10 **Coercion** 10m E3 5c (20.9.2014)

Takes the wall and right-facing corner left of the cutting. Start at an inconveniently large block under the line. Make tenuous moves up the blue face to large holds. Pull into the corner and exit with care near a pernicious hawthorn at the cliff-edge.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Arch Face

This is the steep wall containing a small rock arch where the sloping spoil bank opposite comes suffocatingly close to the cliff to form a cutting. It would be highball with a couple of mats.

11 **Exam Blues** 9m HVS 5b (5.6.88)

Climb the wall and crack 4 metres left of the arch.

FA Adrian Gostick (solo)

12 **Tempress** 9m VS 5a (5.6.88)

The thin crack 2 metres left of the arch.

FA Adrian Gostick (solo)

13 ***The Arch** 9m E1 6b (15.3.87)

Pull through the arch with difficulty, and trend rightwards to finish.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

14 **Slagged Off** 9m E1 6b (15.3.87)

Climb the steep wall and square-cut corner right of *The Arch* to a tree at the cliff-top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

15 Lonesome Pine 9m E3 6a (15.3.87)

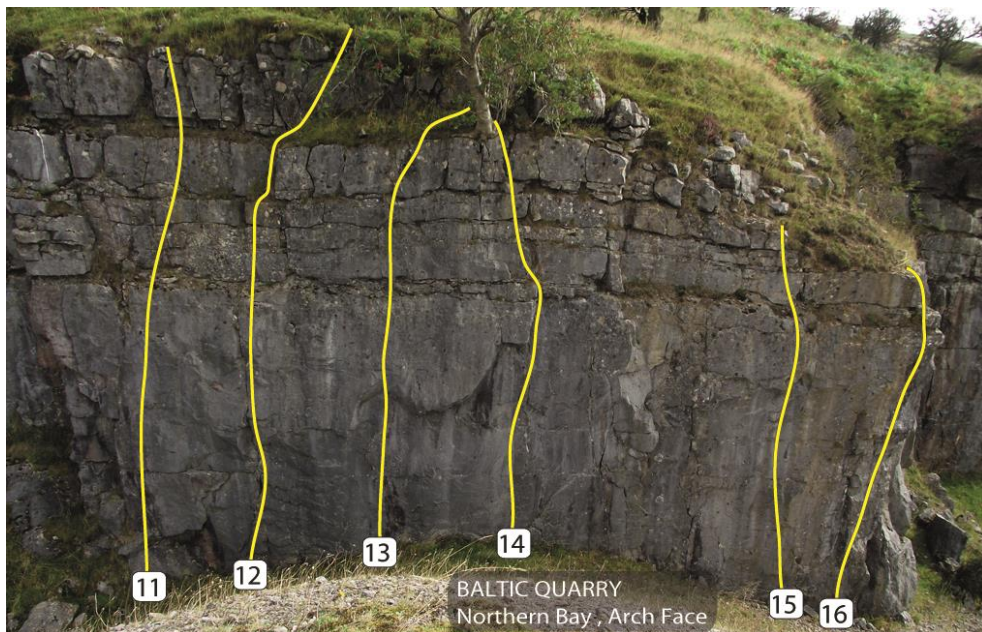
Climb the unprotected impending wall left of the arête of *Slight Alterations*.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

16 *Slight Alterations 9m E3 6a (15.3.87)

The arête on the right: follow calcite cracks to a dynamic exit. Protectable.

FA Roy Thomas, Martin Crocker, Graham Royle



To the right of Arch Face and beyond the confines of the cutting is a groove-seamed wall.

17 *Not so Plain Jane 8m E2 5a/b (5.6.88)

Unprotected but on positive holds and good rock. Climb the clean groove 3 metres right of the overhanging arête (and right of a broken unclimbed groove).

FA Adrian Gostick (solo)

18 *Health Inspector '87 8m E5 6a (15.3.87)

Balance up the right-hand side of the cool arête right between the grooves of neighbouring routes. A decent RP placement at 5 metres makes leading the biz.

FA Martin Crocker, Roy Thomas, Graham Royle

19 *Stealth Inspector 2014 8m E5 6a/b (17.9.2014)

The blank groove and arête next right: very bold. Move up direct and enter the groove proper with a very hard move. Layback and pinch the short hanging arête above with a long stretch to finish.

FA Martin Crocker (solo above a mat)

20 **Bitter & Chips** 8m E1 5a (17.9.2014)

Take the final groove, eventually using large holds on the right to exit (with a quick pull on a runt of a hawthorn). Unprotected.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

At the right-hand end of the wall is a dirty flowstone corner; its left wall has a white streak.

21 **White as White** 8m E1 5a (17.9.2014)

Climb the white streak via a ledge (wire placement) and a scoop. Pull out on a slender rowan tree.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

The leaning N-facing wall (deep unclimbed crack here) is tackled by the following route.

22 **Sanitize** 12m E2 6a (10.3.87)

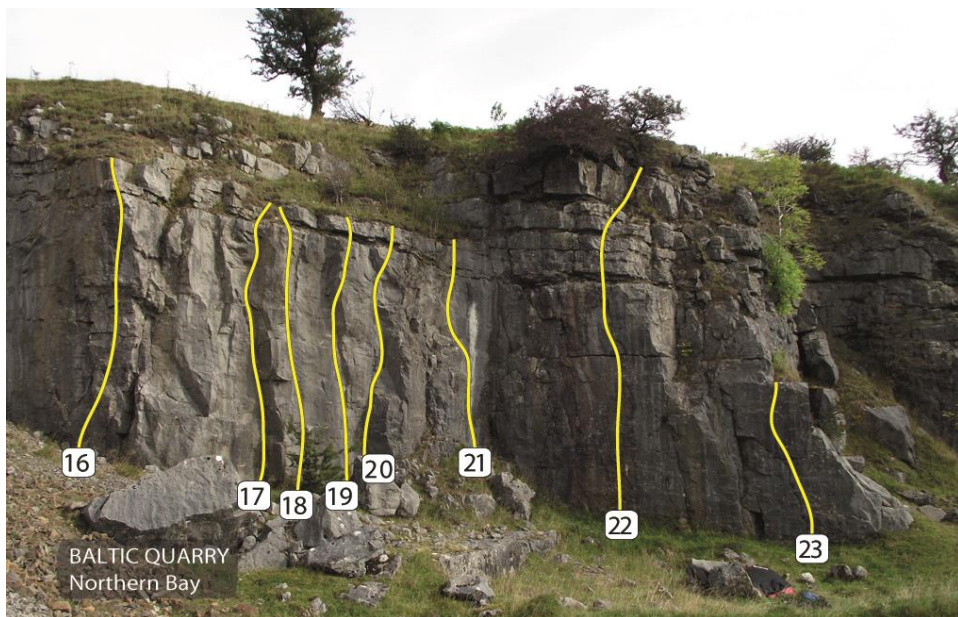
Has gear, bring rope, your lead. Climb the calcite-rich wall with a hard move to start and a long reach for the higher break. Bear right to a hawthorn at the cliff-edge.

FA Martin Crocker, Matt Ward

23 **Hypnotize** 5m HVS 4c (17.9.2014)

Take a crack in the little flying buttress right of *Sanitize* and the wall above on good holds.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)



Lightspeed Wall

Well over to the right of the Northern Bay is an extensive wall, sheer and blank on its right (*Lightspeed* solves the ‘blank’ part). There is a deep crack (unclimbed) left of the blank bit. At the far left-hand end of the wall is a grooved arête with a borehole in its right wall.

24 **Sterilise** 12m E3 6b (22.4.87)

A solo in the mould of various Burbage South routes. Climb the grooved arête with great difficulty. Finish up the left-hand side of the arête.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

The next three routes, just right of the grooved arête, finish at a solid ash tree at 8 metres.

25 **What a Shot-hole** 8m E2 5c (20.9.2014)

Enter the borehole right of the arête with a hard move. Reach a good hold high left and pull delicately into a scoop. Move up to an ash sapling and swing right to the larger ash. Protectable.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

26 **Devolution Convolution** 8m E2 5b (20.9.2014)

The well-defined groove (without using the borehole of the previous route): harder than it looks. No gear. Abseil from the ash tree.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

27 **Old Rectum** 8m HVS 4c (20.9.2014)

Climb the little groove right of *Devolution* to a strange broken hold, apparently solid. Climb up to a break, and swing left to the ash tree.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

28 **Malignancy** 8m E1 5a (20.9.2014)

Start under a clean wall above which is a small roof. Pull up onto the wall and link small holds before a long reach gains a break under the left-hand side of the roof. Bear left round the roof to a small stout ash tree from which it is possible to abseil (back up with ab’ rope recommended).

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

29 **Scotland Decides** 8m E2 5c (17.9.2014)

A difficult bold start but the remainder is protectable. Start 4 metres left of the deep crack. Pull over a bulge on awkward holds to reach flat handholds and a hairline crack (wire). Gain breaks above and finish at two trees (rowan and ash). Abseil off.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

30 **Llangattock Decides** 8m VS 4c (17.9.2014)

Climb the thin crack 2 metres left of the deep crack and pull up left to the two trees. Abseil off.

FA Martin Crocker, Jonathan Crocker

31 The **Line of Slots** left of *Lightspeed* is a reported E1 5c; but the slots are usually awash with veg’.

32 ***Lightspeed** 9m E2 6c (22.4.87)

Technical wizardry: the blank wall past an old 8mm bolt. The route would make a V6 highball with mats, which would be safer than the idiotic first ascent tactics.

FA Martin Crocker (solo with a back-breaker no-stretch sling clipped temporarily to the bolt)

33 **10000 Light Years from Home** 9m E2 6a (20.9.2014)

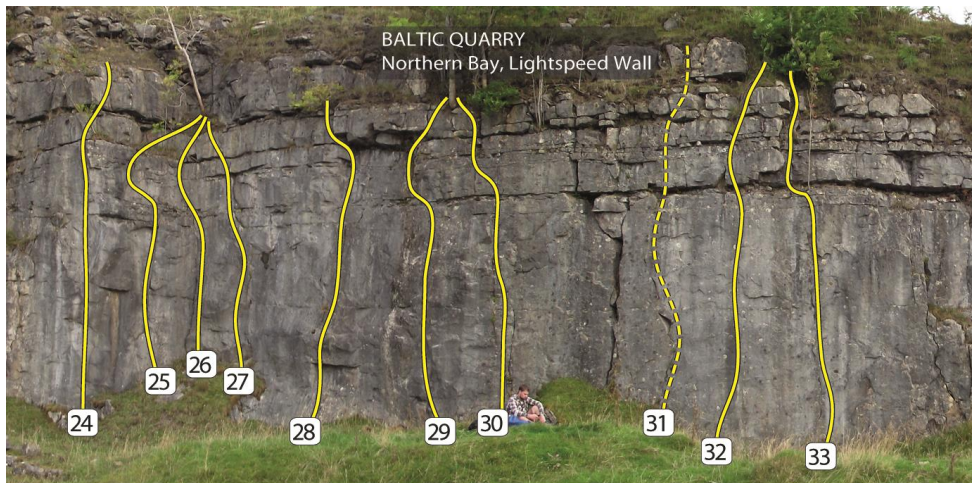
The thin protectable crack right of *Lightspeed*. Climb the sustained crack to a break where there is the most slender of rowans. Climb a corner to mature trees at the cliff-edge.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

34 **Why Wimp Out?** 6m E1 5c (22.4.87)

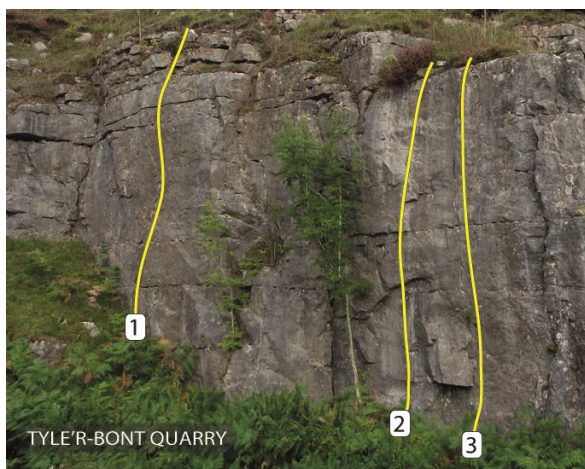
Nice climbing up the short leaning wall at the S end of the Northern Bay.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)



Tyle'r-bont Quarry (Southern Bay) OS 0631 1122

Three hundred metres to the S of the Northern Bay is Tyle'r-bont Quarry (once known to climbers as the Southern Bay), the lesser of the two quarries though with a few interesting routes. Access is less 'open' than the Northern Bay: you may have to step over a fence to enter the bay.



In the far left of the quarry is a rust-coloured wall.

1 Iron Awe 9m E1 5b (22.4.87)

The centre of the wall; exit right.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Just right is a compact leaning wall.

2 Metal Mistake 9m E3 6b (22.4.87)

Take a direct line up the left-hand side of the wall via a projecting handhold at 3 metres. Unprotected (there is an old bolt stub *en route*, which wasn't deployed).

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

3 ***Harmony of the Skies** 9m E3 6b (15.3.87)

Hard, but safe to lead. Battle strenuously up the thin crack in the leaning wall.

FA Matt Ward, Martin Crocker

Further right is an attractive short isolated buttress.

4 **Smile** 6m E1 5a (10.3.87)

Solo up the wall to ledges at the top. Scramble down or up.

FA Matt Ward (solo)

Between the *Smile* buttress and the *Appear'* slab is a 6-metre groove topped by small ash and hawthorn trees.

5 **Hellboy** 6m E1 6b (V4) (27.9.2014)

Bridge up the bed of the groove; very intense. Scramble down left. With a mat the V grade applies.

FA Martin Crocker (solo above a mat)

6 **Hellthorn** 6m E2 6a (V3/4) (27.9.2014)

Climb the right-hand arête of the groove (feet out of the easy groove to the right). Finish direct; then swing left to the small trees.

FA Martin Crocker (solo above a mat)

A higher slab now takes command (stake belays on top).

7 ***Appear, Smear, Disappear, then Reappear** 12m E3 6a (10.3.87)

Once won High Magazine's funny route name award. Appear, and smear up the faint line of weakness in the slab; then disappear direct or rightwards to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

OK, so you've reappeared for:

8 **Bumbling about in Bhutan** 12m E4 6b (10.3.87)

One of the quarry's most exacting climbs. Enter the pod right of *Appear'*, pulling straight over the bulge. Finish rightwards. There's gear, but it doesn't convince.

FA Martin Crocker, Matt Ward

There are two boulder problems to the right of the *Appear'* slab.

9 **Has Been** V1 (5b) Climb the very narrow rightward-facing corner straight to the top.

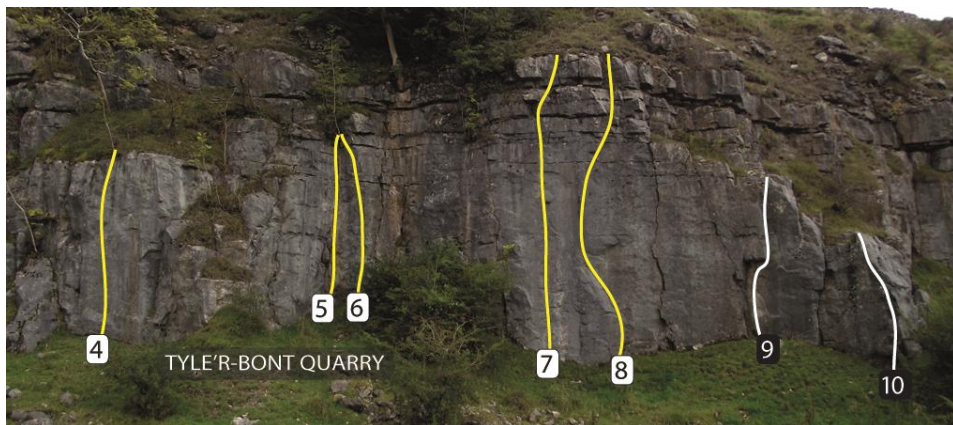
10 **Has Not Been** V0+ (5a) The short arête.

There are three short routes on the final significant buttress which hosts a prominent arête. The top-out is VILE and a pull-out rope is highly recommended should you decide to confront the vileness.

11 **Free Speech** 7m E2 5a/b (27.9.2014)

Start 1.5 metres left of the arête. Climb up to a small roof; trend slightly rightwards and swing right onto the top of the arête.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)



12 Curb All Intransigence 7m E2 5c (10.3.87)

The smart arête, climbed on its right-hand side.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

13 Pro-Democracy Dance Party 7m E2 5c (27.9.2014)

Possibly a highball at V2; the landing is flat. Start 2 metres right of the arête, and climb a line of weakness making a stiff pull past a horizontal crack to reach ledges.

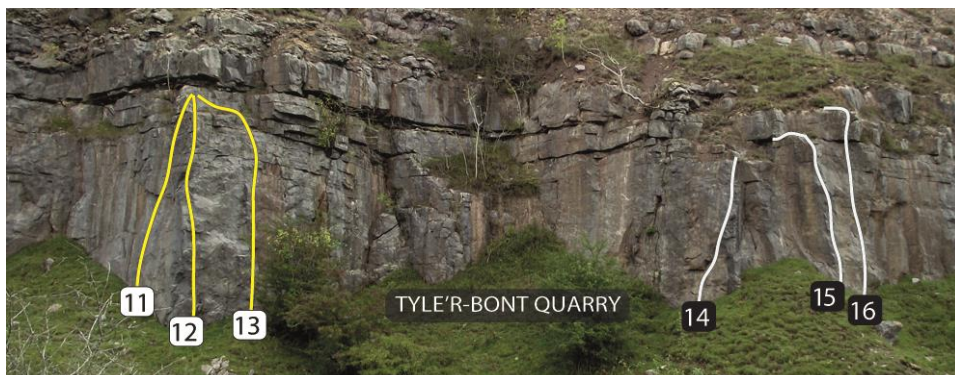
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

The bay now fizzles into a series of low walls. The rubbish bouldering here is above a sloping grass landing and any mat will just toboggan you back down the hillside. Best walk on by.

14 V0+ (5b) The left-hand side of a rounded arête.

15 V0 (5a) A pretend arête; swing left to descend.

16 V0- (4c) A little groove; traverse left to descend.



MORLAIS

OK clever clogs, Morlais lies (just) outside the BBNP, but I thought I'd take the opportunity of including some mostly unpublished material because it's such a good crag. But do please note that this is *not* a full guide to Morlais: another party can take on that mighty project. Described here are only 'not-so-new' routes, significant adaptations to existing ones, and some old hard routes redescribed after re-leading – which might prove useful to somebody.

A Note on Parking

Tales of theft from vehicles parked in the Morlais area are legend: even whole vans have disappeared without trace. Two safe options are to park either a) in Pontsarn Close, (but carefully so as not to annoy residents), or b) 600 metres N of the right-turn in Vaynor, in sight of residential property (though parking spots are limited here).

Ethic

Trad, soloing, bouldering; bolts are not permitted.

Lower Tier

Some areas of this adventurous and good-quality cliff can get dusty; the corresponding routes will benefit from a soft brushing from time to time.

Left-Hand Section

1 ***Mortlock** 15m E2 5b (5.6.2010)

Takes on the black wall in the centre of the left-hand half of the Lower Tier, just right of *Delivery*. Start from a large ledge reached by scrambling up a short blocky arête. From the frail tree above, climb a thin vertical crack for 2 metres. Swing right to a big sidehold on the black wall, and gain a good hold between two small roofs. Finish direct.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

2 ***Wannabe Gangsta** 7m E4 6c (5.6.2010)

A super-technical solo up the white arête left of the 'trio of grooves'. It can be climbed by all-out smearing on its left-hand side or precariously up its edge; in either case you have to pull like hell on the small sloping sidepull/one-finger crimp 2 feet (doesn't convert well to metric) left of the arête.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

3 **The Sickle** 25m HVS 4c (1970s)

Climb the left-hand groove to ledges. Above is a stepped red corner – you could go that way, but it isn't the best line. Climb the wall to the right to a good flake 4 metres up. Take a thin crack and move right under an overhang into a slim right-facing groove. Follow the groove more easily to the top (limited gear on this section).

4 **Pickled by Mirth** 6m E2 6a (5.6.2010)

The grooved arête between *The Sickle* and *Central Groove*; more problematic than expected.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

5 **Central Groove** 7m VD (10.2001)

The central groove to ledges; carefully scramble off right along a grass ledge or abseil from trees.

FA Chris Shorrocks, Mark Salter

6 **The Grunt** 7m HVS 5b (1980s)

Climb the right-hand groove to ledges; scramble off right along a grass ledge or abseil from trees.
FA Phil Thomas

7 **Raspberries** 25m HVS 4c (8.84)

Quite good, but the gear is spaced on the upper wall (making the route feel more like E1?). Climb the line of weakness 2 metres right of *The Grunt* onto a grassy ledge at 10 metres (possible belay). In the upper wall are two long vertical boreholes. Climb slightly to the left of the lower borehole, moving leftwards onto a cracked block jug (wires). Now take the narrow right-facing V-groove (left of the upper borehole) to the top.

FA Lee Davies, P Bruton

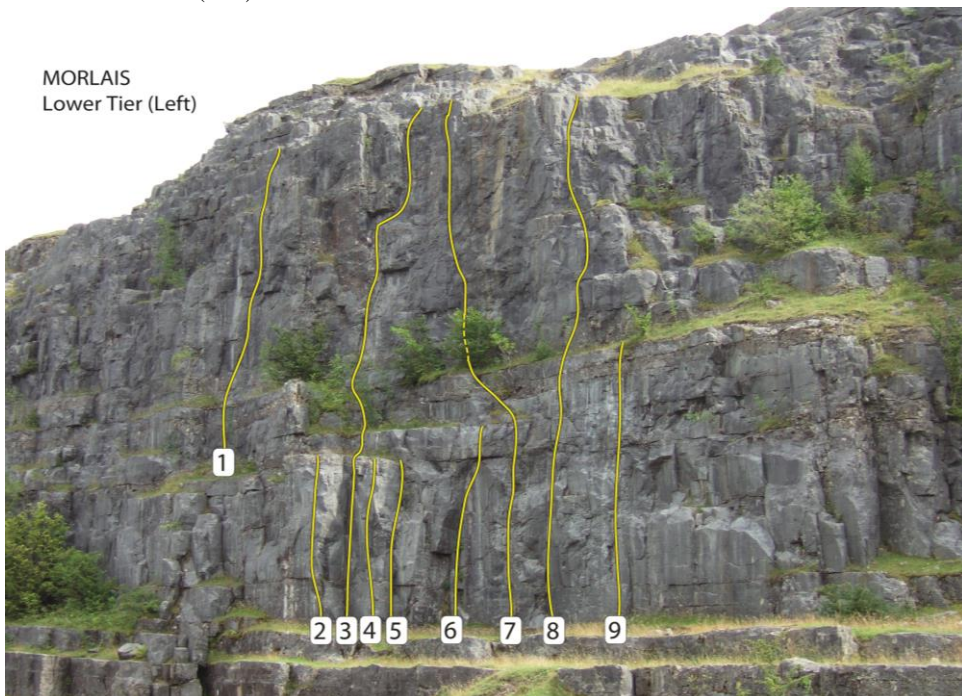
8 **Greenmantle** 25m HVS 5a (1970s)

A poorly protected, if escapable, upper wall. Start at a borehole 3 metres right of *The Grunt* and climb the lower wall to a narrow grassy ledge at 10 metres (possible belay). Just left of the broken right-hand rib, pull up and mantel on a high hold. Climb up ledges in the rib to the top (a steeper harder line left of the rib is exposed and completely devoid of protection).

9 **Motorcross** 10m E2 5b (5.6.2010)

Serious; start 2 metres right of *Greenmantle*. Follow a line of right-facing layaways straight up past a thin horizontal break and exit onto the terrace via a short groove and a careful tug on a small beech tree or hawthorn.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)



Right-Hand Section

The two sections of the Lower Tier are separated by a break and grassy ledge system at half height, which offer a descent route. The ledge system is the starting point for all the routes between *Wall Street* and *Triple Cross*. A small cave halfway along the ledge is the starting point for *Cerebellum*, which takes the left-hand of two prominent cracks.

10 **Wall Street** 7m E1 5a (1983)

Climb the sheer unprotected wall behind a silver birch tree.

FA Tony Penning, G Horler

11 ***Bahama Crisis** 7m E1 5b (1983)

Superb: take the slight crack 3 metres left of the cave (peg). E3 as a solo.

FA Tony Penning, K Barratt

12 ***Cerebellum** 7m HVS 5b (1976)

Follow the crack that rises leftwards above the small cave.

FA: John Harwood, Clive Horsefield

13 ***Khmer Rouge** 9m E2 6a (6.86)

Start as for *Cerebellum*. Climb the left-hand crack for 2 metres and step right into a scoop. Move up the scoop to a bulge. Using a tiny undercut flake on the right-hand arête make a strong move up and so gain the top. Good small-wire protection.

FA Lee Davies, Paul Thomas

14 **Compact** 9m VS 4b (1970s)

The right-hand of the two cracks past a small tree at half height.

FA John Harwood (solo)

The bushy ledges extend rightwards under a bare reddish wall which is crossed by a sloping ramp.

15 **Crisis, What Crisis?** 12m E5 6b (1981)

Very challenging indeed with a bouldery unprotected start. Start at the base of the ramp. Climb straight up impending rock via hard bold moves to and from a sloping hand-ledge at 5 metres. From good holds up to the left (rock-spike runner), swing right to jugs and finish easily.

FA Andy Sharp, Linda Sharp

16 **Exile** 12m E5 6a (1981)

Very bold, if eliminate, – and there is a sod of a hard move too! Follow the ramp for 4 metres to a shallow groove in red rock. Make a committing reach up the groove for good holds (whereupon it is possible to stretch right to place a Rock 2 runner in *Dead Red* without going off route). Make a stubborn long move up the read streak for a good hold; then finish direct up the little headwall.

FA Andy Sharp, Linda Sharp (direct: Martin Crocker (roped solo) 15.8.2008)

17 ****Dead Red** 12m E3 5c (1981)

A fine protectable route on an appealing natural line – the ramp. Follow the ramp rightwards into a groove. Take the groove and difficult wall above to the top.

FA Andy Sharp, Linda Sharp

The next two routes start from the right-hand end of the ledge at a narrow corner.

18 *Morlais Eliminate 12m E3 5c (1984)

Bear leftwards up the face, and climb up on widely spaced fingerholds until a wire can be placed in the groove of *Dead Red* on the left. Move back right and up to a thin overlap (peg). Continue via a short crack to the top.

FA Tony Penning (improvised roped solo)

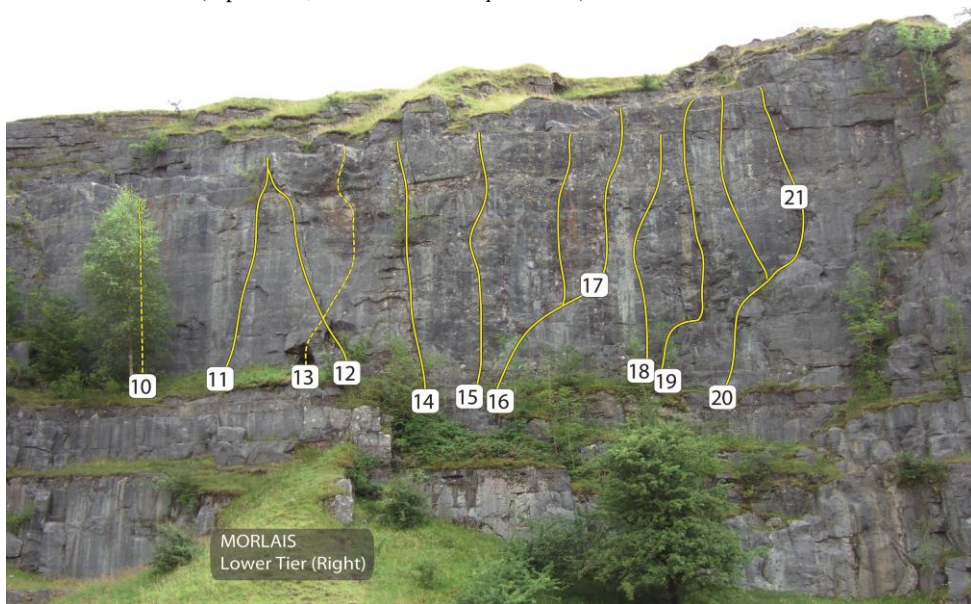
19 *Triple Cross Direct 12m E4 6a (15.8.2008)

Logical, if bold: the protection is microwire-specific and hence the route potentially more serious (E5?) to on-sight. From the right end of the ledge, pull up a narrow corner onto a pedestal ledge. Climb the groove with difficulty until better holds (and gear) over a bulge lead to an easier finish. FA Martin Crocker (roped solo). The original (E4) quitted the groove for ledges on the right (on *Penning Pusher*) before striding back left above the bulge: Tony Penning, Peter Cresswell 1983

20 Penning Pusher 20m E3 5c (26.7.2008)

A slightly bold start – though the face has enough small-wire protection. Follow *The Go-Between* to the ash sapling next to the blocks. Teeter up a scoop in the face 2 metres left of *TGB* and so gain sloping foot-ledges. Climb straight up the wall above – don't cock up the rock-up – to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo, in mistake for *Triple Cross*)



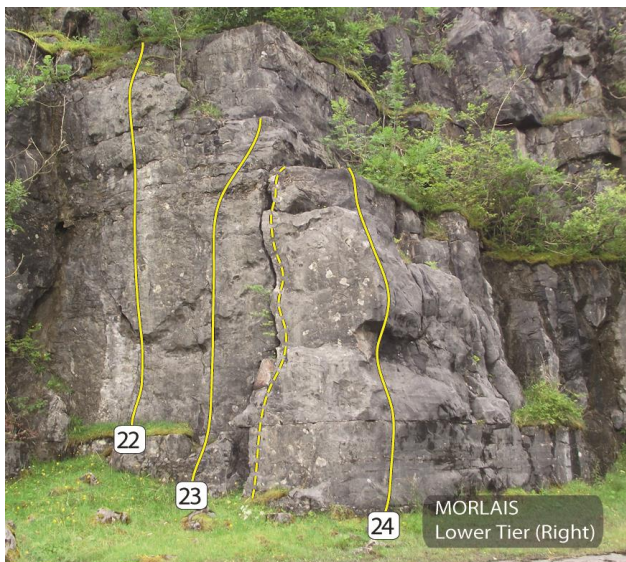
21 *The Go-Between 20m E1 5b (1976)

Refreshingly well protected. Start at the base of the cliff right of a large tree (though the route can be started from higher level ledges). Scramble up mixed terrain to a ledge under the wall proper. Climb rightwards up blocks past a tiny ash sapling into a groove. Make a hard move up the groove (peg) and finish up a thin crack.

FA John Harwood, I Carey. Freed by Andy Sharp, John Harwood 1980

There is a nice ‘problem’ (at about E1 5a) up the arête right of the start of *Busy Bee*.

The next three routes take rock right of *Green Corner* (the corner right of some white stains).



22 Old as Rust 9m E3 5c (1980s/5.6.2010)

Follow an off-balance thin crack to a good pocket. A good stal undercut (peg) initiates a sustained sequence through bulges to a large ledge with tree belays. FA Martin Crocker (solo); climbed before?

Flake Crack (VD) takes the crack in the right wall of *Green Corner*.

23 Small Mercy 7m E1 5a (5.6.2010)

Follow the obvious line of holds up the steep wall just left of *Flake Crack*. Unprotected. FA Martin Crocker (solo)

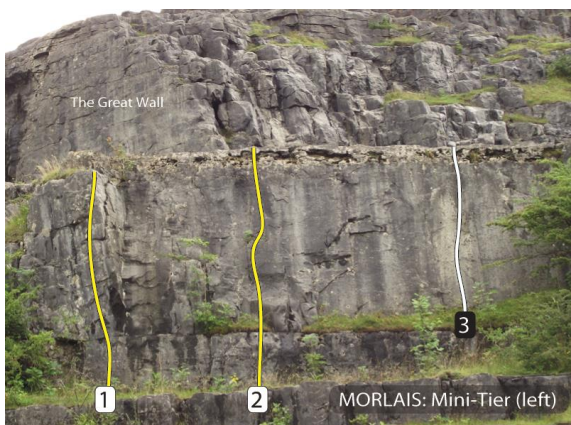
24 When the Future Lies 6m E1 6a (5.6.2010)

Desperately move up on slopers under the short arête right of *Flake Crack*. Keeping on its right-hand side, stretch up the arête for a jug.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

The Mini-Tier

This is the long, low, but quite entertaining cliff under The Middle Tier. The first three problems reside on the sheer 4- to 6-metre high wall under the *Rogue's Gallery* area.



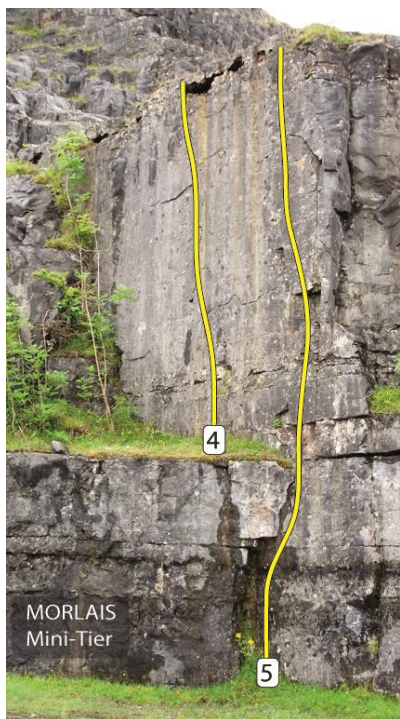
1 *Curtain Raiser 6m E1 5c (V1)

Brilliant: the narrow arête at the left-hand end of the wall left of an open groove.

2 Ground Breaker 6m HVS 4c (V0-)

Gain the tiny left-facing corner in the face, stepping onto a narrow ledge to reach crozzley pockets just under the platform.

3 Rock-up Star V3 (6a) A good old leg-over on the right side of the sheer face (which might test your ability to land on a 40-degree sloping ledge).



In the centre of the tier, to the right, is a sheer left-facing wall: Padawan Wall. Finding belays above the wall is a mare if considering the headpoint (there is an old bolt anchor but it's choked with dirt).

4 ****Padawan** 7m E4 6b (V5) (16.6.2010)

Very impressive: a 'having a laugh?' problem, which might feel like E7 as an unsupported on-sight solo (!). Leave the small undercut to a small crack in the blank wall: three extending moves on two finger edges; then move left to an edge and make a long reach for a jug. A highball but only with a *big* stretch of the imagination, lots of mats, and the Dowlais male voice choir to catch you.

FA Andy Cummings (solo), Morgan Preece

5 **Terminator** 8m E3 6a (1980s)

A difficult line up thin cracks in the right-hand side of the face; a thread and microwires protect.

FA Andy Cummings

Further right, above a rock step, is a series of solid white arêtes of a more welcoming grade. The landing is flat and forgetting your mat is no real issue.

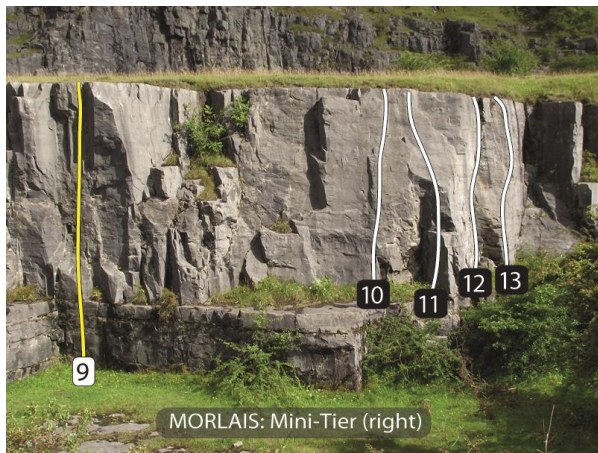


6 V1 (5b) A trickier-than-it-looks arête with a long reach to finish.

7 V3 (6a) Take the arête direct (no use of rock ledge on the right); then layback its right-hand side to the top. Feels scary. (V1 (5b) if started from the ledge.)

8 V0+ (5a) A very pleasant arête.

At the right-hand end of the tier behind trees is a slabby wall.



9 7m HVS 4c Take the wide groove between two arêtes on surprisingly good holds.

The remaining problems start from a rock ledge.

10 **V3 (6a) Smear directly up a very shallow groove in the slabby wall to a finger-edge and move up to bigger holds above

11 V0 (4c) The stepped right arête.

12 4a The groove around to the right.

13 V0 (4c) The broad flowstone rib, swinging left to exit.

Middle Tier

The Great Wall

The stunning sheer main face of the Middle Tier continues its role as a regional trad forcing ground (aided by the resolution of some historic ethical *faux pas*). Forget bolt routes (if only for a while), Great Wall is a must for any serious local or visitor alike.

1 **To the Batmobile** 12m HVS 5b (1982)

Takes the crack far left on Great Wall. Start from a high ledge and hawthorn tree (or the ledge beneath). Enter the crack and follow it to a hard move left over the bulge at the top.
FA Dennis Hillier, Andy Cummings

2 ***Grace under Pressure** 15m E1 5b (1980)

An engaging route with good gear up the narrow wall left of the waterworn fissure of *Phobia*. Swing right from the hawthorn tree (of *TTB*) into a short crack. Climb over a tricky bulge onto a slab. Move up to the capping bulge (peg) and pull strenuously around to the top.
FA Andy Cummings

3 ****Phobia** 18m E2 5c (1973)

A fantastic line up the waterworn fissure (still with an active spring), which has gotten harder and easier to slip off since the polish has increased as countless urchens on outdoor trips squeeze and squiggle into and out of the feature. Bridge out of the initial cave (trying to avoid sliding back into it) and swing left into the runnel above. Ignore the polished vertical crack to the right and climb the runnel to a ledge under the roof near the top. Traverse right and finish direct past an overlap.

Variation **The Rattling Finish** As for *Phobia* to the capping roof; then swing up right over it – fun.
FA Phil Watkin (A1). Free by Phil Thomas, John Harwood 1975; *The Rattling Finish* by Tony Penning, Andy Sharp 1982

4 ***Blade Runner** 18m E3 5c (1982)

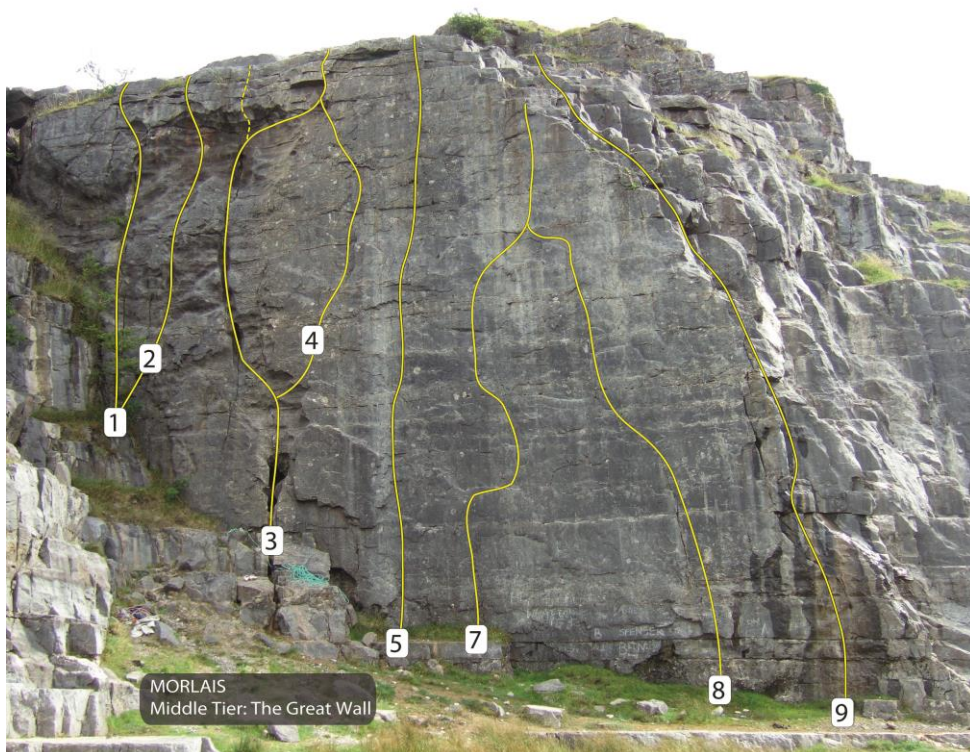
Technical facework with just adequate protection. Climb *Phobia* for 4 metres; then step right onto a narrow ledge. Climb direct (twisted wire in pocket and rock-spike runners above); then rightwards to small ledges (peg). Follow a crack leftwards (peg) to join and finish up *Phobia*.

FA Tony Penning, Andy Sharp

5 ****Rogues' Gallery** 20m E6 6b

Bold and intense, but the gear might *just* be sufficient to prevent a ground fall from the crux. Make a powerful set of moves to enter the white-stained groove right of *Phobia*. Move up boldly to a good rest (poor flexing peg*, wire, and sideways RP3, the combination of which protects the next section – you hope). Intricately climb on small holds until a crucial stretch gains better holds in a crozzly break – gear here but pumpy to place. A long rock-up now gains a ledge system at two-thirds height and a well-deserved rest. Climb the thin crack (peg) past a sting-in-the-tail move to an easy finish.

FA: Gary Gibson with possibly SE Wales's most controversial bolt runner. The route was repeated on-sight with the bolt by Martin Crocker in 1985. First bolt-free ascent: Martin Crocker (after top roping) 3.5.2010 (for which a poor peg* was placed but which within a few weeks had been stolen. That theft meant that – reluctantly – the peg runners were not left in *No Mercy*.) Guy Percival has since led the bolt-free version without the peg, after top-roping.



6 ***Morlais in a Tramp's Vest** 18m E5 6a (3.8.2014)

An eliminate link-up between the previous two routes. Follow *Rogues' Gallery* to the good rest on a ledge on the left. Move slightly left and up to follow *Blade Runner* to its second peg. Here climb direct via a difficult move on undercuts to good holds and the top.

FA Martyn Richards, Andy Sharp

7 *****No Mercy** 20m E7 6c (7.5.85)

Reinstated, without the (rogue) bolt. The route of the wall with brilliant mercilessly sustained moves, its two half-decent pegs offering better-than-expected protection on the crux section. The following is the line described after the 2010 bolt-free ascent. Start below a sketchy vertical crack 3 metres right of *Rogues' Gallery*. Boulder up left of the crack to reach a hand-ledge. Traverse right for 1.5 metres (microwire in old peg scar), stretch up; and then teeter back left along the ledge to a high jug in a crozzley seam. (The two pegs [removed] are pre-placed in the crozzley seam; each fitted with a short hero-loop so they can be clipped.) Make the precise crux sequence above and very slightly left to fingerholds above a tiny overlap (three old bolt holes in this area). Span up right to slopers and take these urgently rightwards to a whopping jug. Step up and finish up the short headwall.

FA Gary Gibson. First bolt-free ascent: Martin Crocker, John Harwood 29.8.2010.

The following is the original (Gary Gibson's) description in the BMC's *New Climbs 1986*.

***No Mercy** 70ft E6 6b

****(C)**

The superb wall between *Rogues Gallery* and *Partners in Crime*. A faint thin crack leads to a ledge. Move up on the right via ripples and no gear until a BR is reached and passed with further difficulty. Continue from a ledge above more easily.

F.A. 7th May 1985 G. Gibson, unseconded'

Footnote: there are various other old bolt-holes on the wall (probably cavers'/aid climbers' bolts), including one on a rightward line from the ledge of *No Mercy*.

8 ****Partners in Crime** 18m E6 6b (8.83)

A gruelling and gripping testpiece up the cracks in the right-hand side of the wall. Follow the crack to its close; then sidestep desperately left into a thinner crack and make committing moves to a peg (keep a hand free to clip it!). Slightly easier climbing gains a narrow ledge at two-thirds height (peg). Move left and take a thin crack to the top. Make sure the pegs are in place before launching up.

FA Andy Sharp, John Harwood (which freed the aid route **Partners** by Chris Jones 1970)

9 ***Fly Arête** 20m HS 4a (1970s)

A well-positioned route up the right arête of The Great Wall with no real difficulties after the start (which can often be wet). Climb the wall just left of the arête; then follow the groove in the right-hand side of the arête to the top.



Rogues' Gallery (in 1985) Pic: John Harwood

Lower Upper Tier (AKA Highball Haven)

This uncharted but much-climbed-upon/abseiled-over 8- to 9-metre high tier of solid rock lies beneath the Upper Tier. Any polish however is once again down to abseiling groups rather than madcap soloists. Aside from the routes described, there are other possible lines on the central ledge-ridden area. However, even on the easier climbs, gear is in very short supply and soloing or top-roping is obligatory for the most part (plentiful stakes *in-situ* above the cliff-top). In general landings are grassy if sloping but can be levelled out with a mat propped up with a sack.

The first routes are on the attractive grey slab near the left-hand end of the cliff above a rock ledge (BAD landing). The routes finish on a terrace 2 metres below the top, from which you can scramble off left.

1 **Slab Left** 9m S (1970s)

Protectable. Climb the left-hand side of the slab and use a short flake to escape left onto a ledge.

2 **Die Another Day** 9m E4/5 5c (18.8.2010)

Take the centre of the slab past an undercut (where a loose flake once resided). There are unprotected hard moves near the top above a death-landing; not really escapable once committed. FA Martin Crocker (solo)

3 **Slab Right** 9m VD (1970s)

Climb diagonally right across the slab to finish up a small rib. A direct start is 4c.

4 **Descent** Right of the slab a leftward-line of ledges gives a possible (VD) descent from the rock terrace, though the first move down is exposed, awkward, and lethal if you mess up.

5 **V-groove left** 6m VS 4c (1970s)

Follow the angular right-facing V-groove (if that's not a contradiction in terms).

6 **V-groove right** 7m E1/3 5c (V2) (1980s)

The left-facing V-groove: slick and polished thanks to the boots of many an earthbound youth. The troubling high crux (E3 if soloing) looks just about protectable with small wires (E1?).

Right of the two grooves is a steep wall characterized by a vertical borehole on the right.

7 **Easy except in Execution** 7m E3 6a (V4) (18.9.2010)

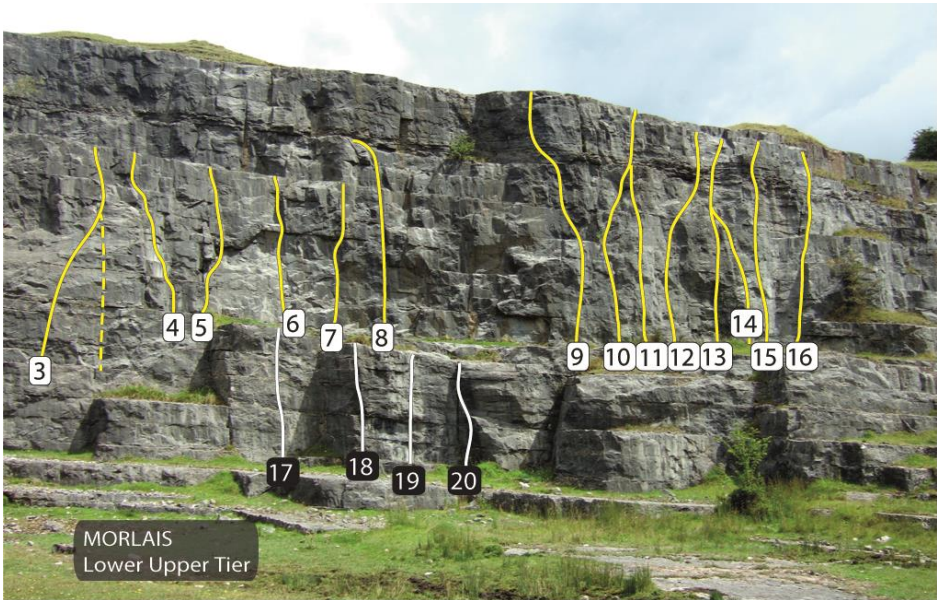
Highball, and hard for 6a. Pull into a slight roof-capped groove 2 metres left of the borehole and throw one for a distant edge. Pull up promptly to more fingerholds and gain ledges above. Ignore the grim short headwall and escape right or left.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

8 **John's Tale of Bolts** 6m E1 5c (V2) (18.9.2010)

Layback the borehole retaining optimism for a long reach for reluctant finishing holds. Scramble down left.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)



Right of a ledgy area is a reasonably coherent tower with a couple of ‘lines’.

9 **Faulty Tower** 9m HVS 4c (1970s)

The exposed section at the top can be protected, though not very well. Boulder up a short wall left of a narrow worn groove to ledges. Use a flake to get established on the left rib of the tower. Step left and mantel boldly to the top.

10 **Make Your own Way Around** 9m HS 4c (1970s)

Quite good. Make a hard move up a worn groove under the tower to ledges. Trend right and up, keeping just right of some loose-looking blocks.

11 **Faultless Tower** 9m E2 5b (V1) (1980s)

Climb straight up the delicious grey rib while keeping out of *Opened Heart*. Balancy.

12 **Opened Heart** 9m E1 5a (V0) (1970s)

Make a technical entry into an open groove containing a projecting flake and reach a ledge above – unprotected. Sidle right to exit easily up a short wall.

The following three highballs under another tower reach easier climbing after 6 metres; the exit from a ledge there is straightforward but a long way up.

13 **Beef in Blackbean Sauce** 8m E3 6b/c (V5) (17.9.2010)

Super-sustained moves up the black scoop that may well need soft brushing. Starting a metre right of a flake (not used) use fingertip undercuts to gain a good sidehold at 4 metres with left hand. Very delicate moves up the scoop gain the ledge.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

14 Classic Sardine 8m E2 6a (V3) (17.9.2010)

Reach a triangular handhold and ease up the grey groove to the ledge.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat; an old rock scar suggests the route has been done before.)

15 Economy Class 8m E3 6a/b (V4) (17.9.2010)

Tight but fun. Work straight up a grey pillar left of *Tower Groove*, keeping your right boot out of the groove. Tricky for feet. Gain good holds on the left-hand arête of the tower and finish direct.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

16 Tower Groove 8m D (1970s)

The groove up the right-hand edge of the tower to an exit up ledges. Very pleasant.

There is a bunch of easyish problems on the 4-metre high micro-tier beneath.

17 VD The slabby wall on the left.

18 V0- (4c) The arête.

19 V2 (5c/6a) The wall right of the arête.

20 4b The borehole on the right.

Upper Tier

**1 *Evening Gem** 15m E4 6a (1977)

A magnificent line up the shallow scalloped groove in the blunt arête on the left-hand side of the main face. Climb easily into the groove and follow this – technical and sustained – to a short headwall. Go up directly to trees on a ledge: abseil off.

FA Pat Littlejohn, John Mothersesele

2 Autonomy 15m E2 5b (1977)

Worth doing and protectable: climb the series of corners and cracks just right of the scalloped groove to the same belay trees: abseil off.

FA John Harwood, W Gray

(There is a route, allegedly, up the filthy brown-stained wall to the right: *Stretch* VS 4b.)

3 **Zig Zag** 25m VS 4a (1970)

Poorly protected. Start just right of a large hawthorn tree 8 metres right of *Evening Gem*. Scramble up to a right-to-left rising ramp and follow this leftwards all the way to the ledge and trees of *Evening Gem*: abseil off.

4 ***Hair of the Dog** 12m E3 6a (1985)

Interesting and not hard for 6a, but peg-dependent. Start as for *Zig Zag*. Climb up onto an obvious right-pointing flake at 7 metres. Above and right a borehole punctuates a leaning headwall: gain and climb the borehole (peg) to ledges.

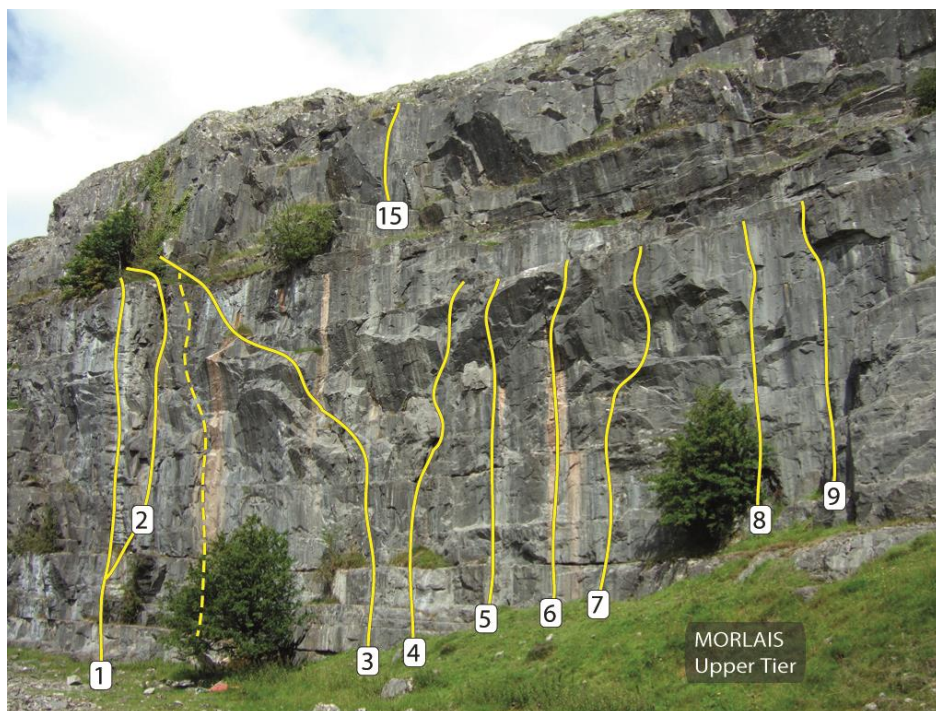
FA Tony Penning, Chris Court

On the wall between the two large hawthorn trees at the cliff-base are two oft-wet brown streaks.

5 **Pontiff** 10m E5 6b (18.9.2010)

Builds to a spiritual climax. Climb the thinner left-hand brown streak boldly to a hand-ledge (peg) right of a dubious stuck-on square block. Teeter up on sloping holds to a really powerful move to the top. The crux is protected by a pre-placed Rock 4 with 0.5-metre sling, just below the top. This chicken tactic is rather contrived, and surely only be a stopgap to the inevitable E7 – take it away!

FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood



6 Incontinent Touch 10m E2 5c (29.8.2010)

Right of *Pontiff* is a high pocket that has an undeniable bowel problem. Contrary to appearances the route is actually quite good and even climbable when symptoms are at their worst. Surf the right-hand brown/wet streak to big flake holds and the pocket (large cam in ass possible). A sly sequence of moves brings a good finishing hold on the right to hand; mantel over.

FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood

7 *Battle of Britain 10m E5 6b (18.9.2010)

A route of character with a storming all-crimping crux at the top (which can be protected satisfactorily; the gear seems to hold!). Start 3 metres left of the large right-hand hawthorn tree. Climb slightly leftwards to a good flake. Traverse right to mantel awkwardly on an overhung shelf (crucial life-affirming wire cluster overhead). Finger-swap left; then crank like a disease over the bulge to the top (weak-looking thread and twisted RPs down left).

FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood

8 Afternoon Delight 9m E2 5c (1985)

Indeed. Start at the large right-hand hawthorn tree. Climb the face right of the tree and mantel left onto a ledge. Gain and finish up the small problematic right-facing corner (peg) near the top.

FA Chris Court, Tony Penning

9 High Noon 9m E2 5c (1985)

Start 3 metres right of the large right-hand hawthorn tree. Climb a blind crack just right of an easy groove into a short left-facing groove left of a small roof (peg – missing).

FA Chris Court, Tony Penning

To the right a more broken area allows a descent before the crag steepens again. Three routes take the left-hand part of this wall (large hawthorn trees on the terrace directly overhead make it easy to set up a top-rope).

10 Snuff Stuff 10m E1 4c (1985)

Aptly named – there is no gear. Climb up onto a flat ledge at 5 metres. Now dig deep and follow the right-slanting groove to the top.

FA Tony Penning (solo)

11 Snuff's not Enuff 8m E1 5a (13.8.2010)

Climb onto the flat ledge 5 metres up *Snuff Stuff*. Make bold moves to connect spaced but good holds on the steep face above. Exit with care.

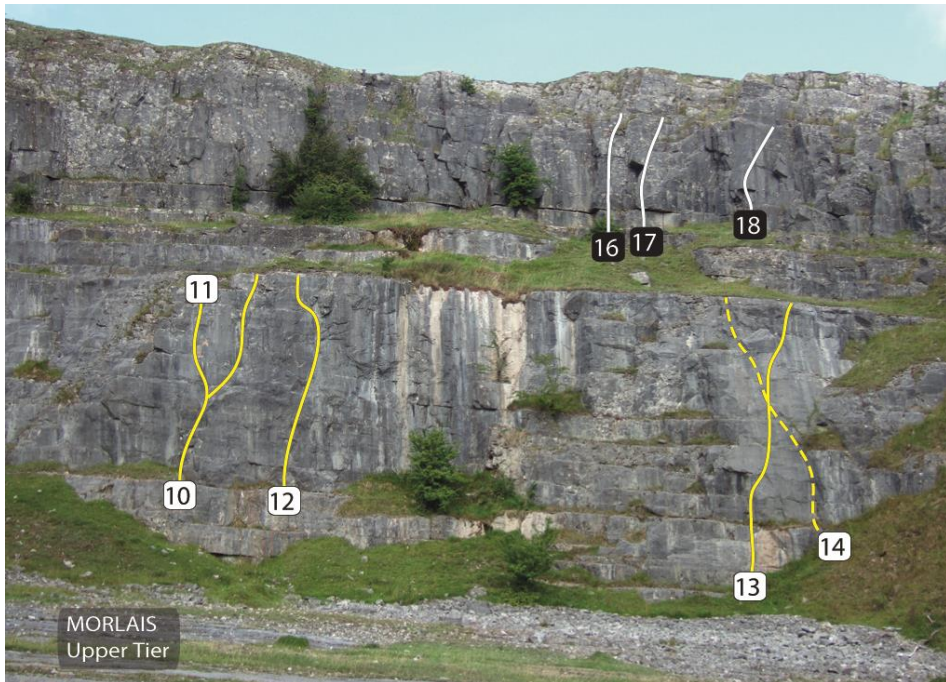
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

12 *Snuff's a Dying Habit 9m E4/5 5c (13.8.2010)

A breakneck solo, though the holds are positive and the route probably reversible – should second thoughts prevail. Climb the vertical seam in the steep wall right of *Snuff Stuff*, reaching left to a series of good fingerholds just below the capping bulge. Finish on a small rib on the left.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

To the right is a sheer dusty white-streaked wall with a grassy top-out that might supply an E8 or two subject to the threat of a hawthorn up yer jacksie.



Near the right-hand end of the crag, just left of a grassy ascent/descent gully is a slab; the original route here has been unscrambled to form two for the price of one, supermarket style.

13 Compact Slab (left) 10m E3 5c (10.2001)

Best appreciated as an on-sight solo (no gear anyway). Move up ledges into a tiny roof-capped groove. Quit this for finger-edges on the slab on the right, and climb up delicately onto the easier slab. Trend right to a slightly steeper finish.

FA Mark Salter (solo)

14 Compact Slab (right) 10m HS 4b (10.2001)

Climb the tricky corner bounding the slab on the right; then trend left more easily to the top.

FA Mark Salter (solo)

Upper Upper Tier

On the little tier above are some good problems and mini-routes.

15 *Horse Whisperer 7m E3 6a (29.8.2010)

Short but swell; this is the fine arête near the left-hand end of the tier, which starts from a niche above the finish of *Zig Zag*. Tackle the arête, using holds on the left to start, and finish nervily some way above the solitary peg runner.

FA Martin Crocker, John Harwood

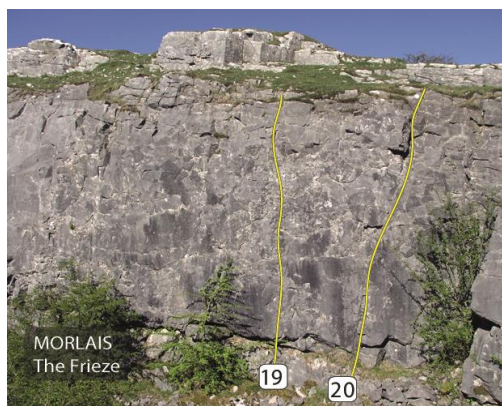
Further right, above and left of the slab of *Compact Slab*, is a series of arêtes.

16 **Buddy Rich** V0+ (5b) The left-hand arête is 6 metres high, but the landing is flat.

17 **Rich Buddy** V0- (4c) The central arête past a small square roof.

18 ***Dashboard Drummer** V2 (6a) The right-hand arête just right of a corner. A must.

At the right-hand end, safe from the opportunistic local youth, is a 6- to 7-metre high crystalline wall – The Frieze. Currently there are two solos here; climbing them without a mat seems unthinkable.



19 ***Over the Heel** 7m E4 6a (17.9.2010)

The hard move is low down, but diligent climbing is called for throughout. Take the pock-marked crystalline wall right of a small hawthorn tree on occasionally sharp incuts past an obvious undercut.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

20 **That Spoonfull** 6m E3 6a (17.9.2010)

Two metres left of the left-facing corner on the right, follow a thin crack rightwards to the top. A sketchy crux calls for a confident snatch for a good fingerhold.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

One hundred metres right of and a little lower than the Upper Tier is a small NE-facing wall often accompanied by on-sight-solo-sheep carcasses.



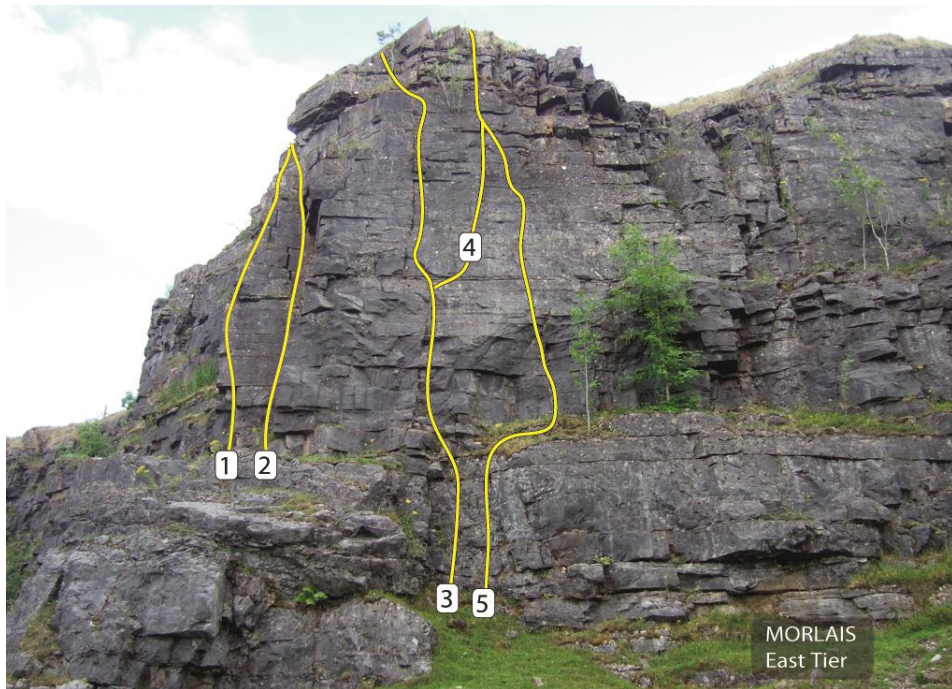
21 ***Murmuration** V1 (5b)

An obvious traverse; quite strenuous. Gain the right-hand end of a flat hand-ledge which is hand-traversed left to its end. Now make difficult moves under a small overhang and finish up left.

22 **HumDrum** 7m E1 V2 (5c)

Start up a scoop and make a difficult mantel onto the centre of the hand-ledge. Trend right to the exit of 23.

23 7m VS 4a From the right-hand end of the hand-ledge follow large holds above to the top.



1 Raining Golf Balls 15m E1 5a (5.8.2010)

Follow the left-hand arête of *Little Owl* exiting as for that route.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

2 Little Owl 15m S (1988)

Climb the corner and exit on the left.

FA A Giles, R Davies

3 One Between the Eyes 15m E1 5a (1988)

Climb the left-hand, more prominent crack passing an ominous unstable flake.

FA A Giles, R Davies

The shared exit of the following two routes is utter rubble which is a shame because up to that point the routes are quality outings (a pre-fixed rope is a reasonable solution).

4 Terminator 15m E1 5b (1988)

Good climbing (assuming you have a pull-out rope in place!). Start up *One Between the Eyes*, but move right to follow the slighter right-hand crack to the 'top'.

FA Bob Powles, A Hughes

5 Bob's Wall 15m E3 5c (5.8.2010)

The not-as-blank-as-it-looks wall. Move right onto a grass ledge (possible belay). Pull up a short groove in the bulge to a break. Work up the slab slightly leftwards to the exit of *Terminator*.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

CILSANWYS NATURE RESERVE, CEFN CIL-SANWYS

There is a micro-edge of small quartz conglomerate blocks 300 metres west of Merthyr Tydfil Golf Club that has provided a little low key bouldering. However these are part of a local nature reserve and probably do not warrant the disproportionate attention that climbing here might generate (especially in view of the hash made by some climbers of nearby classical gem Cefn Coed).

DARREN FAWR

There are several traditional climbs on this limestone face which is sited in the Darren Fawr Nature Reserve. However, they are not included in this guidebook because of a) the vulnerability of the underlying A470 to any large loose material that might be inadvertently dislodged from the crag or the approach, and b) the conservation status of the site.

DARREN FACH OS 0202 1027 – 0198 1067

The long limestone cliff of Darren Fach was regularly visited by climbers in the 60s/early 70s and the potential for more routes recognised. In the 70s most attempts to climb resulted in eviction by a local landowner. Subsequently the crag fell into disuse while the roadside scrub grew impenetrable enough to cut off the traditional approach from the A470. There are about 40 climbs on Darren Fach.

Three important legal developments since are: a) the designation of the site as a SSSI because of its outstanding botanical significance; b) classification of the site as Access Land under CROW Act 2000 thus, on the face of it, enabling legitimate access for climbing; and c) the designation of the site which is part of the Darren Fawr Nature Reserve (managed by Brecknock Wildlife Trust).

Environmental Considerations

The cliff is part of the Darren Fach SSSI and the Brecknock Wildlife Trust-managed Darren Fawr Nature Reserve. Together with Craig Penmallard opposite, this is the only place where Ley's Whitebeam grows – reportedly the rarest tree in Britain. There are only about 17 Ley's Whitebeam growing in the wild and most are found on Darren Fach. There is also other important botany on the cliff including Chalice Hawkweed.

The advice related to rock climbing attached to the SSSI citations is as follows:

'Public access and rock climbing

The SSSI and surrounding area has been mapped as Access Land under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. As Ley's whitebeam is confined to the cliffs, seedlings and young saplings of the species are most likely to grow on or beneath the cliffs, it will be necessary for CCW to monitor the use of the site to ensure that there is no excess pressure from well-used paths developing in those parts of the site where there is greatest potential for saplings to grow, for example at the base of the cliffs. Rock climbing would be inappropriate at this site due to its small size and the potential to damage or destroy rare plants.'

After an informal discussion with the BMC it has been decided that route descriptions should not be included here because of the exceptional conservation interest at this site.