

Climbing in the Brecon Beacons National Park



Part 3: Ystradfellte Area

Martin Crocker

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Front Cover: *Shake that Shake Hole!* Pic: Jonathan Crocker

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:



Brecon Mountain Rescue Team

Donations for Brecon Mountain Rescue Team can be made online through localgiving; i.e.: <https://localgiving.org/brecon-mountain-rescue-team>



Longtown Mountain Rescue Team

Donations for Longtown Mountain Rescue Team can be made online through JustGiving i.e.: <https://www.justgiving.com/longtownmrt>
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Western Beacons Mountain Rescue Team

Donations for Western Brecon Mountain Rescue Team can be made online through JustGiving i.e.: <https://www.justgiving.com/westernbeacons>

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

Ystradfellte Area 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.

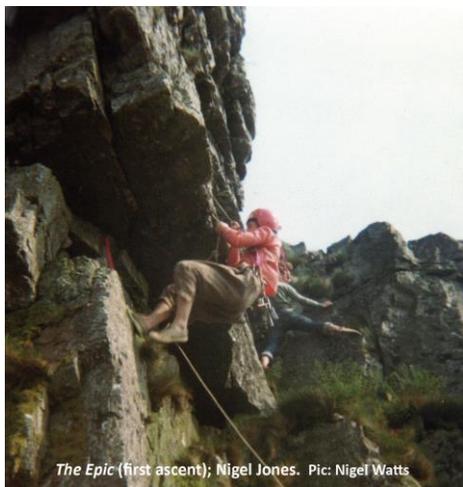
		CRAG CODE www.thebmc.co.uk	
Access	Check the Regional Access Database [RAD] on www.thebmc.co.uk for the latest access information		
Parking	Park carefully – avoid gateways and driveways		
Footpaths	Keep to established paths – leave gates as you find them		
Risk	Climbing can be dangerous – accept the 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 3: Ystradfellte Area

Thanks to Nigel Watts for his assistance.



Twrch Sandstone must be the enigma of South Wales climbing, there being limited recorded history attached to it. The potential of its main outcrops seems first to have been realised in the mid-60s, a 1967 new climbs guidebook by Colin Mortlock stating: ‘Gwaun Cefnygarreg – a long low scarp with good but short routes at its right end.’ A few years later the Aberdare-based Snoopy Climbing Club pioneered further routes there. Others must surely have visited, but may well have been deterred by access problems with the local farmer experienced by the Snoopies. Acting on some faded memories, in 2014 Martin Crocker checked out the cliff (that had become Access Land) and came away addicted to ‘Twrch’. As part of a wider campaign his Twrch Sandstone exploration took him onto the moors west of Ystradfellte. On his way to Carnau

Gwynion he looked back to see a promising Twrch Sandstone outcrop under Point 345: ‘some of the best quality rock I’ve climbed on in South Wales’, he later enthused. To his surprise he found no traces of chalk and proceeded to work out the cliff save one prize line. A few years later bouldering whirlwind Liam Fyffe found the crag, unaware of Crocker’s efforts, and duly compressed up *Sansa* – one of the best boulder problems in the region.

CADAIR FAWR (485m)

There are two limestone crags of interest on the hill of Cadair Fawr, not far from the A4059 ‘mountain road’. Though minor they are set in a spectacular spacious landscape, with views to Pen-y-Fan to the NW.

For both crags park in a three-car pull-in on the S side of the A4059 at OS 9782 1305.

Ethic: Soloing, bouldering.

Obscure Oasis OS 9832 1240

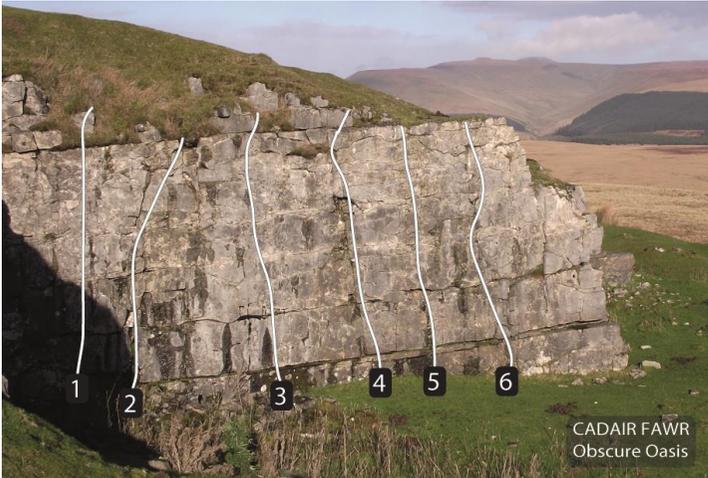
On the E flank of Cadair Fawr at 450m is a diminutive (4-metre high) sheltered S-facing limestone wall, which can provide an hour’s entertainment away from absolutely everything else (including a howling NW wind!). So far as is known, the problems as described were first climbed in 2014.

Approach

Walk SSE from the parking place for a km.

1 Solitary Dot on the Backbone of Wales V0- (4c) The left-most wall, exiting on a sharp jug protruding from the grass.

2 Dark Sky 3c The line of large holds to exit on curious grass jugs.



3 Glitch on the Earth's Curvature V1 (5c) The fine sheer wall with a thin start. The SS is V2 (6a).

4 As Far as the Eye Can See 4a The left-hand of two cracks.

5 Take your Breath Away V0 (5a) The steep wall between the two cracks on surprising holds (pic below).

6 Breathing Space V0 (5a) The right-hand crack: it looks easier than it is.

7 In Search of a Fair Quarry V2 (5c) Avoiding high jug-lines traverse the wall in either direction with feet in the higher of two horizontal breaks: pumpy (and V3 for the to-and-fro continuum). To pass time you can also engineer a traverse keeping feet in the lowest break.



Mountain Road Quarries OS 9786 1291

The crag is a 7- to 8-metre high sheer N-facing wall, the only viable climbing spot in the group of small limestone quarries overlooking the A4059 on the N slope of Cadair Fawr. A foot-friendly contrast to all the huge walk-ins of the Twrch Sandstone outcrops, it is a mere 200 metres from the car-park below. All the route miniatures were soloed above a mat after cleaning the top-outs, but most could be protected if a fall onto the stony ground is a turn-off. Lead and solo grades are given. There is a thread belay in rocks 20 metres back from the cliff-top.

The routes are described from left to right.

1 **Cavatina** 7m HVS 5a (E2) (9.4.2015)

Climb a little groove past a large undercut; then take the slight crackline to ledges and the top.
FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

2 **Capriccio** 7m VS 4c (HVS) (9.4.2015)

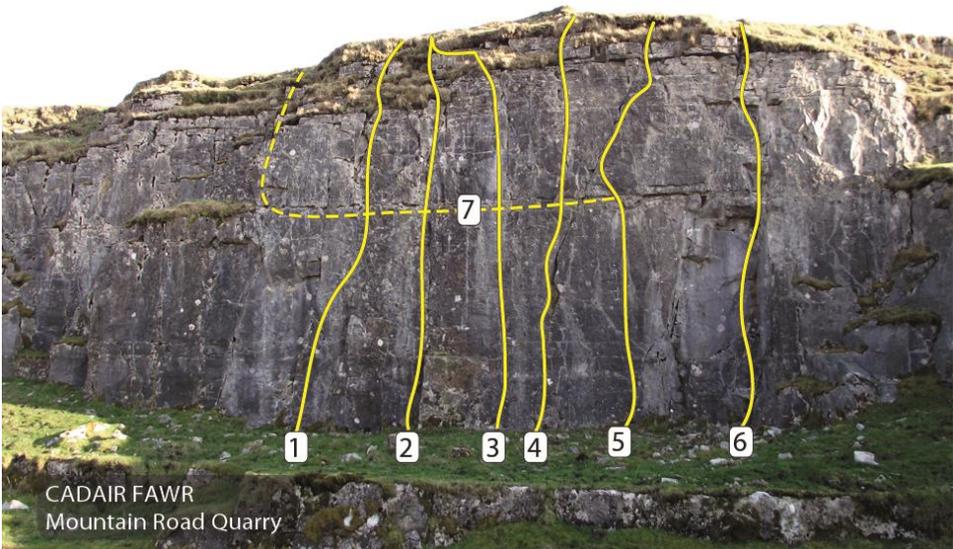
Climb the next crackline past a ledge at 3 metres.
FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

3 **Romanza** 7m E2 6a/b (E2) (9.4.2015)

An excellent eliminate, *almost* of boulder-problem height. Step up and then sketch up the sheer wall past a rounded hand-ledge (without resort to holds on routes to either side). Swing left at the top to escape up *Capriccio*.
FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

4 ***Elegia** 8m E1 5b (E3 5b) (9.4.2015)

The rightward-slanting crack; very protectable, but topping out is troubling. Climb the deep crack to a massive jug. Rock straight up and top out with care – digging hands into the grass.
FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)



5 *Žitná Street* 8m E3 6a/b (E5) (9.4.2015)

Intersects the upper half of the rightward-slanting crack. Using a sidepull on the right, climb the blank wall to a narrow overlap. Reach for a finger-jam for left hand and another above. Swing right and top out with care – digging hands into the grass.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

6 *Two Violins and Viola* 8m HVS 4b (HVS) (9.4.2015)

Hostile; shaky and unreliable rock. Climb the groove near the right-hand end of the cliff.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

7 *Drobnosti* 15m HVS 6a (9.4.2015)

A right-to-left bouldering traverse with a top-out. Follow *Žitná Street* to the narrow overlap (crux) and swing left onto the massive jug. Take the break-line left with hands until a metre past *Cavatina*; move up a short finishing arête to step left onto a long grass ledge 4 metres up.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

GARREG LYWD OS 9525 1249

Those hungry for grit won't mind that there are only two worthwhile Twrch Sandstone boulders on this diminutive edge overlooking the Afon Mellte 4 km north of Penderyn. A morning-sun venue, the edge faces SE. Landings are mostly reasonable and you may choose to leave your mat in the boot of your car. So far as is known, the problems as described were first climbed in 2014.

Approach

The crag is approached from a minor road which is the right turn a km after turning left from the A4059 towards Ystradfellte. Parking places are very limited; there is one at OS 9473 1195, on the E edge of a wood. From here either: a) enter Access Land to the N and contour boggily E to the crag, or walk along the road and immediately after *hepste fawr* farmhouse take a RoW on the left through a small field and into the Access Land. Both ways take about 10 minutes from the car.

Ethic: Bouldering

There is a huge tree between the two climb-worthy boulders.



West Boulder

A 3.5-metre high boulder with a bulging S face.

1 V0- (4c) The line on the left, above a boulder on the ground.

2 V1 (5b) An eliminate up the sheer centre of the S face avoiding the jammed block on problem 3.

3 V0 (4c/5a) The grooved arête on the right starting from the jammed block (5a if you don't want to pull on a hollow hold in the groove).

4 V1/2 (5b) From the jammed block cross right to grasp the far right arête; mantel out using the fin.

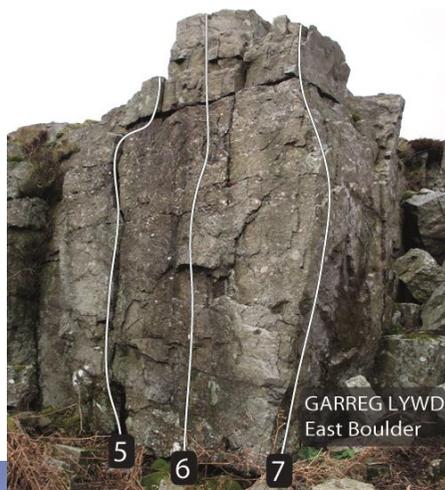
East Boulder

This is a 4-metre high boulder with a fine arête.

5 A Crack in the Mirror V0- (4c) The jamming crack on the left.

6 Been Seeking Low and High V0 (5a) The front face up the dark streak: good holds all the way.

7 Don't You Look at My Girlfriend (She's the only one I got) V0- (4c) The arête using holds on its right-hand side.



GWAUN CEFNYGARREG



GWAUN CEFNYGARREG OS 9406 1308 – 9430 1369

An important Twrch Sandstone crag of wonderful quartz conglomerate gritstone that would have been plastered with routes by the 60s had it been in The Peak. The best part of a km long, but broken into individual buttresses, the crag is mostly between 5 to 9 metres in height, though it does rise to 15 metres in a few places. Many of the routes can be soloed or bouldered (mat desirable/essential), though a rope and kit should be brought for the best-led routes.

The edge faces W towards Ystradfellte in a gorgeous position, and it is quick-drying. It is a viable winter-sun venue provided any wind from the W or NW isn't too strong (experience bordering on hypothermia has shown that anything at or above 10 mph is too strong, deep winter).

Approach:

The crag is on Access Land, thankfully now. It is possible to park with care on the verge of the minor road (boggy in winter) that runs beneath the crag N towards Castel Mellte (and in the direction of Ystradfellte Reservoir). This also enables you to keep an eye on your car (break-ins are not a rarity hereabouts). From the minor road take the signed RoW which leads onto Access Land and the right-hand section of the crag which is clearly visible from the road.

Ethic: Bouldering, soloing, trad

Gwaun Cefnygarreg Right

The best buttress hereabouts is situated far right: a clean and slabby outcrop 9 metres high. A prominent wide crack splits its right-hand section.

1 Penri 7m D (early/mid 1960s)

The right-hand arête; just about a route.

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70 (the Club comprising Nigel Jones, Lyn Greenway, Chris Greenway, Kevin Thomas, Mark Bennett, Nigel Watts)

2 *Tudur 9m S (early/mid 1960s)

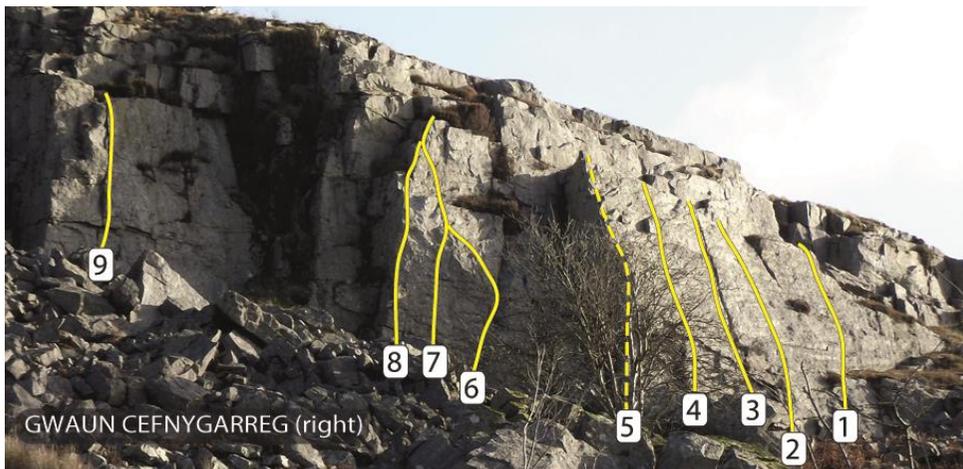
Pad up the protectionless slab right of the crack.

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70

3 Dewi 9m M (early/mid 1960s)

A.K.A *Boot Crack* (said to have fit the hiking boots of ‘the Snoopies’ perfectly).

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70



4 *Llewellyn 9m S (early/mid 1960s)

The protectionless slab left of the crack.

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70

5 Woodstock 9m S 4a (early/mid 1960s)

The left-hand arête, with a hard starting move; again unprotected.

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70

Next left is an impressive and essentially naked wall.

6 *Snoopy Hang On! 8m E3 5a/b (30.12.2014)

Pull into a little groove and gain a flat handhold. Stretch up left across the bulge for rounded edges on the white wall. Swing left, gain a hand-ledge left of a heather-clump and pull up to easier ground.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

7 **Quartz Grin 8m E3 6a (30.12.2014)

Immaculate. Climb straight up the bare wall on edges, past a toothy slot, to larger holds over the bulge. No gear: pad the landing first. (A V3 highball with multiple mats?)

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

8 **Drool on Snoopy** 8m E1 5a (7.12.2014)

Step up onto a block, and make a committing move up the left-hand arête of the wall. A jumble of jagged blocks lurks below, so watch it.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

The next wall to the left is split by a finger-crack.

9 **Finger-Crack** 7m HS 4b (early/mid 1960s)

Enter the crack with difficulty; and then climb more easily to the top. Well protected.

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70

10 **Charlie Brown** 8m Diff (early/mid 1960s)

The arête and groove left of the finger-crack.

FA Named by the Snoopy Climbing Club after their ascent c. 1969/70



The edge rises up leftwards, but it is mostly broken. A boulder reclines E on the rock-strewn slope.

11 **Peanuts** 7m VS 4b (1960/70)

Up and right of the boulder is a right-angled arête, seemingly supported by a drystone wall (but which is not man-made). From the wall of blocks, pull onto the left-hand side of the arête. Swing around to the right to exit in an updraft.

FA The Snoopy Climbing Club

Behind the boulder, on the edge, is a buttress capped by an overhang with three problems.

12 **Twang Band** V0 (5a) The right-hand wall.

13 **Matt's Rickenbacker** 4a The deep crack around the right-hand side of the overhang.

14 **Crockette's Play Central Hotel** V0- (4c) The left-hand arête.

15 **Kite Effect** D The arête of the boulder.

One hundred and fifty metres or so left again is another little buttress split by a crack.



16 **Snoopy** Diff (1969/70)

The deep kinked crack
FA The Snoopy Climbing Club

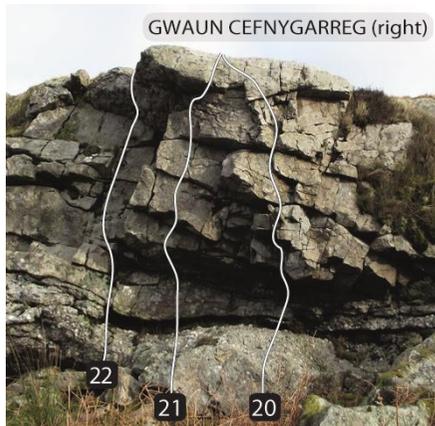
17 **Nige** V0 (5a) The wall immediately right of the crack.

18 **Don't Go Breaking Their Hearts** V0- (4c) (1969/70) The crack.

FA The Snoopy Climbing Club

19 **Babs** 4a The left-hand arête.

Further left is a cracked 5-metre high wall with overhangs above a flat landing, which provides some unassumingly fine bouldering. The tricky top-out feels quite high, so you'd best bring a mat.

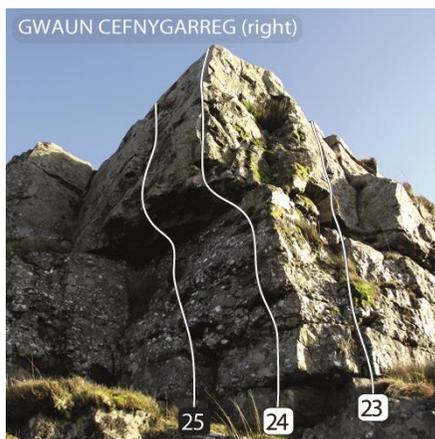


20 ***Calorie Count** V1 (5b) Climb flakes up to the rounded top; find a finger-jug up left and mantel over.

21 ***Obesity Time Bomb** V2 (5c) Climb through roofs and stretch to the finger-jug over the top; mantel out.

22 **Triple Cheese Topping** 4a The roof-capped groove on the left.

A little distance left is an impressive right-angled arête above some rowan trees.



23 **Watts New?** 4m S (1969/70)

The deep crack right of the arête.
FA The Snoopy Climbing Club

24 ***Rowan Arête** 6m Very Severe 4b (1969/70)

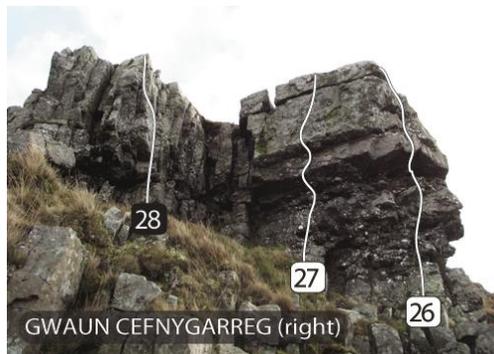
Avoiding the mossy groove on the right, climb steeply up the left-hand side of the arête to gain a series of jugs leading to a lovely top-out. (*Not* a boulder problem, given the huge drop.)

FA The Snoopy Climbing Club

25 **Where's Grabowski?** 4m V0- (4c) Climb the left

wall of the arête via a flake: a nice flat landing. Avoid the crack to the left.

Fifty metres to the left is a rounded arête.



26 Blob Arête 6m HVS 4c (1960s/70s or 30.12.2014)

Starting on huge holds climb the arête via a faint groove, and mantel out with a tricky move. (*Not* a boulder problem, given the huge drop underfoot.)

FA The Snoopy Climbing Club or Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

27 Black Cloud 5m E2 5b (2.7.2016)

Bad landing. Make a tricky move over the overlap to a break, and mantel out.

FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

28 Nipper V1 (5b) Climb the little rib just left, with a springy start.

Gwaun Cefnygarreg Centre

The cliff reaches its maximum height of 15 metres left of a wide grassy break. There is a series of fine undercut buttresses not far left of the break. The first of these is easily identifiable by a strong vertical crack in a groove above half height. If you're considering falling off do note the steepness of the hillside below; it's a long way to the bottom!

29 Crack in a Groove 12m VS 4b (1960s/70s)

Step up on a large pedestal; then climb a flake crack in the left wall of a corner to bulges. Pull into the grooved crack above and follow it steeply to the top.

FA The Snoopy Climbing Club

30 Arête in a Mountain 12m E1 5a/b (3.2.2015)

Bridge up the pedestal for a metre; then swing left onto the arête. Pull up past a rattling chockstone to ledges. Follow the straightforward crack rightwards to the exit of the preceding route.

Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

31 *Roof over Ystradfellte 12m E3 6a (3.2.2015)

A Jack and Jill phenomenon; safer to lead, and it has good gear once over the roof (E2?). Start under the guarding roof, just left of the right-hand arête. Undercut from a pocket to sinking holds well around the roof. Trend left onto a grass ledge. Finish up the front of the lovely blunt rib above.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

The following two routes are on the next buttress to the left.

32 *Jeepers Leepers** 12m E2 5c (1969/70 & 3.2.2015)

Superb; and well protected climbing up cracks on the front face. Climb the right-hand side of the initial arête to a roof (ancient leeper peg – not clipped). Climb the thin crack around the roof and onto the face. Continue to a bulge, and climb straight up the crack with difficulty to the top.

FA The Snoopy Climbing Club as the aid route *The Epic*. Freed by Martin Crocker (roped solo)

Can't really remember what we did although I would expect that any crack, groove or corner would have had its fair share of attention, as did the bloody overhangs. And yes I did have a leeper, always wondered what happened to it, don't suppose my piton hammer is there too? Nigel Jones

33 ***Hunt the Hammer** 12m E2 5b (3.2.2015)

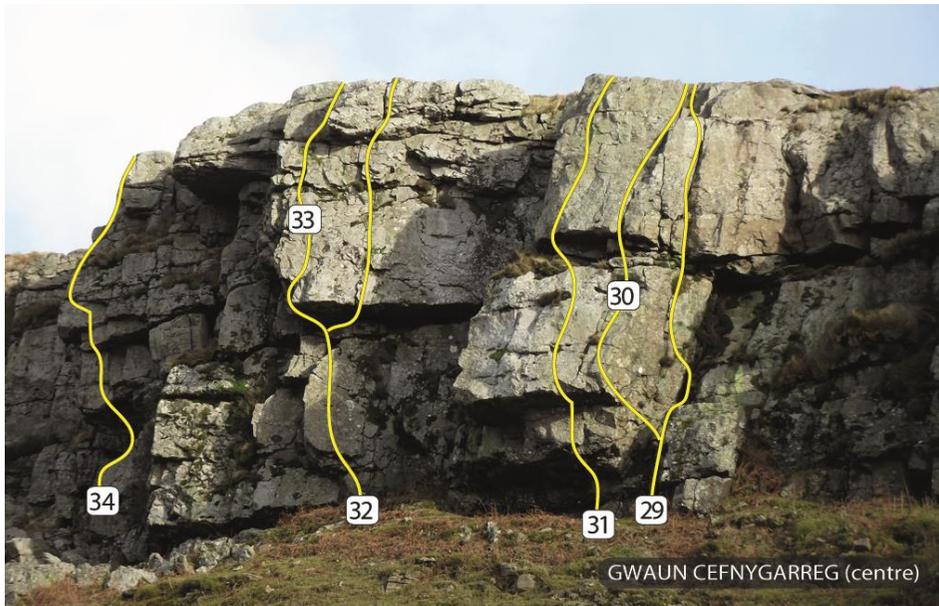
Follow *Jeepers Leepers* to the roof. Step left and climb the grooved arête, before stepping out right onto the face. Climb more easily up the arête to a flat ledge and the top.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

34 ***Grit Paradiso** 10m E2 5c (3.2.2015)

The bulging face and rib just round the corner; excellent. Climb up to the large roof below the face. Grab a break above (bomber gear) and make a long reach for a hold on the arête. Continue spectacularly to the top. Rock-spike belay (from which it is possible to abseil).

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)



Further left the cliff becomes split into two tiers by a grassy terrace. The lower tier extends left of a small through-cave in the underlying limestone and offers two upside down bouldering routes.



35 ****Abducted by Aliens** V4 (6a) A great workout traverse, virtually all on jugs. SS on a small boulder (left of a slightly larger one). Link jugs rightwards dropping to a bum-drag finish on a limestone sidehold after 7 metres. There are two limestone pedestals *en route* for feet (but ledges in the grass are out); it's easy to distinguish what's what.

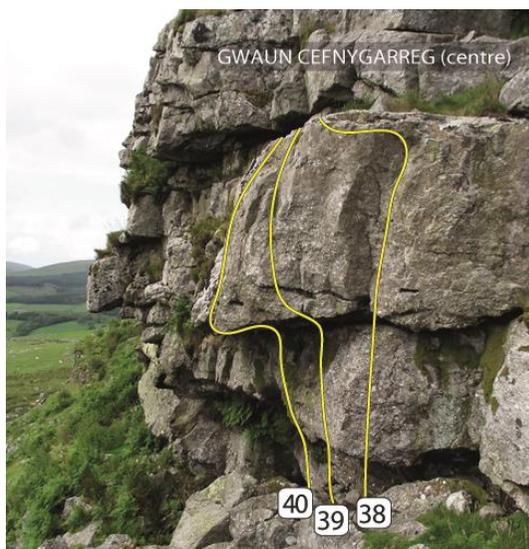


36 ***Area 51** V3 (6a) Start about 8 metres from the left-hand end from lie-down deep under the roof (feet on interior limestone band). Jug crawl under and over the roof.

There is a flat wall in the upper tier with an overlap and one problem.

37 **Schiaparelli** V0+ (5b) Climb up over the overlap on finger-edges.

Next comes a wide break in the cliff filled with boulders. The buttress to the left is fairly incoherent, if steep, yet offers a short wall on its right with three ‘problems’ and some roof routes to the left.



38 **Sixty Tomorrow** 6m E1 5c (V2)
(2.7.2016)

Take the slim groove with a long reach (right wall out of bounds). For the E1 hand-traverse left into exposure and mantel out.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

39 **Still Time to Mess Up** 6m E2 6a (V3)
(2.7.2016)

Start under the rib left of the slim groove. Make a long hard reach up left; hang a sloper and mantel out. Not a boulder problem without mat and spotter.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

40 **It's Hip** 6m E2 6a (V3) (18.7.2016)

Pull quirkily over the roof through two slight horns, and rock up to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo, above a mat)

It looks like the big beak of a roof 6 metres to the left will concede to tussles with muscles; and there's cam protection available beneath the roof too.

41 Ground Control to Major Tim 13m HVS 5a (1960s/70s or 18.7.2016)

Climb past a large rock bridge and up the obvious groove, which leads to the right-hand end of a triangular roof. Take cracks right of the roof to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

42 Juno 13m E1 6a (18.7.2016)

Well protected with cams. Climb the white wall 2 metres left of the groove via a stiff pull to reach a rounded pebbly ledge under the left-hand side of the roof. Pull up right over the roof and climb an easy wall to finish.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

43 *Splash Mountain 13m E3 6b (18.7.2016)

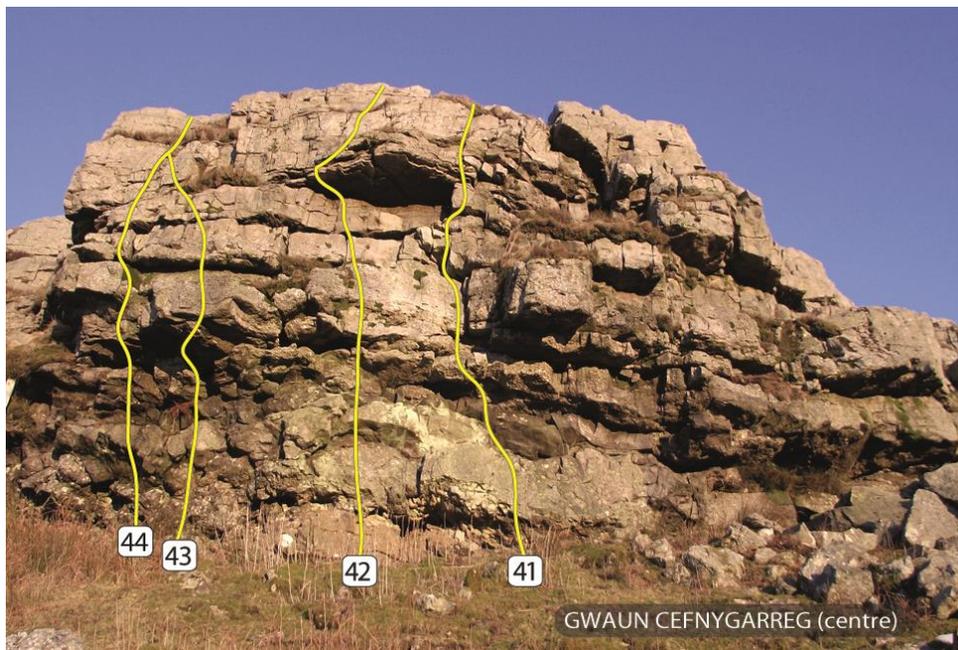
A protectable 2-metre wide roof, mostly on jugs. Start at a small hole at the base of the cliff. Pull up to a rail for right hand on the lip of the roof (*blind* small cam; probably best check how to place it beforehand). Reach a pebble over the lip and power over. From a ledge, finish up the next route.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo after using drips of water to cool off : 30 degrees C that day)

44 *Top of To Do List 13m E2 5c (18.7.2016)

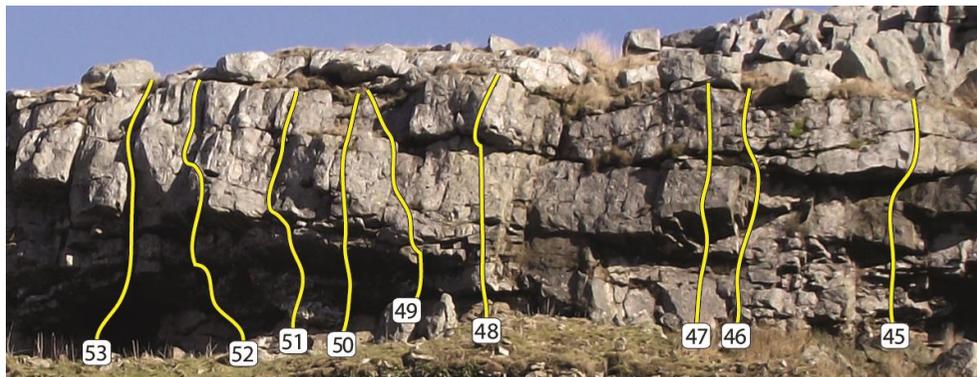
Pretty much a solo, though a cam can be placed strenuously just above the bulge. Start below an open green hole, at 5 metres, in the bulges. Gain the hole without duress; then yard up and left to a ledge. Climb the easy wall to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)



Gwaun Cefnygarreg Left: The Kuiper Belt

The crag hereabouts extends as a narrow band above a 5-metre high cliff of Carboniferous limestone. Between the two is a narrow terrace, the effective width of which diminishes as you ape out across overhangs above it. Seriously: there is the ever-present danger of bouncing off the terrace and time-travelling back to certain catastrophe in the Lower Carboniferous period. Spotters might help or hinder; but a check on a top-rope might be a way forward especially if you're here on your lonesome. **It is possibly best to disregard the V grades altogether.**



45 **Ice Hunter** 6m E1 5c (9.2.2015)

Start under overhangs at the right-hand end of the terrace. Pull up on jugs to a break (gear) and then stretch for a jug high in a hanging rib. Swing around to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

46 **CosmoQuest** 6m E2 5b (9.2.2015)

Climb a corner right of a low roof and gain a higher roof. Pull around left to the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

47 ***Infrared Excess** 6m E1 6a/b (V3) (9.2.2015)

Smokin'! Reach a jug in the lip of the low roof, and power up to a large sloper above. Finish much more easily up the headwall.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

48 **Pics from Pluto** 6m HVS 5a (24.1.2015)

Start just right of two boulders embedded in the terrace. Climb a rib onto the white wall and reach a break above. Pull over the roof and finish up a little headwall. Best led since there is decent gear.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

49 **Varuna** 6m VS 4a (9.2.2015)

Start from the two boulders and trend left on pockets onto a ledge near the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

50 **Haumea** 6m E2 5b (9.2.2015)

Immediately left of the two boulders pull up on good holds at the roof; but then make a rather fierce pull to gain the wall above. Finish direct.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

51 ***Makemake** 6m E2 5b (V1) (24.1.2015)

Starting 2 metres left of the two boulders, pull through the roof to a great large pocket. Move up left into a groove with difficulty and exit direct. No gear until near the top.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

52 ****Eccentric Orbit** 6m E3 6a (V3) (24.1.2015)

A textbook micro-route. Start below a wide roof stack 2 metres right of the off-width. From jugs in the roof make a huge reach round to a jug-ledge over the lip. Swing out left into a hanging groove, which leads to the top. No gear.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

53 **Quaoar** 6m E3 5c (V2) (24.1.2015)

Grovel awkwardly into the off-width and battle out using good holds on the right-hand rib and the odd jam.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

To the left the terrace becomes overhung by the fantabulous arête of *Orbital Resonance*. Right of a loose-looking crack to the right is:

54 **No Cure for Kuiperoids** V2 (6a) A metre right of the crack gain the first of a series of pockets in the steep wall awkwardly (for the tall, if no one else). Mantel right at the top.

55 ***Orbital Resonance** 6m E2 5b (9.2.2015)

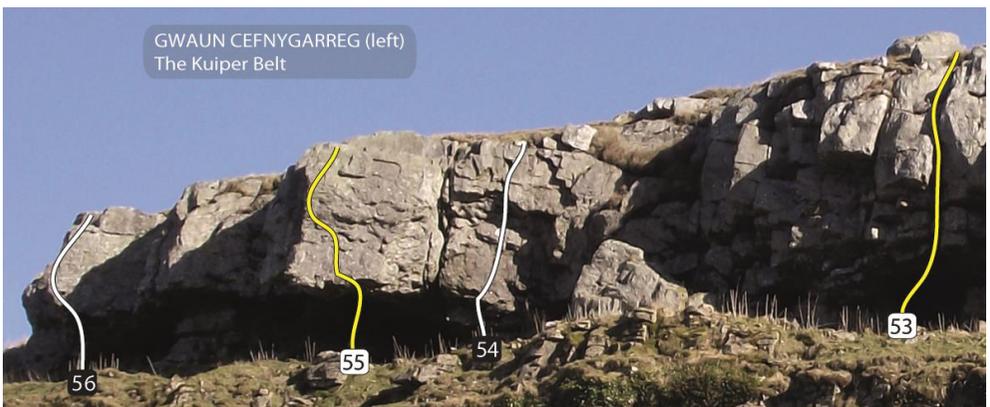
Infinitely eccentric but not to be soloed! From the square limestone block on the edge of the terrace reach pockets (good gear) and then rock up left onto the arête. Take its right-hand side past a flake, well out in space.

FA Martin Crocker (roped solo)

56 ***Dwarf Planet** V2 (6a) Engage the sharp hanging arête on the other side of the through-cave, a cheval. Bounce off the terrace at your peril.

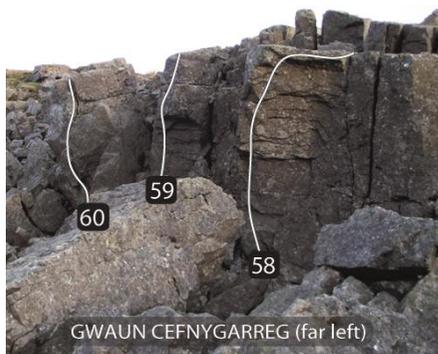
57 **Planetesimal** V0+ (5a/b)

The wall and groove left of *Dwarf Planet*; safer than its neighbour.



Gwaun Cefnygarreg Far Left

At the far left-hand end of the edge a stone wall and fence intersect the cliff. Fifty metres before the stone wall and fence is a small boulder-field at a slightly higher level. Very obscure.



58 **El Indio** V2 (6a) A little leaning arête provides a quick dyno and a swing right to mantel.

59 **For a Few Boulders More** V0 (5a) The rounded rib right of a cracked block

60 **Juan Wild** V0- (4c) The crack in the leaning block.

61 **Crisp Work** 6m HVS 4c (30.12.2014)

Climb the centre of the sheer face ten metres right of the wall and fence, on positive edges.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)



POINT 345 OS 9223 1346

A beautiful if limited bouldering crag hosting possibly the best rock in SE Wales: pristine Twrch Sandstone gritstone (which sits on a bed of Carboniferous limestone exposed at the base). While not situated on Access Land it is approachable from a RoW without having to cross any fences or walls. Facing W it enjoys an open moorland setting and it is quick-drying.

Strong lines abound, and they're not as hard as they look. Landings are mixed (some grassy, some rocky), and – while many routes were soloed ground-up without any padding – it will be worth carrying a mat the short distance. So far as is known, the great majority of the problems as described were first climbed in January, 2015. However, it is difficult to believe that this was the first time the crag had been climbed upon: any offers?

Approach

Park in the free car-park next to the crossroads in the village of Ystradfellte. Walk up the tarmacked no through road which heads W uphill and becomes, in the same direction, a rough track. Follow it to a gate in the stone wall enclosing the high moorland Access Land. Turn left and follow the wall for 200 metres to an opening in the wall right of a gate. Go through the opening and walk S keeping right of a fence (pasture on S side) to reach the crag in 200 metres (which is not visible initially).

Ethic: Bouldering

On the extreme left is a 3-metre high boulder under a tree. Just left of this the rounded left arête of a shorter wall provides a SS V2 (5c).

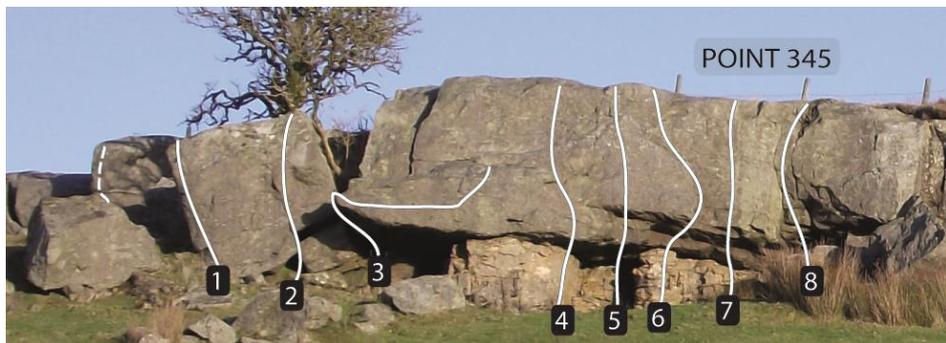
1 **Meghan Moans** V2 (5c) The left arête of the boulder, starting low and taken on its right.

2 **Kate Wows** V1 (5b) Starting low climb the left-hand side of the right arête taking care not to disturb the lichens *en route*. Only 4a from standing.

3 ***Carb Free Diet** V4 (6a) A left to right traverse of the undercut nose. SS in the small cave; then hand-traverse and hook around right until a rock-up on a jug completes the battle. No (Carb') limestone allowed for feet: keep them on the sandstone. (It can be done in reverse, starting from a big pocket: *The Shuffle*, V3 (6a).)

4 4a The overhang left of the left-kinking crack.

5 **Sitck That!** V3 (6a) Eliminate bulge left of the left-kinking crack; start low on the limestone.



6 ***Release the Gecko** 4a From SS dart up the left-kinking crack through the overhang.

7 ***Legless Lizard** V3 (6a) An eliminate over the bulge right of the left-kinking crack; start low, on the limestone. Nice moves on positive finger-edges.

8 **Traction** V3 (6a) SS the overhanging flake crack above back-breaker boulders (not used).

Beyond a short broken section (one very easy morsel up an arête) the crag musters up its full (5/6 metre) height in the form of a superb buttress. The first two problems take its sheer left wall.

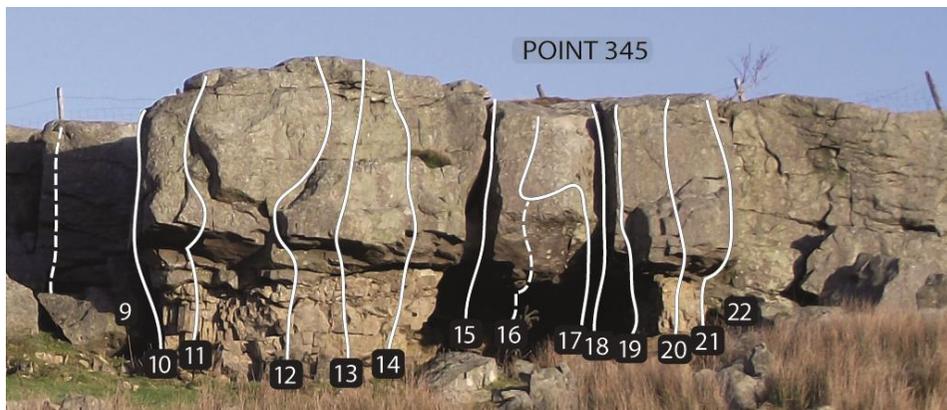
9 **Flying Wallenda** V0+ (5a/b) Balance right from a boulder onto the lip of the overhang and exit using a blind black crack: committing.

10 ***Rebel Heart** V2 (5c) Start under the blunt arête and – using two good crimps – rock up to the blind black crack.

11 *****Shake that Shake Hole** V2 (5c) High. Start right of the arête under the overhang, reach over to a long layaway, and grab a jug. Pull up the grooved arête to an easy exit. A grassy landing encourages. There is an easier left-hand start (V1, 5b) which uses a runnelled hold.

12 ***Backbone of a Paramecium** V0- (4c) On the front of the buttress bounce over the overhang using a flake crack.

13 **CL to MG** V3 (6a) Starting from low, on the limestone, crank over the small roof.



Just right are two ominous hanging cracks above a cave.

14 **Left Knee Won't Work** V0 (5a) Take the juggy overhang left of the left-hand crack, with a rock-up left. Don't let the arthritis keep you down.

15 ***The Horrorfice** V0 (5a) Squeeze into the pod in the left-hand crack, and slither for the top.

16 *****Sansa** V9 (6c) Utter mind-boggling compression awesomeness. From crouch at the back of the cave power out using opposing slopers to emerge onto the hanging wall. Multiple mats a must.

17 ***Beast from the East** V4 (6a/b) Start immediately left of *Shake ya Booty* and (without using the crack or sidewall – contrived) throw one for the obvious deep pocket. Swing around left onto the hanging wall whereupon mild campus tactics get the job done.

18 ****Shake ya Booty** V0+ (5b) Enter the right-hand crack strenuously, and exit on good holds.

19 ***Cuckoo Wrasse** V3 (6a) Possibly hard-V2. Take the sharp right arête of *Shake ya Booty* via the high finger-jug. A harder SS is possible.

20 **Flippy the Burger** V2 (5c) Pull up direct over the overhang above a dire landing; start low.

21 ***Butt Surely** V2 (5c) SS and climb the arête at the right-hand end of the overhang.

22 **Striker Muto** V2 (6a) The sheer S-facing wall; start with a hard step up onto the shelf under the easy descent corner (morpho).

Finally comes the easy descent corner (D) which is topped by a small rowan tree.



CARNAU GWYNION (398m)

This is the lush green rolling limestone 1.5 km NW of Ystradfellte. Craggy and open, and with interesting geomorphology, it offers two minor crags as well as some magnificent 360-degree views.

Fort Crag OS 9173 1408

A clean-cut if trivial limestone facet with a wonderful outlook that justifies a 10-minute romp while exploring the area. The rock has a Gower-type weathering. It is located 100 metres N of the Gelli-nedd Iron Age fort and faces W. So far as is known, the problems as described were first climbed in 2014.

Ethic: Bouldering

The problems are described from left to right.

- 1 **Gelli-nedd Mantel** V0 (5a) A surprisingly tricky mantel onto a narrow hold, far left.
- 2 **Citadel Crack** V0- (4c) The vertical crack.
- 3 **Karstlands** V0- (4c) The weakness just right.
- 4 **Fortress Wall** V0- (4c) The steep wall just before a narrow corner.
- 5 **Sent, by Iron Age Boulderers** V0+ (5a) The next steep wall, using a good finger-edge for right hand to start you off.
- 6 **Stronghold** 4a The pleasant little wall.
- 7 **Britannia Secunda** D The square wall, far right.





Sarn Helen · Pic: Jonathan Crocker

Lime Kiln Quarry OS 9215 1462

The N edge of the hill has been quarried into a cliff of up to 9 metres in height, which is mostly stepped with ledges. A deep cave far left (Ogof Gwynion) undercuts a steep slabby wall.

Here an afternoon's summer frolicking with the lambs can be complemented by a few interesting short limestone routes. But it is N facing and to be avoided on windy winter days! Take care with the rock – some of it is weak. Multiple stakes in the plateau above evidence outdoor group abseil use.

Ethic: Bouldering, soloing, trad.

1 **Troglodyte** 6m HVS 4c (17.7.2015)

Pull over the left-hand side of the cave roof and make a difficult move to reach the second of two hand-ledges. The possible direct finish is very loose, so hand-traverse and exit up a wide fissure.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

2 ***Dyn Ogof** 8m E2 6a (17.7.2015)

A route of substance; protectable apart from the crux start. Using a shaky bolus for left hand make a powerful long reach over the right-hand side of the roof. Follow cracks above to a hand-ledge. Pull up and mantel onto the top.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

Right of the cave is a narrow wall with a textured W-facing wall to its right.

3 **Evan Bevan** 6m E1 5b (17.7.2015)

Using the right-hand arête pull up to a break. Climb the centre of the wall on small holds to a tricky mantel onto a grass ledge at the top.
FA Martin Crocker (solo)

4 **Kiln Route** 6m VS 4c (17.7.2015)

Climb the corner to ledges.
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

5 **Mr Nasty** 6m E1 5a (17.7.2015)

Rather squeezed. Avoiding the corner (and the next route!) climb the left arête of the grey textured wall, passing a few weak flakes with a very light touch. Rocks below!
FA Martin Crocker (o-s solo)

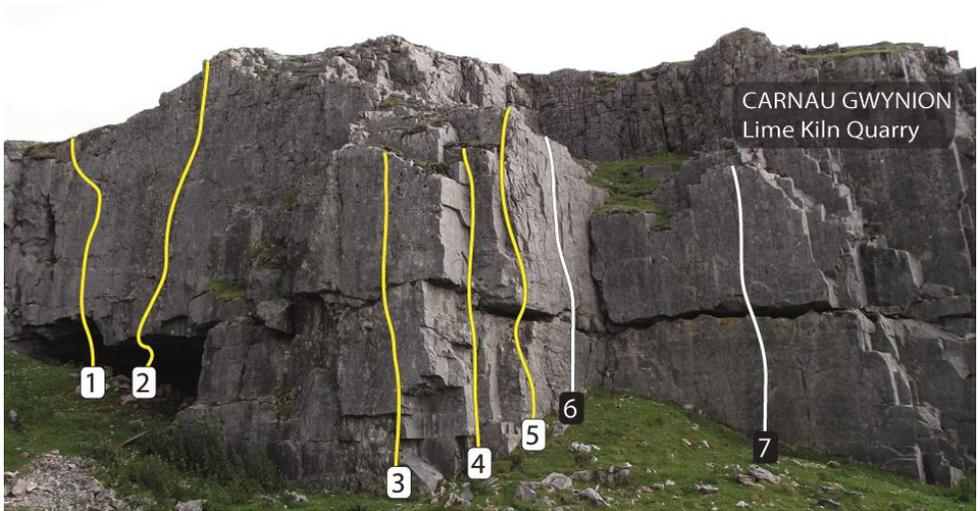
6 ***Sarn Helen** 4b The textured grey wall on pleasureable holds.

A tapering wall right of the short corner provides:

7 **Tall to Order** 5m V0- to V0 (4c to 5b) Gain a wide dusty break. Using a mono for right hand mantel onto a narrow foot-ledge. Which part of the top you now reach determines the grade: go for the longest reach possible – there's flat grass below.

There is a lower E-facing tier of sorts, but with little of interest here apart from the

8 **Tombstone** V0 (5a) A charming rock-up and rounded mantel.



CWM PWLL-Y-RHYD OS 9114 1375

The limestone gorge of the Nedd Fechan is better noted for its caving than its climbing (Little Neath Cave is a classic). Much of the limestone exposed or outcropping along the banks of the riverbed is coated liberally with moss and it drips profusely.

Probably of most interest, certainly from a novelty point of view, are the sides of the Pwll-y-Rhyd insurgence itself where some short but way-hard and spooky trad routes look possible.

Approach

Take the road between Pont Ned Fechan and Ystradfellte and turn off N towards Berthlwyd Farm along a minor road. After almost a km turn left down a steep track to a parking spot on the left just before a bridge over the Nedd Fechan. Follow the riverbed (often dry outside winter) S to Cwm Pwll-y-Rhyd (300 metres from the parking).



Ethic: Trad/soloing

Twenty-five metres before the insurgence is a triangular face undercut by substantial roof.

1 ***Yn Dwf n Dwr** 8m E3 6a (6.5.2016)

Aerobic aeronautics. Solo grade (although a left-hand lead version looks possible without using the jug, but the gear would be blind). Grope around for a finger-jam in a blind crack. Span out right to the mega-jug, cut loose, and pull up to easier ground. Climb the right-hand of the two ash trees to top out.

FA Martin Crocker (solo)

MAES Y GAWNEN OS 9042 1373 – 90691350

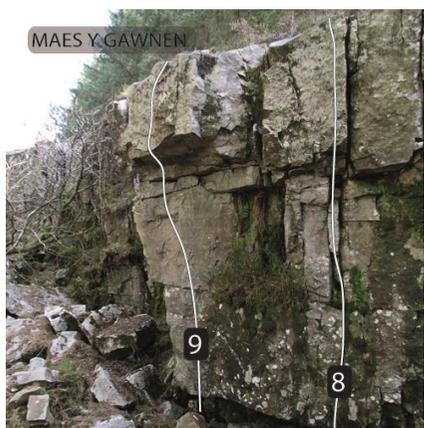
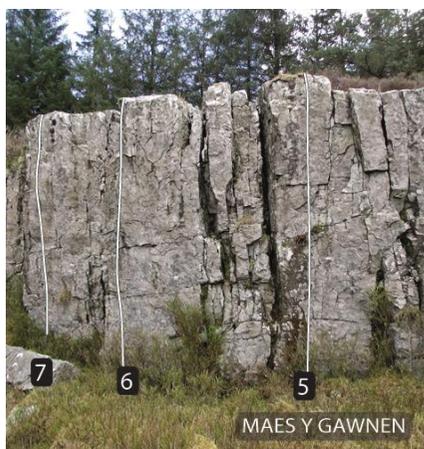
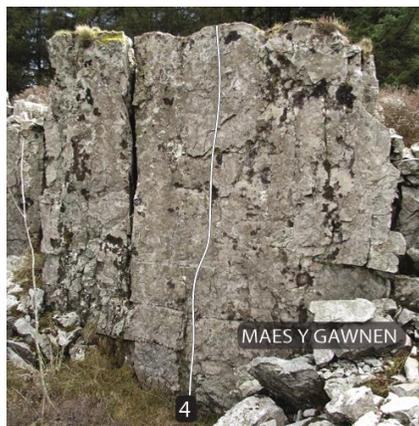
This is a 4/5-metre high Twrch Sandstone edge set in conifer woodland to the east of the Nedd Fechan. While a candidate for the most obscure crag in the area, it is worth a visit for a few of the problems and just possibly for a thorough clean-up. The landings are mostly rocky, so you might like to take some padding. Its sheltered E to NE orientation makes it useful in W howlers. So far as is known, the problems as described were first climbed in 2015 and 2016.

Approach

Park as for Cwm Pwll-y-Rhyd. Walk over the bridge and follow the track up a dry valley to a T-junction. The quickest access is to turn left, walk along this track for 50 metres before vaulting the fence on the right into the plantation. Scramble straight up to intersect the crag in the region of a metal structure on top. It is also possible to reach the right-hand end of the edge by turning right at the T-junction and following the forestry track into the plantation whereupon the crag will become visible through a fire break 300 metres away. A stone wall meets the crag near its right-hand end.

Ethic: Bouldering

The routes are described from right to left.



The first problems are located on a boulder 100 metres right of the stone wall. The playful lichens don't really get in the way.

1 **Gross Negligence** V2 (5c) An eliminate up the flat orange face (large holds in centre not used).

2 **The 766** V0 (5a) Good holds up the centre.

3 **The 96** V0 (5a) The left-hand arête; surprisingly troublesome – well, at least at the start.

Some way left is a face with a crack left of centre.

4 V0 (4c) Climb the clean face right of the crack.

Before the stone wall is a face divided by twin cracks.

5 V1 (5b) Climb the narrow face right of the cracks. Don't use the sharp rattling flake.

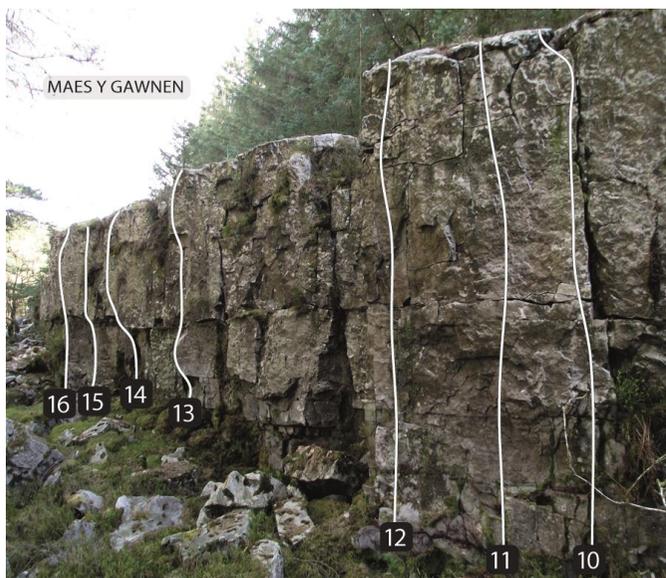
6 V1 (5b) The rib left of the twin cracks.

7 V1 (5b) The rib left again.

Walk along the top of the crag and drop down below it after about 150 metres. Here is one of a series of long but predictably mostly dirty walls. An obvious clean square nose indicates the first problems.

8 **Muck** 4a The mucky jam-crack right of the nose.

9 ***Eight Days a Week** V0 (5a) The wall and nose.



The next developed section is a cleaned 4.5-metre high face with a crack on the right.

10 Gravedigger V0
(5a) The finger-crack.

11 *Most Excellent Fancy V2 (5c) Crimp up the leaning face left of the crack.

12 Memento Mori V1
(5a/b) The arête: a sloping finish so take care if you're matless.

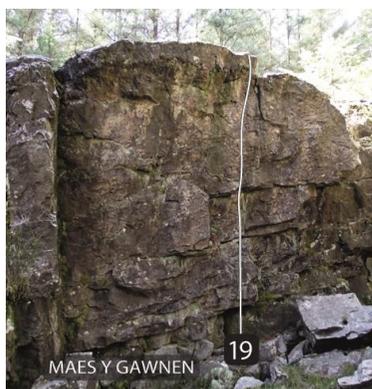
13 Yorick V1 (5b) The scooped arête exiting on two eye-sockets.

14 *Corbynmight V3 (6a) The roof and arête. The SS is even better, and V4.

15 A Touch of the Trotskys V0- (4c) A jug-fest; the fun wall 2 metres right of the arête.

16 A Touch of the McCluskeys V0+ (5b) The arête, via a hand-ledge for left hand.

One hundred metres left of an estranged metal 'signalbox' at the top of the crag is a fine sharp arête.



17 Snot Grot V1
(5b) Grunge: take the right-hand side of the arête using the crack on the right.

18 *Men in the Shadows Staying out of the Spotlight V2 (6a) Superb: the left-hand side of the arête.

Fifty or so metres further left is an isolated leaning face.

19 M4 Mono V3 (6a) There is a vertical hairline crack above half height. Climb straight up to the crack (no block on right) and stretch for an unobvious mono. Good holds to exit, fortunately.