

# Portishead Quarry climbs

Martin Crocker

## Portishead Quarry (Old Black Rocks) OS Ref 457 747

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### About this Mini-Guidebook

This mini-guide is a partial update of my script in *Avon & Cheddar* (published by The Climbers' Club in 2004), plus new topos. With this in mind you should **check the BMC's Regional Access Database (RAD)** for any access updates and developments **before climbing here**. Also note that there have been some post-2004 climbing developments, only some of which are represented in this script. I've also edited-in the changes that occurred as a result of the BMC's rock-safety works of 2006/7. Consistent with my North Somerset coast topo series, I've detailed below how you can make a donation to the area search and rescue team, ASSAR, should you choose to download/use this free guidebook – thanks.

### Avon & Somerset Search And Rescue (ASSAR)

ASSAR, a registered charity, has been providing cliff rescue services for Avon Gorge, Cheddar Gorge, and the area's other cliffs since 1975. (Avon Gorge and Cheddar Gorge rescue teams amalgamated in 1990.) More recently, in liaison with the police, ASSAR's remit was broadened to include a search and rescue function – saving lives other than those of climbers. Few would dispute that we owe ASSAR a huge debt of gratitude. The team's creation was the cornerstone in the climbing access agreement for Cheddar Gorge in the late-70s, which set the framework for all subsequent agreements. Furthermore ASSAR volunteers have given their time freely to support local partnership initiatives such as Cheddar Gorge's CragAttaK festivals and ClimbBristol.

ASSAR has no paid executives, just dedicated unpaid volunteers on standby 365 days/year 24hrs a day. But in order to operate effectively the team runs up significant running and capital costs. Please make your **donation** using either of the following links:

<http://www.assar.org.uk/>

[https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/donation-web/charity?charityId=1012306&stop\\_mobi=yes](https://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/donation-web/charity?charityId=1012306&stop_mobi=yes)



### 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.

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

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## Introduction

With its sunny and sheltered aspect and its emphasis towards traditional slab climbing, Portishead is perhaps the friendliest of the quarries in the Bristol locality. A number of excellent mid-grade routes are on offer, though they have paid the price of popularity by becoming rather polished. For the travelling hard guy, one route in particular, *Highway One*, justifies a special visit. Alternatively a few hours of fun (and pain) can be spent edging and crimping on various rasping desperates on the red walls, their exfoliating micro-flakes keeping some routes in a state of flux and you frustrated. Most of the bolts are stainless steel.

## Approach

This large quarry is located in the hillside approximately two kilometres southwest of Portishead. To get there leave the M5 at Junction 19 and take the A369 signposted 'Portishead'. Follow the A369 to a roundabout, and then bear left towards Clevedon. Continue to join the B3134 and follow that road past Gordano School (still in the Clevedon direction) until the quarry can be seen on the right (there is a terrace of houses on the left). Please avoid parking anywhere that could cause annoyance or an obstruction to residents; there is a lay-by 250m further on. Walk through the gated entrance or take the right-of-way a little to its east, and follow tracks that lead into the quarry. A good alternative, though heavily used, is to park in the lay-by next to the allotments on the left, just before you get to the quarry. You can then use the right-of-way on the other side of the road that leads into the woods and to the quarry.

## Access

The site is owned and managed by Avon Wildlife Trust, being part of the Weston Big Wood nature reserve. In 2006/7 works were carried out by the BMC on behalf of the owners in order to reduce the threat of rockfall to climbers: a number of unstable rock formations were removed from the High Slab area and a catch fence was constructed in the bay 2/3rds way up the slab. Several bolt belays were installed at the same time, so climbers would not have to interact with the fence or the loose headwall above it. However it is still permitted to climb *One Rainy Wish* and *Brink of Solarity* to the top. Abseiling from trees is not permitted.

## Rockfall risk

Note that no rock-safety works were carried out to the North Face, which still holds some disturbing looking suspended blocks and obviously loose rock. Great caution is advised, especially on less popular routes; and please do report any serious rockfall incidents or evidence of progressive movement of any rock formation to the BMC.

### **Ethics and fixed gear**

In the 1960s bolts were placed on the left wing (North Face) for the purpose of aid climbing. The aid bolts were used for protection on subsequent free ascents and additional bolts were placed for protection on the left wing including for new sport routes. The local drilled gear policy makes the statements that retrobolting is not permitted, and that on the left wing higher density bolting [i.e. sport routes] is accepted and on the right wing bolts are unacceptable. In consultation with the owners, in 2006/7 bolt belays were installed on the right wing (specifically on High Slab) for overarching rock-safety and conservation reasons.

### **Caution: fixed gear**

The bolts here are of different specs: 12mm or 10mm through-bolts with Petzl or Fixe hangers and some Eco-bolt glue-ins too: mostly stainless steel. There are also various pegs, some dating from the first ascents. Note that all *in-situ* gear gets a battering from wind and corrosive sea air, which will limit its lifespan over and above normal rates of corrosion. All fixed gear should be backed up wherever possible.

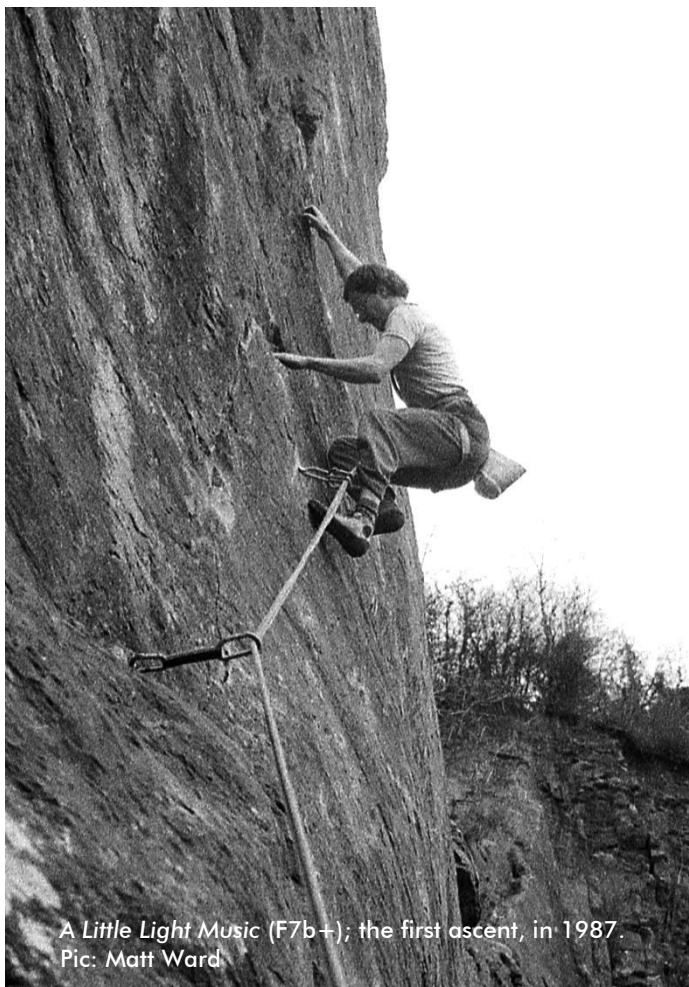
**No fixed gear is completely trustworthy. In line with the BMC Participation Statement you must realise that it is your decision and yours alone if you choose to use the bolts.**

### **History**

In 1962 Portishead Quarry was christened with the ever-popular *Pharos* by J Hanz and K Burton. Around that time came the ghost-like creations of the *Phantom Bolter* and *Phantom Groper*, two inspired aid-lines on the slender red wall. The Phantom, no doubt responsible for the rash of enigmatic bolts on other quarries in the area, was – like every effective ghost – never to reveal his or her identity! The quarry remained completely neglected until its rediscovery by local pioneers Keith Williams and Rob Walker in 1971. As a result, *Pharos* was temporarily renamed *Tiger Crack* but all the pair's other additions, like *Pickpocket*, were new. A few years later Williams, still passionate about exploring new venues, returned with protégé Martin Crocker in tow. Williams pointed the way; Crocker caught the 'new route bug' and wrapped up the finest remaining line on High Slab, *The Brink of Solarity*. Other ascents of his like *One Rainy Wish* required considerable excavation and mud in his eyes. At a similar time, local Gerry Jewson discovered the quarry, and worked through many of the same lines, plus a few others. Both he and Crocker had separately drafted their own guides, eventually the two putting their heads together to sort out 'who got their first'.

Fast forward to the 80s and local milkman, Frank Thompson, diverted from his round for a peep in the quarry. Without making a big deal of it, he soloed *The Baldest* and *Approaching Maturity*, and made a *Token Gesture* with Andy March, thereby ending an eight-year lull in developments. Consequently, climbers were reminded of the great line of bolts on the slender red wall. Could they be free-climbed? One night at The Port Of Call, Bristol's local watering hole, someone told Richard (Nipper) Harrison – and the rest was a foregone conclusion. The outcome, *Highway One*, gained rapid recognition as a regional quarry classic, at least one of the deeds of the Phantom Bolter having been laid to rest.

During late-1987 and early-1988, a scattering of sport climbs tentatively materialized in the West Country. On the protectionless blank boilerplate sheets of Portishead Quarry, the Ward/Crocker team custom-bolted *Bladder Ladder* and *A Little Light Music*, two tough nuggets. Crocker's interest in the quarry extended into the 90s, expressed through various nail-biting horrors on the 'tiniest of holds imaginable' – *Exfo '92* offered 'three star climbing on no star rock', according to the third ascensionist.



*A Little Light Music* (F7b+); the first ascent, in 1987.  
Pic: Matt Ward

The quarry's development was pretty much rounded off in 2013 by Gordon Jenkin who, on his quest for well-gear'd sport climbing, completed the gifting of three sport routes on an unclimbed sidewall, his younger son Rich taking the lead on the harder of the trio.

### **Crag Tour**

Most of the climbable rock lies to either side of the northeast corner of the quarry (*Eartheye Corner*). To the left is the North Face dominated by the slender, red-coloured wall and the long scoop of *Highway One*. Left again is a 'boilerplate slab', accompanied by *A Little Light Music*. To the right of the corner, in the centre of the East Face, is the 45-metre sweep of High Slab, the showpiece of the quarry, which hosts a rock-catch fence at 2/3<sup>rd</sup>s height. Right again, the crag diminishes in height to the South Col, which marks the top of an area of broken slabs. Finally on the right and angling forwards is a leaning wall containing a clutch of sport routes. For routes that top out, **descent** is by paths in the woods, although it is possible to climb down rock beneath the South Col, which is awkward and serious at the best of times.

## THE NORTH FACE (Boilerplate Slab area)

Left of centre in the smooth boilerplate slab is a pink and red-flecked scoop. The flake and grey wall immediately to the left gives the line of *Drummers of Burundi*.

### 1 **Drummers of Burundi** 12 metres F6c (24.12.87)

A rhythmic pitch on solid rock. Start at the base of the ramp that rises rightwards under the scoop. From a shattered ledge, climb up on good holds to the right end of a roof. Rock up to the left and continue delicately up the smooth wall to a twin-bolt abseil station. Four bolts. FA Martin Crocker, Matt Ward (originally climbed with one bolt runner)

### 2 **Digit Pizzicato** 12 metres F6c+/6b (18.5.95)

A fingery passage, for tough finger-tips. Start as for *Drummers of Burundi*. From the ramp on the right, make staccato pulls straight up the patchy-red face to a jug, tech 6b. (It's a lot easier if you weave in from the right, F6b.) Continue over a small prow to the twin-bolt belay of the previous route. Four bolts. FA Jim Clayton, John Savage, Chris Savage

### 3 \***A Little Light Music** 18 metres F7b+ (20.12.87)

A left-to-right serenade across the boilerplate promises some traumatically thin climbing. Start as for *Drummers of Burundi*. Follow the ramp rightwards to a ledge after 5 metres. Gain a jug up and right and span forever to the obvious finger-ledge. Standing on this, reach the ledge above and finish direct. (Three *Eco-bolts*.) Double-bolt belay. FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

3a Variation. **Payne's Pianissimo** For a F6c cop-out, you can go straight up onto easier ground instead of initiating the desperate traverse rightwards. Subsequently retro-bolted on a line up the edge of the slab, unknowing of the first ascent, presumably. FA Roger Payne (1990s); Roger reported this in a phone call to the author in the mid-90s.

### 4 **Legato Animato** 15 metres F7a (29.11.2012)

A smooth start, a rest, and then it all goes eccentric. This bisects *A Little Light Music*. Note that a hold near the top was sheared off by a strongman shortly after the first ascent, so – at 7a – expect to be blown away (7a+/7b now?). Start 4 metres right of *A Little Light Music*. Face climbing leads onto the resting ledge. Clip the BR on *A Little Light Music* if you like – keeps the rope out of the way – then stretch for a crystalline hand-ramp which escorts you left onto the headwall. At the final bolt, make a tongue-tied move across left to catch a big layaway. Finish left of the whitebeam tree to the twin-bolt abseil station. Five bolts. FA Martin Crocker, Aaron Lines

A minimalist bolt-line to the right is/was an open project awaiting on-sighting by an 8b hitman (I bolted it in the early-90s, so it must surely be done by now – Ed).

### 5 \***Viking Slip Beat** 12 metres F6b (20.1.2017)

Weird: the bolts are set in the boilerplate slab, but for the most part you climb the corner. Things buck up for an entertaining traverse left across the top of the boilerplate to the double-bolt belay of *A Little Light Music*. Keep low on the traverse, and well below the rubble! FA Mark Davies, Guy Percival

Right of the boilerplate slab is a corner and a projecting rounded arête. The four trad routes here appear dire; and should carry a Government Health Warning.

# The North Face Boilerplate slab area



## 6 **Photon** 7/12 metres E1 5a (9.75)

Best avoided, unless you lower off the bolt belay 7 metres up: that way you can take on the fine, though unprotected, start and give the appalling exit the thumbs down. Climb the slabby side of the projecting arête and then the slab to a bolt belay, or – if you must - pull over a collapsing bulge into vegetated terrain (original peg runner missing). Good tree above.  
FA Gerry Jewson

## 7 **A Route with A Name, No Doubt** 8 metres F6b (2020)

A sport route up the right-hand side of the arête; better than its lefty. Use the arête to start; then make a few moves up the wall on the right to a huge jug on the arête. Rock up onto the slab to gain a bolt belay in the corner. Three bolts.  
FA?

## 8 **Zee Zee Top** 12 metres E2 5b (17.12.2001)

Best avoided, unless clean (highly improbable). Start 3 metres right of the slabby arête of *Photon*. Move into a red niche, pull over a small roof, and climb the zigzag crack above.  
FA Ally Smith (roped solo)

## 9 **Ballista** 12 metres Severe (29.6.93)

Best avoided, as it's loose, sandy, and vegetated. Climb the rightward-leading flake and corner midway between *Photon* and *Baby Bird*. Tree belay.  
FA Simon Mooney, Neil Burton

**10 Mr Prickle** 12 metres Very Severe 4b (12.12.2001)

Best avoided, due to nightmare brambles to exit. The slab, groove, and corner next to *Ballista*.  
FA Ally Smith

THE NORTH FACE (*Highway One* area)

**11 Baby Bird** 54 metres Very Severe (1.63/8.73)

A well-positioned though poorly-protected ramble up the left edge of the red wall. Start below a shallow rightward-trending groove bounding the left-hand end of the wall.

**1** 27m. 4c. Climb the groove past a tree at 6 metres, and continue up the easier-angled ramp to bush belays above the huge, hanging block.

**2** 27m. Continue up the ramp and rounded rib to a good tree belay just below the top. Care is required with the rock.

FA J Hanz, K Burton (first pitch), M A Plano, S Clupson

**12 \*Bladder Ladder** 18 metres E5 6b F7b (24.12.87)

A slick and slate-like work of art. Start under a left-arcing crack in the left-hand side of the red wall. Force the short, slippery crack (gear required) and then take an involved line up the wall until a thin crack leads leftwards to the ramp of *Baby Bird*. Three *Eco-bolts*, and a peg – which could still be missing (needs a bolt here now). Scramble to bush belays and abseil off.

FA Matt Ward, Martin Crocker

**13 Token Gesture** 20 metres E4 6a (18.5.83)

An exciting pitch with a nasty start. Its original low peg runner (and some holds) fell out many years ago, and repeats are few. In the left-hand side of the red wall is a thin rightward-trending ramp and flake crack. Start as for *Bladder Ladder*. A trying start up the thin ramp leads rightwards to better holds in a niche. Follow the flake crack out right (peg) to the base of another crack which veers leftwards underneath the huge, hanging block. Climb the crack to join *Baby Bird*, and belay on bushes above. Abseil off.

FA Frank Thompson, Andy March

**14 More Please** 20 metres E4 6a (11.8.92)

From the *Token Gesture* niche (gear on the right) pull up to pockets (bolt). Make hard moves up, and then swing out left past the peg (missing?) on *Bladder Ladder* to the top.

FA Gordon Jenkin, Martin Crocker

**15 No More Please** 20 metres E5 6c (18.5.97)

From the bolt runner on *More Please*, climb slightly right (bolt), and finish direct with great improbability up a peeling, not appealing, wall. It sheds ‘holds’, and somehow regrows them.

FA Goi Ashmore, Alice Howe

**16 \*Exfo '92** 20 metres E6 6c F7c+ (29.6.92)

Almost a French 8a slab – but not quite. Grow your calluses for this formulaic finger-ripper! Start at the base of an undercut rightward-leaning rib, 3 metres right of *Token Gesture*. Climb direct and then rightwards, very thinly, to reach one of the better holds on the route. Move up, step left, and then climb diagonally rightwards onto a good foothold. Now traverse right, with a lunge for the arête to bring closure. Finish leftwards up the E2 crack of *Token Gesture* (take some nuts for this section). Five bolts.

FA Martin Crocker, Gordon Jenkin



**17 Luring Labia** 24 metres E4 6a (1960s/9.6.84)

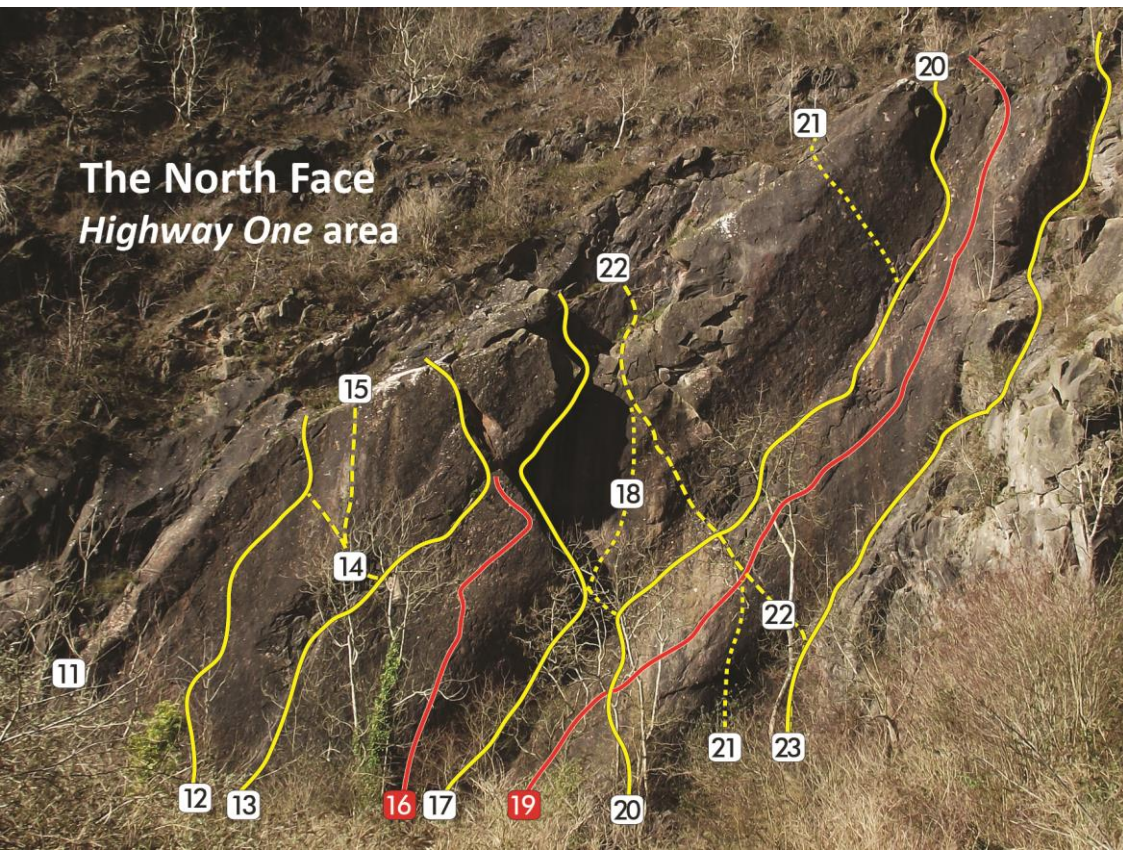
Looking for something utterly perverse? Then battle rightwards up the rising undercling in the centre of the wall, hauling over onto a small slab. At the top of the slab, throw caution to the wind and expedite a disturbing layback up the right-hand side of the huge hanging block. FA Richard Harrison, Greg Forward (effectively freeing the aid route *The Phantom Groper*).

**18 L'Homme Absurd** 25 metres E5 6c F7b+ (11.8.92)

An absurdly holdless problem, but free of the usual peeling flakes hereabouts. Start 3 metres right of the base of the rising undercling. Step onto a foot-ledge, and climb straight up the slab (bolt) to a thin diagonal crack: wire placements. Work diagonally left to the lowest point of the slab above the labium of *Luring Labia*. Climb the close-to-impossible wall above (two bolts) to reach the left-slanting crack of *Biggerballs* (peg). Either finish over a small roof and up a fretwork of interwoven blocks, or along the (desperate) crack of *Biggerballs*. FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

**19 A Route for the People** 40 metres F7a+ (1995)

Dedicated to the community by some mystery driller... the return of the 'phantom bolter' perhaps? A huge clip-up, taking the right-hand carriageway of *Highway One*. Start as for *L'Homme Absurd*. Step onto a foot-ledge, and climb straight up the slab (bolt) to a thin diagonal crack: wire placements. Trend right to the obvious good finger-ledge, stand up and continue on non-holds to the shattered flake on *Highway One* (wire). Reach right onto the face and, avoiding *Highway One*, follow a tiny flake past an undercut to jugs. Climb the slab more easily until improving holds lead directly up a scoop to the top. Ten stainless-steel bolts.



20 \*\*\***Highway One** 42 metres E4 6a (1960s/24.8.83)

The quarry's thoroughfare – though traffic often grinds to a halt! This is the elegant and incredibly intricate shallow scoop that runs the full height of the red wall. Take wires to supplement the eight bolts. Start 3 metres left of the main (northeast) corner. Climb cautiously up a rib (bold) to reach a crack (wires). Swing left along the crack, then teeter up to the right to gain the first of the spaced bolts. Work up the depression to a higher set of ledges under a final crack. Follow the crack dynamically to the top. Bolt and tree (6 metres above) belay.

FA Aided by unknown forces; freed by Richard Harrison, John Edwards



Highway One (E4)

21 **Agenda 21** 35 metres E5 6c F7b+ (9.12.95)

Very bouldery. Start below the main (northeast) corner of the quarry, at the right edge of the red wall. Gain height up the intense face left of the corner (two stainless-steel bolts) to reach a good finger-pocket on the rising crack of *Biggerballs*. Traverse left to the shattered flake on *Highway One* (wire), which is followed for 12 metres (bolts) to the point at which a thin crack sweeps off left into the headwall. Take the crack on increasingly small holds (two stainless-steel bolts) until a difficult lock reaches a fabulous mono-thread and a simple exit. FA Martin Crocker (unseconded)

22 **Biggerballs** 27 metres E4 6b (24.12.87)

Macho action aplenty, though with few macho enough, on the leftward-rising diagonal crack which crosses *Highway One*. Start below the main (northeast) corner of the quarry, as for *Agenda 21*. Climb the corner to good holds and runners above a small roof. Launch out left along the diagonal crack to gain ledges on *Highway One*. Follow the steeper continuation crack with great difficulty (peg) to the top of *Luring Labia*. Bush belay above. Abseil off. FA Martin Crocker, Matt Ward

### THE EAST BUTTRESS

To the right of the slender red wall are a corner and a broken, scrub-infested buttress, terminated on its right by a rib, all that remains of a gigantic unstable pillar which was felled in 2007 during rock-safety work. (You can find a picture gallery of the works on [www.martincrockerclimbing.com](http://www.martincrockerclimbing.com) including a pic of the unstable pillar in mid-flight). It seems hardly surprising that most people give this part of the cliff a wide berth.

23 **Eartheye Corner** 45 metres Very Severe 4a (21.9.75)

The main (northeast) corner of the quarry; unfortunately scrappy, loose and scrubby. Ideally it could do with a big clean-up (and hose down). Start below the corner, as for *Agenda 21*. Climb the corner to a steepening at 15 metres. Step right into a subsidiary right-angled corner and follow it to a ledge (optional poor belays). Move back left to the main corner and climb it, with a short excursion on the right, to the top. FA Martin Crocker, Keith Williams

The undistinguished **Split Personality** (48 metres Hard Severe 4a, FA Martin Crocker, Keith Williams: 21.9.75) takes a diagonal line across the lower part of the broken buttress, over a bulge, and then direct to a belay on the overlying slab. It finishes up the slab.

The following routes were lost to the rock-safety work.

**Fallen Pillar Chimney** 45 metres Severe (FA Rob Walker, Keith Williams: 14.7.71) took a squeeze-fissure in the collapsed pillar (you daren't squeeze too tightly).

**Great White** 45 metres E15b (FA A Randell, J Randell: 6.93) took the blunt hanging arête of the collapsed pillar, and exceeded gravity-defying expectations.

**Aphrodite** 45 metres E1 5c (FA P Wherlock: 1995) started up *One Rainy Wish* and then followed a crack in the right wall of the collapsed pillar.

## HIGH SLAB

*Descent:* For the routes that reach the top, take paths down rightwards through woodland and back around into the quarry. For the routes that lead towards the large bay, abseil from either of the two bolted abseil stations below the level of the rock-catch fence. Please do not use the fence or belay behind it. (Any issues with the fence including concerns about the quantity of rock collecting behind it should be reported to the BMC.)

### 24 \***One Rainy Wish** 45 metres Hard Severe 4a (12.8.75)

The right-angled corner bounding the left side of High Slab (which requires resurrecting from time to time). Take a full rack. Climb the corner with mounting interest to its top. Continue carefully rightwards up cracks in the slabs to the top of the cliff.

FA Martin Crocker, Keith Williams

### 25 \*\***The Brink of Solarity** 45 metres Hard Very Severe 4c (7.8.75)

A highly enjoyable route and the most varied on the slab. The climbing is steady and the protection better than expected. Start 2 metres right of the *One Rainy Wish* corner. Balance up a polished crack and continue up a slim groove to a small ledge. Climb thin cracks and then move right on pockets to a tall thin crack-line that leads to a broken headwall. Top out.

FA Martin Crocker, Keith Williams

Two very constrained eliminates are possible on High Slab: **Solus** (45 metres E3 5b, FA A Randell (solo): 6.93) climbs the slab between *One Rainy Wish* and *The Brink of Solarity* and is interesting throughout particularly in its upper half where it gains greater independence; while **Sandbagging Simon** (27 metres E2 5b; FA Simon Chen, Peter Sleet, Helen Barry: 19.5.91) gatecrashes the slab between *The Brink of Solarity* and *Pickpocket*, with little gear opportunity apart from side-runners. They are nonetheless worth doing if you've done everything else on the slab and you're having a good day.

### 26 \*\***Pickpocket** 45/27 metres Hard Very Severe 5a (8.71)

After a tenuous start, a fine pitch up the crack just left of centre of the slab. Start 4 metres right of the *One Rainy Wish* corner under the crack. Climb boldly up the lower, thin crack past the only 5a move on the route. Now, with good protection, follow the crack, bearing left into the tall thin crack of *The Brink of Solarity* which provides the best finish. Or, more popular, you can conclude the route at the left-hand of the two bolted abseil stations under the fence.

FA Rob Walker, Keith Williams (with two peg runners)

### 27 \***Approaching Maturity** 27 metres E3 5c (14.6.83)

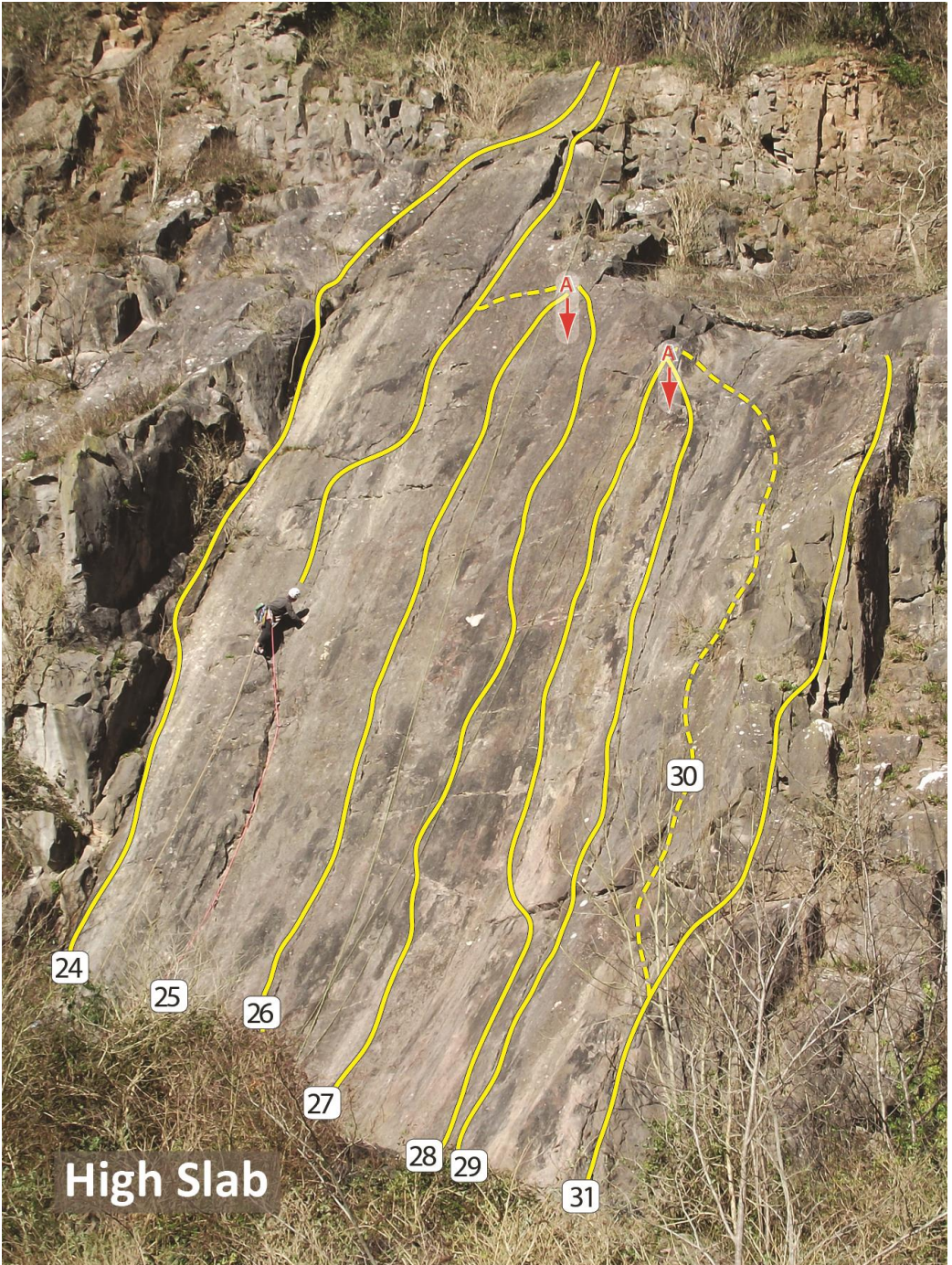
An interesting polish-free climb, but which has a very bold, though avoidable, start (after that, the protection is better than might be imagined). Climb straight up the slab an arm-span (or two) right of the central crack to better holds at 7 metres: various smeary sequences possible. Now climb direct, linking pockets and breaks to a bolt belay under the fence. A wise strategy might be to miss out the start by traversing in from a route to either side (low E2 then).

FA Frank Thompson (solo)

### 28 \***The Baldest** 27 metres Hard Very Severe 5a (18.5.83)

Climb the slight parallel cracks right of *Pickpocket* to a bolt belay below the fence. At this grade, sidle in from the crack of *Pharos* on the right to start. (Reaching the cracks direct involves unprotected smearing on slick rock and is at least E1.)

FA Frank Thompson (solo); named by Gerry Jewson who had left it unled from the 70s.





Above: Nigel Elliott on *The Baldest*. Pic: Martin Crocker

29 \***Pharos** 27 metres Hard Severe 4a (12.62)

The original route of High Slab. Fine climbing with good protection. Climb the distinct crack in the right-hand side of the slab to a bolt belay slightly to the left. Very polished, sadly.

FA J Hanz, K Burton

30 **Finesse** 27 metres Severe (9.75)

The slight scoop-line between *Pharos* and *The Arête*, starting up the latter (or former!).

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

31 **The Arête** 27 metres Very Difficult (7.7.71)

The right-hand arête of High Slab may be climbed by a number of lines.

FA Keith Williams, Rob Walker

32 **Retina Plexus** 60 metres Very Severe 4b (21.9.75)

An enjoyable traverse of High Slab. Climb *Pharos* for about 12 metres to where a crack branches left across the slab. Follow this, descending slightly, to join *Pickpocket*. Move up and then traverse leftwards along more breaks to the top of the corner of *One Rainy Wish* (possible belay), up which you finish. Originally the route was climbed with a traverse into *Eartheye Corner*, making for a grandiose girdle of the whole face.

FA Martin Crocker, Keith Williams

Variation: *A Drying Wind* 30m HS 4b (19.6.2020) This is a reverse version of *One Rainy Wish*, up which it starts. FA Colin Knowles, Evan Hall

The face to the right of High Slab becomes very broken. **Central Pillar** (25 metres Very Difficult, FA Keith Williams, Rob Walker: 14.7.71) is a poor climb which takes the shattered pillar in its centre via either the right-hand or left-hand crack to a loose exit. (Originally both cracks were described as independent routes.)

Underlying the South Col is a short slab furnished with four (well, five just about) minor pitches.

33 **Panache** 12 metres Difficult (17.7.71)

The left-hand of two diagonal cracks.

FA Mick Putnam, Keith Williams

34 **Bombast** 12 metres Severe (17.7.71)

The right-hand diagonal crack.

FA Keith Williams, Mick Putnam

You can also invent a solo between the two cracks at about 4b; an old problem (c. late-80s) that was never written up.

The next two routes are solos up the sheer black face right of the parallel cracks.

35 **Live Long and Prosper** 7m E3 6a (27.2.2015)

Totally independent of *Reggae in the Grass* and with a comfortable(ish) landing should things go awry. Start dead at the base of the *Bombast* crack. Climb up thinly to establish your left foot in an obvious crystal-filled pocket. Flexing micro-edges lead straight up the black wall to a niche and a swing left to scrambling ground.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping) *A farewell to Leonard Nimoy*.

36 **Reggae in the Grass** 8m E2 5b (24.12.87)

Unprotected yet rock-steady; it stays solid enough to on-sight solo: no need to take it any other way. Start 1.5 metres right of the *Bombast* crack. Negotiate a very thin sinuous groove to reasonable fingerholds on the face above. Climb direct to a large flake side-hold left of the corner, and then trend leftwards to escape scrub and tot.

FA Martin Crocker (on-sight solo)

Right again is a small sport crag outlier, the work of the indefatigable Gordon Jenkin. It is the short leaning grey wall you notice on the right as you near High Slab. The three bolt routes here take unusual strenuous slopers and introduce a third, not-unwelcome mood to climbing in this quarry. From left to right the grades are: F7a, F6b, F6b (or thereabouts).

Finally, a quick note to mention that there is a group of relatively recent sport routes in the wooded ravine just behind (northeast of) the quarry. Some of the rock here is suspect, but the central, F7c route is especially worth a fling, when it's dry. Anyway, if nothing else, you can grab some shade here, if needed.

Simply as a means of filling the final page of the fourth quad, here is a compilation of diagrams from the first Portishead Quarry topo care of Martin Crocker and Gerry Jewson, 1975. Just pen, pencil, and paper; yet they still survive.

