

DESERT ISLAND CLIMBS - RON KENYON

Climbing is such a varied game — there are the glorious sun kissed rocks of Spain and the cold ice clad cliffs of the Ben; the special techniques required for grit and the subtle thuggery of limestone; easy days soloing a classic mountain route or clipping bolts, which give security but not always guarantee success. I thought it would be good to look at various types of the climbing game and take one climb from each of them.

Lakes Rock

Where do I begin? Having lived in this area from year zero I often feel it would be good to have a change of scene. The Lakes however have a variety and I still find plenty to do — I would find more if I could shift up a gear or two!

There are good routes at all grades - going through the grades with the likes of Moss Ghyll Groove; Tophet Wall and Arete Chimney and Crack: Eliminate A; Overhanging Bastion and Haste Knot: Nimrod; Raindrop and Pink Panther : Cruel Sister; Humdrum and White Wizard. What to take to the Desert Island - one route which does bring back memories is Saxon — those moves left from the arete just flow along followed by the crack — and what a position.

Eden Rock

Climbers in the Penrith area have always been drawn to the Lakes and the Eden Valley crags have always taken second fiddle. The delights (before the now dense vegetation) of Cowrake have been known for many years. It was in the 70s when we had a lot of fun developing the crags throughout the valley. Lazony was the first to be discovered and the adventure of climbing there followed with the likes of Merry Monk; Silicosis, Fingers and Hernia — unfortunately access problems now forbid enjoyment of this great place. Armathwaite was discovered by Tim Dale on a geological trip from school. At first I wasn't too impressed with the outcrop. As the routes flowed it was evident that this place was good. Time and Motion Man was a pleasing find and the likes of Flasherman and Monkeyhanger were fine lines. Many much harder routes such as the Exorcist, Dome Slab and Free and Easy were stamped on the place by the Carlisle gang of four. Kings Meaburn was unearthed (or univved) and the likes of the Flake; Marik and the Phall attract but how sound as some of the others ! There are a lot of good routes in the valley — which one should I take — can I take Time and Motion Man and the rest of the bouldering area to its right?

Grit Rock

This rock only comes in small vertical lumps but there are so many marvellous routes with lots of tales and history associated. It takes some time to get used to the jamming and the rounded nature of the ledges and the lack of proper holds. You have to climb the rock!! So many routes - and so, so many still to do. Right Unconquerable, Suicide Wall, Valkyrie, Peapod, Great Western, NW Girdle - I would love to do the likes of Edge Lane, London Wall and Braille Trail. Which one to take — let's go for Fern Hill

Lime Rock

I have never got to grips with limestone — I should have worked harder at the steep stuff — or waited for the bolts. Topping out on a limestone route always seems to be an achievement - the likes

of Crossbones and Wombat suck in the atmosphere; Kilnsey Main Overhang (with aid a long time ago) was a good way to start the year; Surplum and Debauchery are brilliant. The route to take must be Carnage — that top pitch is amazing.

Scot Rock

A whole country to choose from. Mountain crags and sea cliffs — from brilliant one pitchers such as Diabaig Pillar and Grey Panther — to marvellous mountain days with the likes of Steeple and the Pin; Shibbleth and Yoyo and more! The route which often comes to mind is on “Big Ben”, was done with Chris and in interesting conditions with a bergschrund — Minus One Gully Buttress is often overlooked but at over a 1000 feet long from base all the way to the summit gives a lot for your money.

Welsh Rock

There is so much rock crammed into North Wales it has for long been a mecca for climbing in Britain. Such a variety with the likes of mountain crags — Cloggy (Shrike, West Buttress Eliminate); Cryn Las (The Grooves) and Dinas Mot (Nexus, Black Shadow) and the Cromlech (Cenotaph Corner; Left Wall) : the Slate Quarries (Pull My Daisy; Comes the Dervish; Ride the Wild Surf): North Wales Limestone (limestone and I have never really got together); don't forget Tremadoc (Scratch Arete and Silly Arete; Vector) and Gogarth (Dream of White Horse; Blanco; Big Groove). A

route, which gave me a real buzz and still leaves me buzzing, was Quartz Icicle. An intricate first pitch led to a belay in the middle of the wall below a top pitch, which look so improbable. This just unwound as I weaved my way up it and that buzz at the top.

Southern Rock

Living in the “far north” of England it seems a long way to go to the South of England — a few years ago we discovered the Thursday night starts to the weekend and with a blast down the motorway it is possible to have a few days on some new rock in the sunshine. Bristol is decision point — Swanage/Portland; South Devon; North Devon or the far end — Cornish Granite. So much rock — so many routes!! Swanage — those abbs into the unknown — the relatively easy Finale Groove was amazing; Portland — plenty of bolts ~ not all memorable but Cutting Edge and Pregnant Pause stand out — and the banter of Chris King and Tony Mawer ; Torbay — with Moonraker (we should have done Dreadnaught) and Cornwall — Steve Prior's lead of Bow Wall and the wonderful slab of Saxon. Why is it so far away !! At decision point is the Avon Gorge which must be one of the biggest road side crags around. Not everyone likes it but what a variety of routes — and the route for my desert island is Yellow Edge.

Sun rock

There was a time, in pre-sun rock times, when Easter meant heading for Glencoe and a campsite next to the Clachaig — was the weather better then as route such as Trapeze, Pause and Long Reach were done as well as some good Ice routes. At the end of the 70s there was a mass invasion (1000 climbers some say) of Buoux one Easter and also Pembroke was “discovered” and sun rock- came of age. It wasn't until the mid-80s when I latched onto this with an Easter trip, with the lads and lasses, to the Callanques and the bolts — later Montserrat — then Majorca and Calpe. I remember waking up on the first morning at Montserrat to the hot sunshine and then the same the next day and the next and the next — to that sun. Which route to this island. Despite the preponderance of bolts I tend to

remember and prefer the more traditional routes — such as the arete at La Gubia; the green bolt route high up at Montserrat; Diedro Upsa on the Penon and Diedre Magics on Puig Campana. The route, which stands out, is Eldorado 1 on the Toix sea cliff. Not quite the gripper as the Missing Link but a really fine line up unbelievable rock. Bits of tat, the odd peg and a hanging belay help the sense of adventure.

Wet Rock

I have never been a seeker of Wet Rock however sometimes, either on purpose or by mistake, I encounter some. Surprisingly easy routes in wet conditions can be very rewarding — Central Gully on Great End (in non-snow mode) is a good scramble however Great Ridge on Garbh Bhein (Ardgour) can be very confusing ; Troutdale Pinnacle on Boxing Day can sort out Christmas blues but a wet Eagle Front is desperate. When the heavens opened below the top pitch of Eperon Sublime (in the Verdon) it was a pain as the ensuing ab (which was quite a trip) into the gorge and the walk out took a long time. The Wet Rock I would want to take to the Desert Island is Curving Gully on Hutaple Crag — this was a very wet Whitsunday with Steve Prior - the popularity of the valley that day (Whit weekend) was shown by the complete lack of other cars at the layby. Quite an adventure — better than going to the wall!

Fantasy Rock

I have a stack of climbing videos with lots of fantasy rock — the likes of Patheon Shot, Gaia and Braille Trail; The Scoop (on the Strone) and an amazing sequence of a 5.14 at Cave Rock on the “Master of Stone” video. I have climbed at a reasonable grade for a long time but it would be nice to climb at that higher level. To be realistic I can’t see me pushing out on a E8 — so how about some long far away fantasy rock — Baffin Island and the West Ridge of Mt Asgard may be a possibility in a few years time (any one interested) - but a real fantasy (almost on another planet) is Queen Mauds Land in Antarctica — a Fantasy Wall.

One area does not feature above — this is Pembroke. It would be easier to leave the above routes where they are and just have Pembroke and all its routes as the “Desert Island” !

Which books to take —

The first one is a bit of a cheat - “Great Climbs” — with general editing by Chris B — was given to Steve Huddart and myself at the opening of the Penrith Wall. Lots of tales — all round the world — on all sorts of routes. Great choice —

thanks.

In 1966 a book appeared (for 35 shillings!) called “Rock Climbers in Action in Snowdonia” by John Cleare and Tony Smythe. This had some stunning photographs and accompanying commentary, which was an inspiration to many – it is still inspiring!