

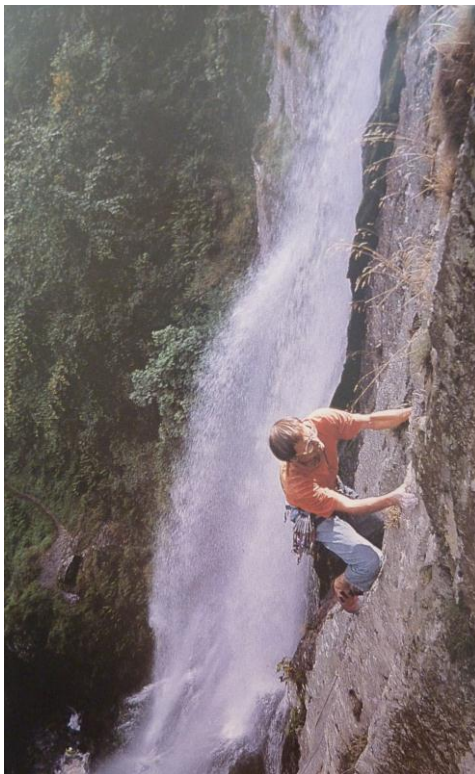
## Steep Stone Selected Area Guides

# Y Berwynion

## Pistyll Rhaeadr, Craig y Mwn & Craig Rhiwarth

*A Rock Climbing Guide*

**By Stuart Day**



*“For climbers, this quiet Welsh borderland area is indeed full of eastern promise.”*



[www.steepstoneclimbing.co.uk](http://www.steepstoneclimbing.co.uk)



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## Acknowledgements

I have discovered that guidebook work is hard graft; you can't do it alone and it is not a quick hit. I have a new found respect for all the guidebook writers out there and I would like to thank all those that have helped out cleaning, carrying and route checking over a rather prolonged period of time. In particular: Phil Wilkinson for getting the ball rolling, the bivis, the whiskey, the hangovers and the dirt; Jonny Martin and Chris Dale for the belays and the laughs; Dave Williams for his guidance and friendship and last, but not least, Vicky Holmes, for putting up with me dragging her up to Rhiwarth time and again with a sack full of unconventional climbing equipment to "enjoy the view".

Thank you all!

Stu Day  
December 2019

## Introduction

In the past, Berwynion rock climbing has been definitively covered by two Climbers' Club guides, namely *Mid Wales* by John Sumner (1988) and *Meirionnydd* by Martin Crocker *et al* (2002). However, in 2015, the Climbers' Club decided not to replace *Meirionnydd* once it sold out; an extremely disappointing and wholly regressive move which will inevitably consign large areas of Mid and North Wales to the climbing wastelands. There is also an undeniable possibility that both previous guidebooks have unknowingly undersold the Berwynion as a viable and worthwhile climbing destination in its own right, both guides presenting it as something of a bolt-on to other venues deemed to be both more interesting and worthy. As a result, despite having some excellent and very accessible climbing, the area has largely remained a backwater as far as the climber is concerned.

*Meirionnydd* sold out in early 2020 and, consequently, Steep Stone is now very pleased to be able to redress the balance by providing climbers with up-to-date, well-presented, user-friendly and fully definitive information for all Berwynion crags. Not only does this free-to-download guidebook contain all that the rock climber needs to know about the Berwynion, including an updated history, it also details the new developments that have occurred since the publication of the last guidebook. These have mainly been the work of Stuart Day, local activist and author of this guide. In addition, many of the original climbs have been cleaned, re-ascended and, where necessary, re-equipped on a like-for-like basis by Stuart and his equally dedicated companions. A number of original route descriptions have been updated and some long overdue re-grading has also taken place.

I first climbed on Rhiwarth in the late 1980s and have returned many times since. As a self-confessed Berwynion devotee, it has indeed been a great personal privilege to be involved with this most worthy of projects. I am very hopeful that this new guidebook will fulfil its aim of affording climbers with a closer and clearer appreciation of what is available in these wild, friendly, relatively untouched and charmingly unvisited Welsh borderland valleys.

Looking ahead to the future, it is very much hoped that this new guidebook will serve to both enthuse and inspire in equal measure, thus ensuring that the future of Berwynion climbing is going to be exciting as more and more climbers discover its true potential.

Dave Williams  
Steep Stone Publishing  
Spring 2020

## Y Berwynion

by Dave Williams

**Y Berwynion\*** (Singular: Y Berwyn or Mynydd y Berwyn) - *The White (probably referring to snow-dusted) Barrier* - is an isolated and sparsely populated bulwark of hills and mountains, all in excess of 600m altitude, nestling neatly and near anonymously in the Welsh Borderlands in North Eastern Wales. Just to the east is Offa's Dyke and the English border, while to the west the range encroaches on the far eastern boundaries of Snowdonia. Located between Llangollen, Corwen, Bala and Oswestry, the Berwynion is a significant area of upland but, unlike the Rhinogydd, Cadair Idris, Arenig and Aran mountains, it was seemingly considered unworthy of inclusion in the Snowdonia National Park. This is quite curious, particularly as Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall, one of the Seven Wonders of Wales, is located at its very heart.

The Berwynion never made it into Poucher's *The Welsh Peaks* either and it is not a popular hill-walking destination, especially as none of the peaks reach the 'magic' 3000ft/914m mark. Once rather unfairly described by the Welsh essayist David Tecwyn Lloyd as "*anial chwith*" (a forlorn wilderness), all of the highest peaks are rugged and have a distinctive character which is well worth exploring.

The main summits marked on Ordnance Survey maps are Cadair Berwyn (Chair of the Berwyn; 827m), Moel Sych (Dry Hill; 827m) and Cadair Bronwen (Bronwen's Chair; 784m). However, the true high point is none of these, but is actually a rocky knoll located between Cadair Berwyn and Moel Sych. At 830m, Moel yr Ewig (Hill of the Roe Hind; a lovely name) is the proper summit, but is not shown as such by the Ordnance Survey. The name is on the map, but a long uncorrected mapping error places it 400m south of where it should be. Not only is it the highest point of the Berwynion, Moel yr Ewig is also notable for being the highest significant summit in Wales outside the National Parks. Anybody wanting that wilderness buzz amongst significant hills needs look no further.

For far too long Berwynion rock climbing has also been outside the mainstream, very much the Cinderella of North Wales climbing. Several factors have contributed to this, not least the fact that Snowdonia is the undoubted star attraction in this particular part of Wales and its myriad attractions can be all too compelling. Most climbers completely by-pass the area as they dash past to the crowded and polished honey-pots to the west. Those who do so by travelling the A5 trunk road may have noticed some distant high ground away to the left somewhere between Llangollen and Corwen, but few will have ventured further. Of course, this is great news for those who take the time to do the less obvious and explore the great climbing on offer in the very core of the Berwynion.

While the Berwynion's northern slopes are green and rounded, there's a lot of exposed rock on the steep, hidden southern and south eastern margins of the range. Here there is a wealth of very good quality climbing set amongst a discrete backdrop of quiet, bucolic, wooded valleys. The crags themselves are both pleasant and easily reached, sporting a good and varied selection of middle-grade rock climbs and a number of 'state-of-the-art' modern desperates. Indeed, some of the latter are of comparable quality to the very best on offer elsewhere to the west.

Most of the crags have clean rock and a sunny aspect and, being located in a rain shadow, are often dry when it is raining in Snowdonia. Not only could one pause here on the mad dash west, or indeed escape the vagaries of Snowdonia weather, but the area's climbing is also easily accessible for a single day visit from the Liverpool and Manchester conurbations, the West Midlands and all points in between.

For climbers who relish the chance to be alone on the rock, rather than queuing with others in crowded places, this quiet Welsh borderland area is full of eastern promise.

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\* **Etymology** A possible origin of the term "Berwyn" is "Bryn(iau) Gwyn (ap Nudd)", where the Middle Welsh word "bre" (hill) has mutated to Ber + Gwyn, Gwyn ap Nudd being the mythological King of the Tylwyth Teg (Fair Folk, or fairies). A more likely etymology is "bar" (summit, crest) + "gwyn" (white) or rather the plural: "gwynion".

## A Concise History of Berwynion Climbing

by Dave Williams

Prior to their long-overdue re-discovery in the early 1980s, the crags at Rhiwarth in particular had, to all intents and purposes, been 'lost' in obscurity. Rhiwarth has obviously been climbed on for many years and it is likely that the early pioneers did not record any of their routes. Later teams from Oswestry and Reading then claimed some of the more obvious lines in the 1960s and 1970s. Classics such as *Rose Corner*, *Tanat*, *Ivory Tower* and *King of Maybe* were first led by B Phillips in the summer of 1962, an impressive achievement at the time. Some years later, ascents of *Silwood* and *Melangell* were recorded by D Bishop and D Thomas in 1970. At the time, it was noted that both of the latter lines had the appearance of having been climbed before.

In the 1980s, a far more methodical approach by the Stafford based Mountaineering Club led to a vast number of new, fully recorded, discoveries, a number being very fine lines indeed. At Rhiwarth, Chris Nunn found his *Eden* in 1984 and John Sumner had plenty to smile about with *The Cheshire Cat* in 1985. Later in the same year on the somewhat futuristic Craig y Mwn, Andy Grondowski, Colin Little and Sumner had a particularly fine day with *Pardon me for Breathing* and *Brothers in Arms*, as again did Sumner with his ascent of *Meisterspringer*.

The publication of Sumner's *Mid Wales* guidebook by the Climbers' Club in 1988 predictably led to a flurry of interest. Pat Littlejohn ventured onto Craig y Mwn on a very cold day in April 1989 and climbed *Jack Frost*, so named as Mick Hardwick, his second, was too frozen to follow the pitch. A few months later, in much warmer weather, Martin Crocker added the spectacular *Mwnchild* as well as *State of the Union* and *Big Cigar*. The bold and technical *Scwp Dragon* at Rhiwarth was also discovered by local climber S Williams in the same year.

Despite frenetic new route activity elsewhere in Mid Wales at this time, both Sumner and Crocker continued visiting the Berwynion crags at intervals throughout the 1990s. In 1996, Crocker climbed the aptly-named *Man on a Mission*, together with *Cougar* and *Queen of my Soul* in a single epic day, while Sumner found *The Rocho Machine* a short while later. Towards the end of the decade, Crocker continued with the development of the atmospheric Pistyll Rhaeadr, adding two more routes just prior to the publication of *Meirionnydd* (Climbers' Club) in 2002.

Although very much welcomed at the time, in retrospect it is not unreasonable to argue that the new *Meirionnydd* guidebook did little to inspire visits by a new cohort of climbers and so, for many years, the Berwynion largely remained an esoteric backwater known only to a few.

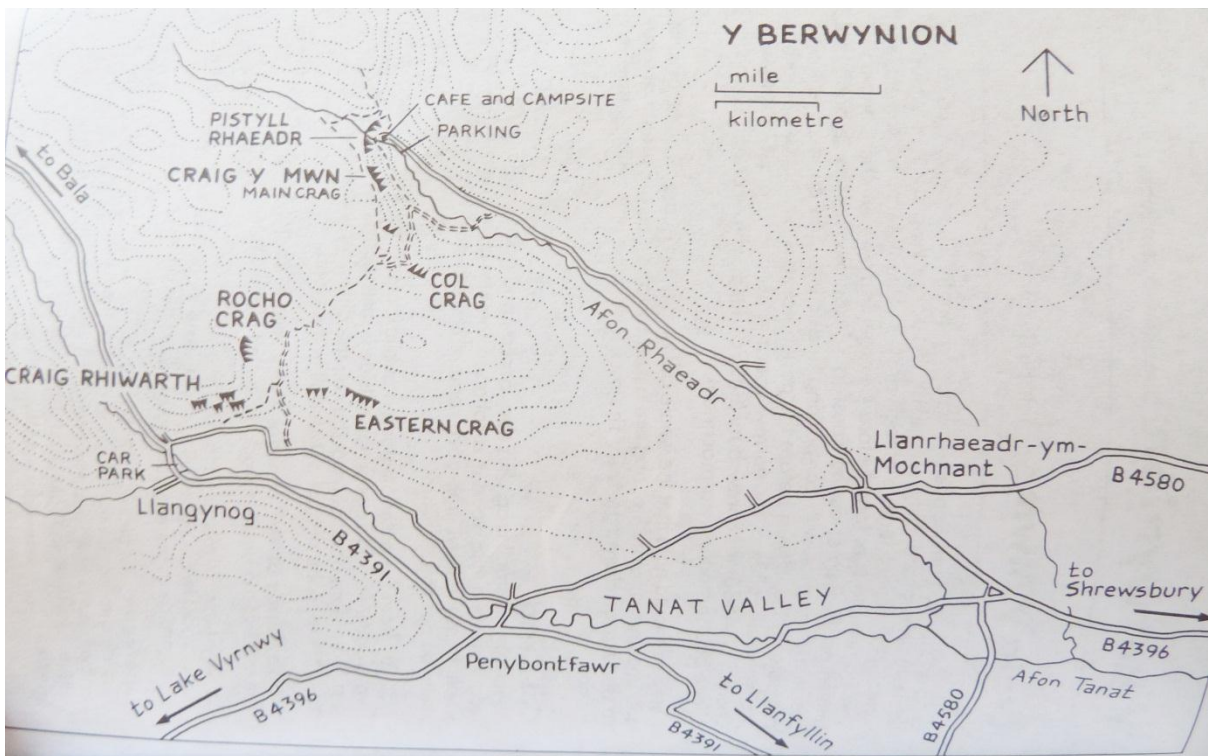
The situation changed for the better in 2012, when two talented West Midlands based climbers burst onto the scene. An enthused Phil Wilkinson persuaded Stu Day to take a closer look at Rhiwarth, a fateful act which quickly developed into something of an obsession for the latter. Not only were notable new routes discovered, such as *Snowflake* and *Evening*

Wall, the pair, together with Jonny Martin, Chris Dale and Vicky Holmes, also set about methodically climbing and grading the existing climbs at both Rhiwarth and Craig y Mwn. Consequently, many of the original climbs have been cleaned, re-ascended and, where necessary, re-equipped on a like-for-like basis. Some of the original route descriptions have been amended and some long needed re-grading has also taken place. Previous soft touches such as Rhiwarth's *Rose Corner* and *Queen of My Soul* and notorious sandbags, such as *King of Maybe*, are now more realistically graded.

In 2015, the Climbers' Club decided not to replace *Meirionnydd* once it sold out. On learning of this fact, Day approached Dave Williams of Steep Stone Publishing, who responded with the suggestion that this was an opportune moment to produce a new guidebook, one which would provide climbers with fully up-to-date information, presented in an accessible, user-friendly format. Day promptly set to work.....

*Meirionnydd* sold out in early 2020 and, consequently, Steep Stone's Berwynion area guide is now the only fully definitive and up-to-date guidebook for the varied climbing to be found in these wild, friendly, relatively untouched and charmingly unvisited Welsh Borderland valleys.

### Y Berwynion Area Map



© THE CLIMBERS' CLUB



**Craig y Mwn** *Crag of the Buzzard*

OS Ref.: SJ 074 288

*Craig Y Mwn is an inspiringly essential crag. That's essential as in personally essential: "Wow that sounds/ looks so cool I gotta go there ...", not the mundane socially essential: "I must tick this because it's so classic/ popular/ rite of passage/ in a guide book ..."*

– Matt Thompson, Mid Wales *aficionado*

<b>Overview:</b>	<b>A regionally very important but unfairly neglected crag, with routes of comparable quality to some of the very best in Snowdonia in the E2-E5 range</b>
<i>Altitude:</i>	480-490 metres (Craig y Mwn Main Cliff); 400 metres (Col Crag)
<i>Rock type:</i>	Acidic tuffs, sometimes welded (ignimbrites)
<i>Approach:</i>	Up to 2½ kilometres walking. Some walking on pathless terrain. Very steep approach to Craig y Mwn
<i>Approach time:</i>	15-40 minutes, (crag dependent)
<i>Aspect:</i>	Variably south east and east facing (crag dependent)
<i>Drying:</i>	Quick drying in the right conditions
<i>Winter sun:</i>	Yes – morning and early afternoon, but not really a suitable venue for climbing during the winter period
<i>Summer sun:</i>	Yes until midday
<i>Access Land:</i>	Yes (Col Craig and Craig y Mwn Main Cliff) No (Pistyll Rhaeadr)
<i>Grade Range:</i>	HS – E6

Located on the southern slopes of the Berwynion and at the head of the Afon Rhaeadr valley, Craig y Mwn is most famous for Pistyll Rhaeadr, a truly spectacular waterfall formed as the Afon Disgynfa falls in three stages over a sheer 73 metre cliff-face. This fall is claimed to be the largest waterfall in Wales but, sadly, it is not. However, it is still one of the most famous and impressive falls in Britain and, in summer and especially after rain this superb feature is an extremely popular tourist attraction. There is a good café beside the waterfall, with car-parking (for a modest daily charge), toilets and an ideally-situated campsite. In addition, there is a free car park on the left by the river some 250 metres before the road head.

Climbers should note that all the cliffs at Craig y Mwn lie within a SSSI which is a habitat for some delicate and rare plant life and are asked **to take the greatest care not to disturb or damage such vegetation**. The rock is volcanic tuff and is, on the whole, very sound. However, there can be an issue with midges in high summer.

**Approach:** Follow mainly narrow roads and lanes from Chirk (B450), Oswestry (B4580), or Shrewsbury (B4396), all of which converge upon the village of Llanrhaeadr-ym-mochnant. Once in Llanrhaeadr, drive through the main square past the Wynnstay Arms and turn right into Waterfall Street just before the corner shop. Pistyll Rhaeadr is signposted above the shop. Continue along this narrow, dead-end road for four miles to the road head and ample parking.



## Col Crag

OS Ref.: SJ 077 282

An interesting small crag, with easy access and good rock and routes. However, all climbs here suffer from neglect and any visiting climbers will probably need to be prepared to carry out some cleaning before or during an ascent. The crag is located above a little wood in a col one kilometre left (south) of the waterfall and is visible from the Pistyll Rhaeadr approach road. It is south-east facing and is in a very sheltered position. **Approach** by walking left from the waterfall along a public footpath for a kilometre until a farm track, which zig-zags up the hillside, is intercepted. Follow the farm track to a sharp right-hand bend at the col; the cliff is immediately below and on the left, just to the right of a waterfall in the wood.

### North Winds Blow 6m VS 4b †

The arête of the isolated block on the left of the crag.

FA M Crocker solo 10.9.01

### So Lay Low 7m HS 4b †

Flake cracks in the right wall of the isolated block lead to a judicious step left to avoid a terminally rocking block on the cliff edge.

FA M Crocker solo 10.9.01

### Liberation 12m E2 5b †

Superb climbing on the left-hand arête of the main face. Climb a short corner on the right, and then swing left onto a hanging flake right of the arête. Cruise up the flake, and make use of the arête for the final 3 or 4 metres.

FA M Crocker solo 10.9.01

The next four climbs start from a gangway and ledge below the rippled and overhanging main face, 4 to 5 metres above the ground.

### Fall Out 10m E2 5b †

From the left-hand end of the gangway, pull over a bulge using a thin left-facing flake. Better holds in the scoop above lead to an easy and exposed exit on the right.

FA M Crocker solo 10.9.01

### Touch Too Much 10m E5 6b †

Intricate and committing, with a very bouldery crux. From a large undercut, reach fingerholds above a bulge. Rock-up ferociously to the left, and gain a small rock spike beneath a tiny left-facing corner. A finger-flake above leads to the exposed exit of *Fall Out*.

FA M Crocker lead solo 10.9.01

### Much Too Much 10m E6 6b †

Strenuous, with gear that is difficult to place and none-too-reassuring. In the centre of the main face there is a leftward-rising flake crack. Gain the flake crack and fight up it, trending leftwards to a sloping hand-ledge. Undercut direct onto the ledge, and step up left to finish.

FA M Crocker lead solo 10.9.01

### Head First 10m E1 5c †

A powerful move over a bulge gains entry to the obvious break in the right-hand side of the main face. Climb the break more easily, and step right to finish.

FA M Crocker lead solo 10.9.01 (*A hold broke leading to a head-first plummet. By grabbing a slender sapling, Crocker managed to rectify his orientation.*)

The final climb takes the crack-system in the north-west facing wall that ends the main face.

**Gerbil Street** 12m E4 6a † ★★

Pure quality. Climb a flake crack to a small overhang. Reach two good handholds above, and use these to step right into the crackline: hard and bold. Follow the crack above, past two good flakes (and runners), to the top.

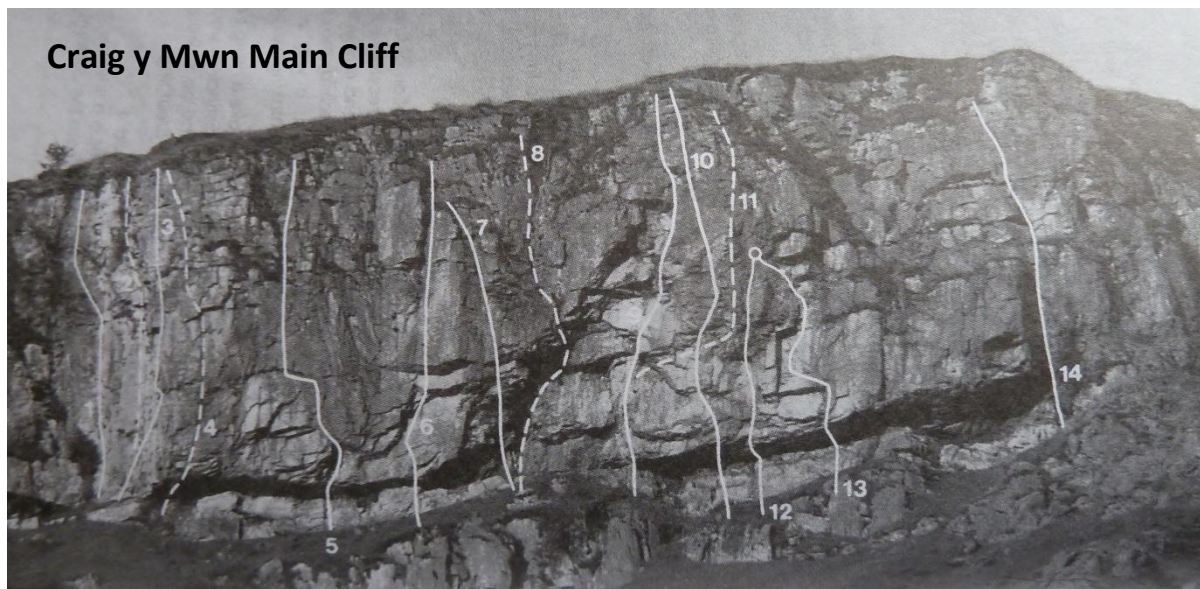
FA M Crocker lead solo 10.9.01

**Craig y Mwn Main Cliff**

OS Ref.: SJ 074 291

Dominating the view on the drive in, the dramatically impressive main crag sports an unexpectedly high number of fine climbs, some of them of comparable quality to the very best on offer elsewhere. The crag reaches a height of 40-45 metres and an obvious feature in the left-hand half is the corner of *Pardon Me for Breathing*. Facing north-east, the face receives sun until midday in summer. Unfortunately, despite being steep, well-drained and quick-drying, the main face can be quite dirty owing to its aspect and if you intend to climb here it is recommended that you bring cleaning kit. Some of the routes stay lichen-free, though others (eg. *Mwnchild*) may need a gentle re-brush from time to time. The only available belays at the top of the crag use the fence line which is about 15 metres back from the cliff edge. Care must be taken with the rock at the top of all the routes, some of which can be deceptively insecure. Descent from all routes can be made via the gully on the right hand side of the crag.

**Approach:** Cross the bridge beneath the Pistyll Rhaeadr waterfall before making a rising traverse leftwards through trees. The final stage of the approach necessitates a very short but heinously steep and pathless slog up to the crag's distinctive undercut base, but the effort expended is amply rewarded by the breathtakingly well-positioned and exposed climbing.



© THE CLIMBERS' CLUB

**Carboxyhaemoglobin** 20m E4 6a †

In the slabby wall 10 metres left of the corner there is a shallow groove. This provides a welcome, if committing, retreat from the customary roof routes. Start up the left arête of the shallow groove with difficulty to reach a good hold (and crucial *Friend 2½* placement) at 6 metres. Continue up the groove on positive holds to its close. Climb the easier slabby wall above and move left to retreat by abseil from a tree.

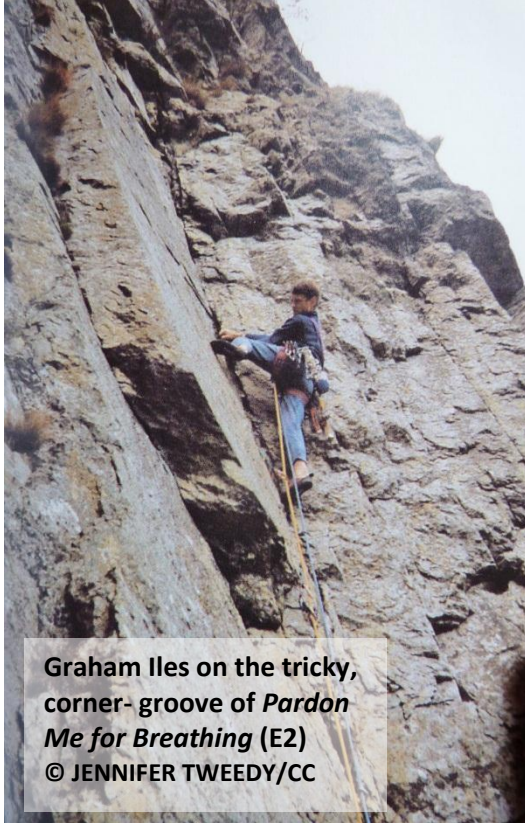
FA M Crocker, D Sargeant 20.6.98



**1. Legionnaire's Disease** 40m HVS 5a

This follows cracks and then a groove a short way left of the corner. Gain a ledge below a steep flaky crack, climb the crack (crux), and move left to a groove, which leads to the top of the crag.

FA JA Sumner, C Nunn 31.3.85



Graham Iles on the tricky, corner- groove of *Pardon Me for Breathing* (E2)  
© JENNIFER TWEEDY/CC

**2. Pardon Me for Breathing** 40m E2 5c ★

The obvious corner gives excellent sustained climbing with a hard move at 5 metres. Step right at its top, and climb the steep continuation groove on big holds to a vegetated groove that leads to a careful finish over dubious large blocks.

FA JA Sumner, CW Little, A Grondowski 9.3.85

**Xelation** 40m E6 6b † ★

A superb and sustained eliminate up the leaning wall that forms the right wall of the *Pardon Me for Breathing* corner. Perfect rock, but high in the grade. Climb the corner for 4 metres (to a vertical slot in its initial crack). Move right onto the steep face and reach a pocket above. Now take a direct, yet intricate line up the leaning wall, keeping just to the left of a straight, very thin crackline (gear) until a good pocket is gained (*Friend 3* placement). Pull through bulging rock slightly left to a rest above at the foot of the top corner of *Pardon Me for Breathing*. Move up; then spectacularly finish up the right-hand side of the capping arête on good holds.

FA M Crocker 20.6.98




**3. Meisterspringer** 40m E2 5b ★★

The extremely photogenic arête to the right of *Pardon Me for Breathing* gives elegant and very airy climbing. Start, as for the preceding routes, at the foot of the corner. Gain a ledge on the right overhanging wall by a traverse from the left. Move up right onto the arête at a ledge and climb its right-hand side to reach a short overhung groove in the arête (peg). Continue up its right edge to easier ground and another ledge; then go up over some detached blocks and finish out left.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 2.6.85

< An inspiring shot of Andy Grondowski on the steep, committing and exposed crux of *Meisterspringer* (E2)

© JOHN SUMNER/CC

**4. Big Cigar** 40m E5 6b † 

The dominating line of the impressive undercut buttress to the right of *Meisterspringer* where a 2½-metre roof at the start contrasts with bold face-climbing above. High in the grade. Start below the arête of *Meisterspringer*. From the ledge beneath the roof, place cams for protection and then launch out rightwards to gain a quartz-lined crack (peg runner) and good pockets on the right leading to a half-height resting-ledge. Step right to a weakness on the face (good wires in short crack on the right) and climb it past a spike runner (thin tape) to a roof (peg runner). Make reachy moves diagonally leftwards to meet good holds leading quickly to easier ground, and finish up *Meisterspringer*. If successful, you'll deserve a big cigar!

FA M Crocker 29.4.90

**5. Pale Rider** 40m E4 6a

Start about 10 metres right of the *Pardon Me for Breathing* corner, below an overhung niche. Gain the niche (peg) and step left to a flake (thread). Continue up the wall to the top.

FA M Elwell, A Grondowski 26.10.85

**6. Mwnchild** 40m E5 6b/c 

Excellent, sustained and sometimes bold climbing up a brilliant piece of rock. The route takes a direct line up the Pant Ifan look-alike buttress of overlapping slabs between *Pale Rider* and *Dovercourt Special*. The pegs are good. Surmount the bulge past a thin overlap and downward-pointing peg runner (which can be reached from the floor and may be of some use to the belayer) and step boldly up leftwards into a V-groove (peg runner). Sprint up the groove (peg runner) to jugs and a spike runner (thin tape) between the two main overlaps. Reach over directly to a large pocket (bombproof *Rock 5* in a small pocket), and proceed up the thin crack in the upper slab to the foot of a wide corner-crack. Climb the crack and exit easily. Belay on the fence.

FA M Crocker 29.4.90

**7. Dovercourt Special** 40m E2 5c 

In the centre of the crag, there is a weakness in the overhang with a groove above. Gain a large dubious hold from the right (peg runner). Move left and go up to the overhang (second peg); pull over rightwards and climb the bottomless groove, then trend slightly left to the top.

FA JA Sumner, CW Little 29.9.85

**8. Foundation and Empire** 39m E1 5b †

The obvious overhanging chimney/crack in the centre of the crag. Start as for *Dovercourt Special*.

**1** 24m. 5b. A steep layaway leads to a ledge on the right below the large overhangs (two pegs). Swing boldly out right and go up to gain a good ledge.

**2** 15m. Continue up the crack to the top.

FA CW Little, I Cowan 19.10.85

**9. Brothers in Arms** 43m E3 5c 

An absolutely excellent, low-in-the-grade route, which deserves far more attention, taking the overlapping wall just right of the large overhangs. Start below a weakness in the lower band of overhangs. Move up right to gain the wall below the weakness in the first band of overhangs and go through awkwardly to attain a large pocket in the wall below the second band. Avoid these by moving right, then left to a delicate slab (peg). Climb the slab and move out left to finish up a short juggy wall.

FA A Grondowski, CW Little, JA Sumner 9.3.85

**10. State of the Union** 40m E5 6b 

Easier than *Moonchild*, some gymnastic roofwork and technically sustained wall-climbing force a direct start to *Brothers in Arms*. The crucial *Rock 4* may make a better small cam placement. Start 6 metres to the right of *Brothers in Arms*, below a step in the path. Go up shaky holds to the roof. Overcome the roof (good *in-situ* thread) and take the wall above via a thin vertical crack (crucial *Rock 4* – carry it in your teeth!) to a jug beneath an overlap. Step up to the right and back left past a peg runner to a junction with *Brothers in Arms* below its fissure. However, now bear rightwards over bulges (large hex in pocket) and then back left to re-join *Brothers in Arms* above its delicate slab. Finish as for that route.  
FA M Crocker 29.4.90

**11. Jack Frost** 40m E4 6a 

Some very good climbing, though escapable in places, on the wall to the right of *Brothers in Arms*. Start as for *Brothers in Arms*. Move up and step right onto the slab. Traverse right past the big slanting crack and move up to a peg in a bay. Climb the shallow groove and continue up the rib to a deep hole. Move up to an obvious flake (runners); then go diagonally right up a steep slab to another flake and a small ledge. Climb up slightly left to a groove leading to the top.  
FA P Littlejohn 25.4.89 (*Second was too frozen to follow.*)

In the wall above the large roof between *State of the Union* and *First Blood II* there are two opposite-facing, slim corners.

**12. Tectonic** 20m E6 6b † 

A wonderful test-piece that, to date, also happens to be the hardest route in the Berwynion. Start below and left of the left-hand, left-facing corner and 3 metres right of *State of the Union*. Clip a peg (hero-looped; also advisable is a twisted wire in a pocket immediately above); then work through the bulge strenuously (peg runner) before fingery and intricate climbing leads up the wall just left of the slim corner to a semi-resting-position beneath a bulge. Climb the bulging rib (poor *in-situ* thread), and trend right to ledges and a flake and thread. Abseil from here or finish leftwards up *State of the Union*.  
FA M Crocker 20.6.98

**13. Arian** 20m E5 6b † 

A powerful entry, with fine climbing on the wall above the roof. Start below and right of the right-hand, right-facing corner in the wall above the roof; a taunting hanging flake on the lip shows the line. Extend for the hanging flake (questionable flake/ questionable cam placement, but small wire immediately above), and power over to good holds on the wall. Move up; then follow a series of incuts leftwards into the slim corner. Climb the corner and easy rock above to the flake and thread (possible). Abseil point on the left.  
FA M Crocker, D Sargeant 20.6.98 (*A very similar line to this was led by Nick Dixon in 1995 but, inexplicably, this was not described in Meirionnydd 2002.*)

**14. First Blood II** 37m HVS 5b 

An obvious clean-cut corner at the extreme right-hand end of the main face provides a good introduction to the crag. The upper wall is normally dirty but climbs really well. Climb the groove with a difficult move low down and a traverse to the arête just below a ledge. On the left of the overhang above the ledge, climb the wall past a peg. Steep moves lead up and right to the prow and then the top.  
FA CW Little, CR Little 14.9.85



## Pistyll Rhaeadr

OS Ref.: SJ 073 296

Literally alongside one of the most impressive waterfalls in Britain, this is also one of Wales' most atmospheric places in which to climb and a day's climbing here, so close to the waterfall, will definitely be no ordinary day. The cliff-top is approached by a signed path to its right. There are two routes on the face to the left of the waterfall, an area sometimes used by abseiling groups who obediently throw themselves into the pools beneath. Abseil in from a tree on the edge.



Pistyll Rhaeadr  
'The highest  
waterfall in  
England and  
Wales'

© CHRIS DOWNER

**Access:** The climbing at Pistyll Rhaeadr is not located on access land. There is no public right of way and no access agreement but, to date, visits by climbers appear to be tolerated and there has been no objection to climbing. However it should be appreciated that this *status quo* can change at any time and the crag's inclusion in this guide does not infer that climbers have any right whatsoever to climb on it. If challenged, climbers must take heed of any instructions to leave the area, remain respectful and avoid any confrontation with the landowner, their agent or representative. It goes without saying that climbers must also ensure that they avoid damaging fences, gates or any other structures.

### Riparian 15m E1 5b ★

Spectacularly perched next to the waterfall, this delightful pitch has an ambience all of its own. Abseil to a twin-peg belay at the foot of a V-groove in the face. Technical climbing up the groove (two peg runners) leads to a roof. Swing right onto a wall and follow good pockets straight to the top.

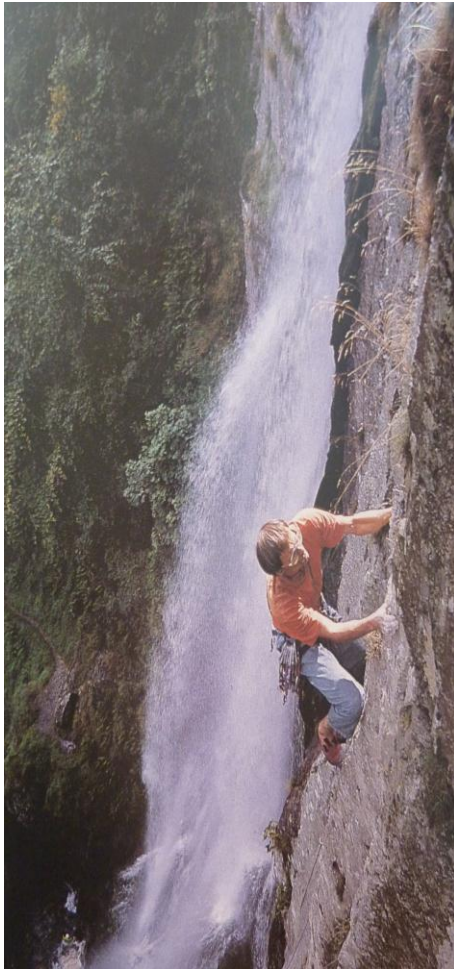
FA I Deans, J Porter 8.98

### Rhythms of the Planet 18m E3 5c † ★

A line that seems curiously attracted to the waterfall. Move up the groove of *Riparian*, and traverse right to a grass-covered ledge. Take a committing narrow groove above, and climb a fine pocketed wall to join the exit of *Riparian*. There are two recorded routes on the groove-seamed face right of the waterfall. Both start from a grassy ledge reached from the

right, or by abseil from the cliff-top. Best avoided in windy conditions as the waterfall can become a bit enthusiastic.

FA C Silverstone, M Boniface 9.94



**Aquatonic** 20m E3 6a ★

Fine, clean climbing when dry, but take an umbrella. Start 4 metres right of the waterfall. Climb a strenuous corner to an overhang. Swing right and pull up onto a rib. Gain the groove on the left as soon as conditions allow (peg runner low left), and follow it past pockets to its close. Trend leftwards up the headwall (old peg runner out left), finishing with your left foot scarcely out of the waterfall. If the waterfall permits, it is also possible to climb the pocketed left arête of the upper groove.

FA J Porter, E Hoskins 5.8.98. (Groove variation: FA M Crocker, J Harwood 8.9.01)

**Waterworld** 20m E3 5b †

Delicate and sustained, with sparse protection in places. Start 8 metres right of the waterfall, next to a shrub at head height. Pull past the shrub and climb diagonally leftwards (wet rock) to an overhang (old peg runner). Gain the shallow groove overhead, and climb it and the rib on its right to the top. Some grassy rock at the top adds to the commitment.

FA M Crocker, J Harwood 8.9.01

< **Martin Crocker on the first ascent of Waterworld (E3) on Pistyll Rhaeadr**

© CARL RYAN/CC

**Craig Rhiwarth** *Ridge Slope crag*

OS Ref.: SJ 055 265

<b>Overview:</b>	<b>An unfairly neglected crag with a number of very worthwhile, mainly single pitch climbs. Potentially an all year-round venue, but the best time to visit is in Spring- early Summer. Rocho Crag is also best in high summer</b>
<i>Altitude:</i>	300 metres
<i>Rock type:</i>	Acidic tuffs, sometimes welded (ignimbrites) and quartz feldspar porphyry
<i>Approach:</i>	Up to 1 mile walking. (Crag dependent) Some walking on pathless terrain.
<i>Approach time:</i>	15-45 minutes, (crag dependent)
<i>Aspect:</i>	Variously south east and east facing (crag dependent)
<i>Drying:</i>	Quick drying in the right conditions
<i>Winter sun:</i>	Yes
<i>Summer sun:</i>	Yes
<i>Access Land:</i>	Yes
<i>Grade Range:</i>	VD – E5

Located just beyond the village of Llangynog on the B4391 in the Afon Tanat valley, this extensive complex of crags mark the most southerly point of the Berwynion mountains.



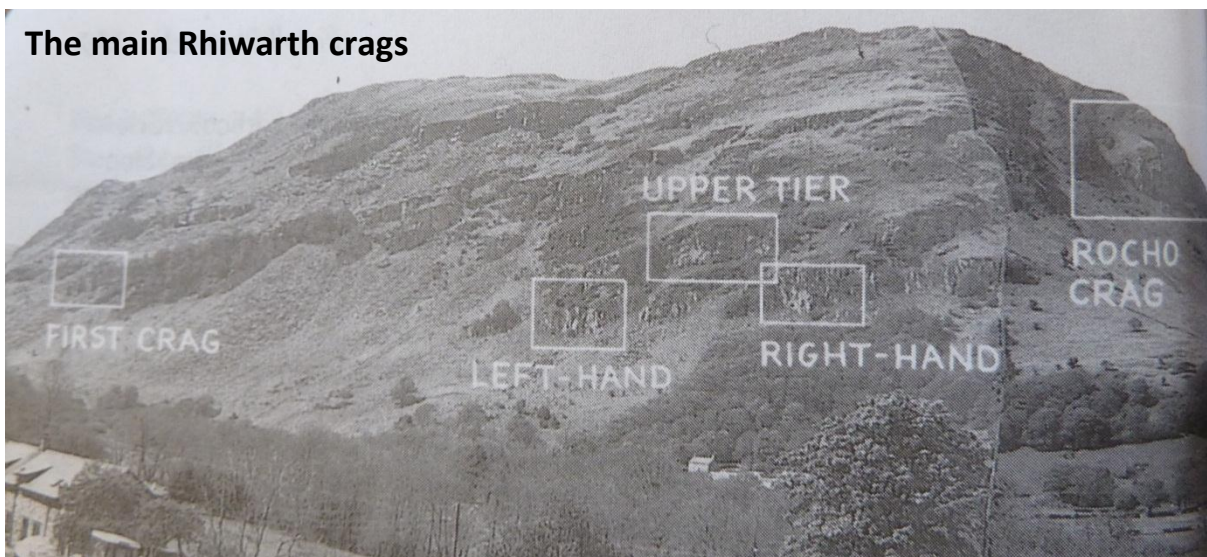
**Craig Rhiwarth** actually comprises half-a-dozen or more small crags some 20 to 30 metres high dotted around a kilometre or so of the hillside and most have now been developed. The crags dry quickly and the imaginatively named **First Crag** and **Second Crag** in particular have a sunny aspect.

Facing southwards, often dry when it is raining in Snowdonia to the west, almost roadside and being at a relatively low elevation all allow for the possibility of year-round climbing at Craig Rhiwarth rather than summer only. This can make visits worthwhile during the winter months when higher altitude crags are out of condition. In this sense, it is not out of place to think of Craig Rhiwarth as the 'Tremadog of the Berwynion'.

Once quite a popular, well-frequented crag, Craig Rhiwarth seems to have been out of vogue for a few years, but many of the more popular climbs remain clean all year round; however some of the less-frequented routes may need a light brushing prior to an ascent. The rock is generally very solid, being compact and flawless on many of the First and Second Crag routes, but on occasions care needs to be taken when topping out. Rock quality does deteriorate slightly on the Upper Tier.

As at nearby Craig y Mwn, there are several pieces of fixed gear on various routes, a number of which are crucial. Many of the threads described in *Meirionnydd* (Climbers' Club 2002) have been replaced as of 2013-15. All the pegs have also been checked but, as their age is unknown, it goes without saying that they should not be relied on as sole protection and should be backed up wherever possible. Belays are generally easy to find as there are many trees and rocky outcrops along the top to the crags. Where these are lacking, belay stakes are relied upon, but these can be difficult to spot due to vegetation. Note that on occasions there will only be a single in-situ stake in place and these are described as such within the route text, so if you are planning on climbing these routes you may wish to arrange a suitable backup.

**Access:** Cars should be parked in the village car-park and **not** on the side of the minor council road which runs directly beneath the crag.



© THE CLIMBERS' CLUB

### First Crag

As its name implies, this is the first crag to be seen on the approach from Llangynog along the minor road, which lies above and to the right of the last cottage. There is easy-angled scree below and a slate ramp to its left.

**Approach:** From the minor road which runs underneath the crag, head up an old quarry incline after passing the first group of cottages on the left. Then follow a slate ramp towards the left end of the crag and when level with the top of the crag, cut across and drop down to reach the base of the crag. This approach takes less than ten minutes from the village car park. There is an easy descent from all routes on the left of the crag which re-joins the approach path.

The first area of rock encountered is on the far left hand side of the crag and is hidden from view during the approach. It comprises a short wall of good rock that has escaped the encroaching ivy on its right hand side. The small triangular cave at its base marks the start of *Zippy*.

### **George** 10m E1 5b

This route takes a rising left to right traverse across the clean wall left of the cave and is low in the grade. Start at the large crack on the left. Climb the crack for 2 meters until good holds allow a step right on to the wall. Move up and rightwards to a high undercut then make a tricky move rightwards to the arête just below the sapling. Finish up the short square groove left of the sapling on good holds.

FA S Day, J Martin 16.04.12

### **Zippy** 10m HVS 5b

This route climbs the steep groove above the cave. Climb the well-protected groove to a crux mantel onto a ledge. Finish just right of the sapling, avoiding the loose looking blocks on the right.

FA S Day, J Martin 16.04.12

### **Bungle** 16m HS 4a

This starts at the lowest point of the buttress below a pedestal before taking the obvious line from right of left across the wall bounded by the ivy. Climb the short wall onto the pedestal; or alternatively start on the pedestal. Climb the wall just left of the ivy moving leftwards to a ledge and finish as for *Zippy*.

FA J Martin, S Day 16.4.12

Twenty metres further right is a fine steep square-cut buttress. The rock and the routes here are generally excellent, giving some of the best climbing in the area. The routes start on the very steep wall of the steep, squarish buttress just right of the trees and good natural belays can be found a little way back from the top of the crag.

### **Sledgehammer** 24m E2 5c

Good well-protected climbing that is, unfortunately, over all too quickly. It takes a line of pockets to the left of *Mismael*. Move right along a break, make a long reach to a good hold, and then follow a line of good holds, trending right at the top to finish as for *Mismael*.

FA C Nunn, D Gale 12.6.86

### **Mismael** 24m E3 5c

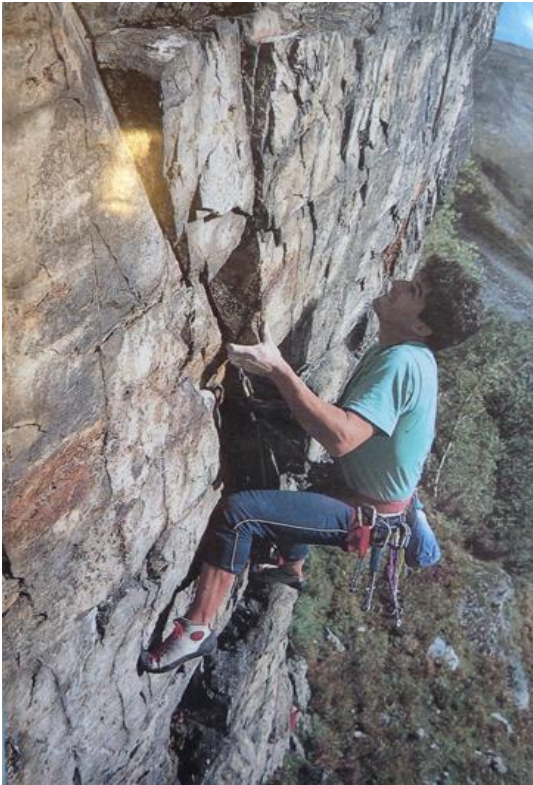
The pocketed crackline just left of centre of the wall provides excellent, pumpy and well-protected climbing. From the block, step left to the crack. Hard moves gain better holds, which lead to a ledge and easier climbing to an oak tree.

FA C Nunn, S Coneys 8.6.86

**Snow Flake** 24m E3 6a ★

This route climbs the blank wall to the right of *Mismael* through the small cave to pass a ledge above half-height where it briefly joins *Wingeing Pom* half-way through its traverse before finishing directly. Small gear is required to adequately protect the route.

Start down and right of *Mismael* beneath the centre of the small cave. Climb to the cave then continue up the wall above its right-hand side. Hard, bold moves up and left gain a sloping ledge. Exit this on the right (junction with *Wingeing Pom*) before climbing the stepped flake crack on ever improving holds to a steep direct finish where *Wingeing Pom* moves left.  
FA P Wilkinson, S Day 13.1.13 (*Climbed in a snowstorm!*)

**Wingeing Pom** 34m E1 5b ★★

A superb route, low in the grade, which manages to create a sense of exposure for such a small crag as it follows a rising traverse from right to left, finishing up the obvious stepped crack at the top of the crag. Start at a groove on the right-hand side of the crag, just left of a vegetated gully. Go easily up the groove to the overhang and traverse left below it to a good peg. Move left round an edge to the base of the stepped crack. Climb this strenuously, take a horizontal hand-traverse left and finish up to a small tree.  
FA JA Sumner, I Tapley 26.5.87

< Chris Nunn on an early ascent of the excellent *Wingeing Pom* (E1) © CC

**Bionic Woman** 24m VS 4c

This route has a distinct crux and the upper half of the route is quite dirty and not well-protected. The belay is a good 12 or more metres back and the climbing itself is only around 10 metres long. Climb the groove of *Wingeing Pom* to the overhang; then make a very awkward move up and right to easier ground leading to the top.

FA JA Sumner, I Tapley, JA Sumner 26.5.87

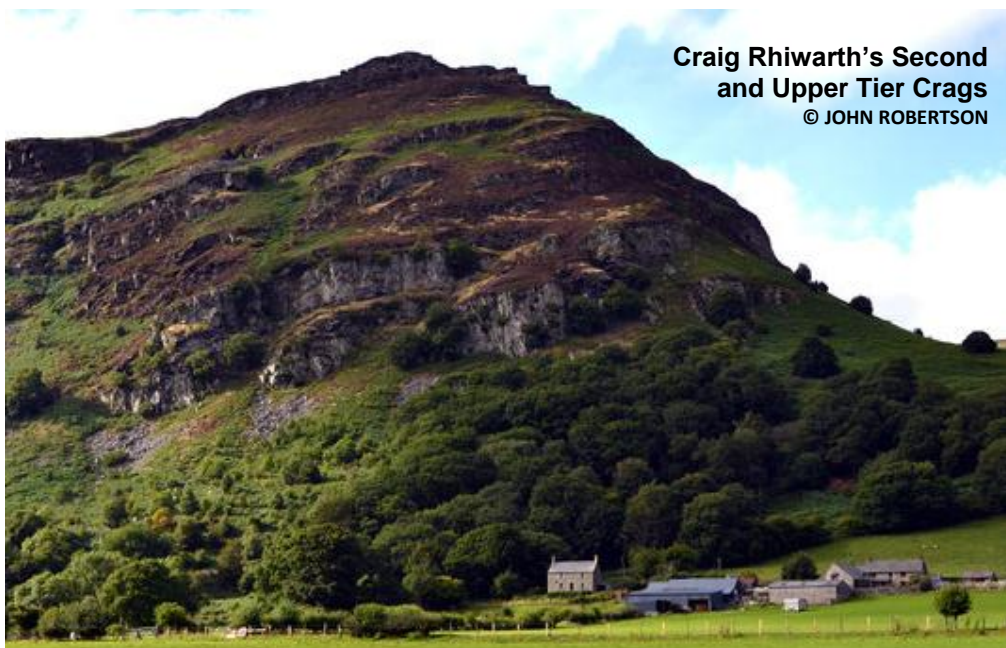
Right of *Bionic Woman* is a tall, scooped black wall with a shallow groove line that snakes its way up towards the overhang.

**Johnny takes a Tumble** 15m E1 5a

Start below the groove in the middle of the wall. Enter the groove directly, step up into the scoop, balance up the scoop and make a tricky move leftwards at its steepest point (crux). Move boldly up beneath the overhang and shuffle rightwards to avoid the loose looking blocks to finish on the right side arête up steep heather. Good belay well back.

FA S Day, J Martin 19.03.12





**Craig Rhiwarth's Second  
and Upper Tier Crag**  
© JOHN ROBERTSON

## Second Crag

This is comprised of three buttresses which are grouped together about a quarter of a mile right of **First Crag**. There is a small wood directly below the right-hand Lower Tier. Easy access and a selection of good routes in the VS range make this the most popular of the crags at Rhiwarth.

**Approach:** The best approach is to continue along the minor road past a spring and take the obvious bridleway path that gently climbs the hillside towards the crag. After a few hundred meters you reach a large oak tree, from here a vague path (hard to spot in summer due to bracken) heads steeply towards the left hand side of the crag in 15 minutes. Descend either left or right on foot or alternatively abseil as indicated in the route descriptions. A fixed rope belay/ abseil point has been placed to protect the tree at the top of *Eden*.

## Left-Hand Lower Tier



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Fifteen metres left of *Phase Shift* is a short clean groove. **Gardening Time** 9m S 4a (FA J Martin, solo, 13.6.13) climbs onto the broad sloping ledge and then climbs the short corner above to a tree belay.

### Phase Shift 18m HVS 5a

Start just left of the diagonal line of *Silwood* and climb the short pillar.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 8.87

#### 1. Silwood 20m HS 4a

Climb the obvious right-slanting weakness. An alternative finish can be made at VS 4b by climbing directly to the oak tree rather than continuing rightwards up the groove, although care needs to be taken with the rock by the tree.

FRA D Bishop, D Thomas 8.70 (*Thought to have been climbed before.*)

#### 2. Ivy 24m VS 4c ★★

The excellent groove on the left of a smooth slab is possibly the route of the whole crag. Start below an oak tree. Climb through the oak tree to gain the groove and climb this and a steeper continuation groove in the wall above. Tree belay and abseil descent.

FA JA Sumner, AN Other 10.84

#### 3. Charisma 24m E3 6a ★

A good route that is high in the grade. Clipping the peg is particularly difficult for the short and the upper section is pumpy. Start as for *Ivy*, climb through the oak tree and then traverse the base of the smooth slab (peg) to a shallow groove. Take this and the steep continuation groove above. Tree belay and abseil descent.

FA JA Sumner, AN Other 10.84

#### 4. Eden 24m E2 6a ★★★

Start below the open black groove that leads to a small roof split by a crack at 6 metres. Climb the groove and make a series of strenuous moves (crux) to a semi-rest on the right. Regain your composure as a committing sequence then leads up to a good ledge. Climb the short wall above the ledge into the groove (left of the holly tree) and then swing left again on good holds to a thin blind crack up another groove. Climb this to easier ground. Tree belay and abseil descent.

FA C Nunn 10.84

#### 5. Melangell 27m VS 4b

Nice climbing though bold in its upper section, with some suspect rock, before it joins *Rose Corner*. Take the leftward-rising flake crack to a ledge at half-height; then climb a short wall up and right to an arête. Finish up *Rose Corner* on the right.

FRA D Thomas, D Bishop 8.70 (*Thought to have been climbed before.*)



#### 6. The Slide 27m VS 4c

The left arête of *Rose Corner* is worthwhile. Climb the steep, leftward-slanting ramp awkwardly to gain a ledge on the left; then finish as for *Melangell*. A good variation on this route, at HVS 5a, is to climb the steep leftward slanting ramp to gain a ledge on the left (as originally described), then make a couple of committing moves rightwards across the dark compact wall to join *Rose Corner*.

FA JA Sumner, AN Other 10.84

Variant: FA S Day 2014

< Martin Whitaker on *The Slide* (VS)

© PAT COCKS/CC



**7. Rose Corner** 26m VS 4c ★

Possibly the most popular route on the crag and a strong natural line. The wild rose can make the start a little prickly although this is occasionally heavily pruned. Climb the obvious corner, starting at a rose bush on the right. Move right below an overhang at the top of the corner and go up a short groove to finish.

FA B Phillips, P Hill, J Jenks, Summer 1962

**8. The Scwp Dragon** 24m E4 6a ★★

The obvious scoop between *Rose Corner* and *Ivory Tower*. A little contrived in its upper half as it is very close to *Ivory Tower*. High runners can be placed first in *Ivory Tower*, but are not strictly needed. Climb up to a ledge below the scoop. Enter the scoop and make a hard move up to a triangular pocket (poor, downward pointing peg runner). Leave the scoop to climb the right arête to a very poor spike runner, then traverse left above the scoop, mainly on layaways, to a shallow groove with numerous pockets. Climb easy ground to finish as for *Ivory Tower*.

FA S Williams, C Roberts 17.9.89

**Scwp Dawgy Dawg** 18m E3/4 6a

This route is essentially an independent variation of *The Scwp Dragon* that stays well away from *Ivory Corner*. Climb directly into the scoop as for the parent route and make a hard move to a triangular pocket and poor peg runner. Make a committing traverse leftwards across the scoop to a small rest ledge beneath a high flake (poor wires on the left). Climb the short wall past the flake and continue up the pocketed groove above as per the parent route.

FA S Day, C Dale 18.4.15

**9. Ivory Tower** 24m HS 4b ★

The crack forming the left edge of a huge flake on the right edge of the buttress. Take the crack to the top of the flake. Continue up the broken groove above, and move left near the top.

FA B Phillips, P Hill, J Jenks, Summer 1962

Above the Left-Hand Lower Tier there are a series of broken continuation walls which are bounded on the left hand side by a large slate cave/roof. Just to the right of this cave is a right-facing corner.

**A Pitch or Two** 30m VD

This can also be climbed as a three pitch enchainment by first climbing *Silwood*, as this tops out where *A Pitch or Two* starts.

1. 15m Climb the corner, bridging at first then lay-backing on the excellent crack and slab above. Above the crack, turn half right and pad your way up the slabs above to belay at the back wall. An escape can now be made to the left or:
2. 15m Traverse 4 metres left to the left edge of the continuation wall above. Step up and turn the corner to climb the slab above, keeping just right of centre, up to the rowan tree. Pass the tree either on the left or the right and belay above.

FA S Day solo 2015

At the right hand end of the terrace is a slate tower.

**Worrying Heights** 20m HVS 4b

A serious route which climbs the front face of the tower that is best viewed as an unpleasant means to an end. Be aware that your ropes will be going over many sharp edges and plan accordingly. Start beneath a rightwards slanting crack. Move up to and follow the short crack to a ledge on the right of the tower. Step back onto the face and climb it with caution over

sharp edges, boldly following the path of least resistance until the rock type changes and some welcome gear appears. Move up beneath the capping overhang (loose) and shuffle leftwards around the left hand side to a vague groove. Climb this to a good belay at the base of *Nob Job*.

FA S Day, J Martin 13.6.13

### **Nob Job** 10m E2 5b

A complete contrast to *Worrying Heights*, the route directly beneath. Start at the base of the crack below the dead tree. Climb the crack using good holds on the wall to the right before moving rightwards via a weakness into the middle of the wall. Climb this to a good break. Plug in a couple of medium/ large cams and attack the short headwall (crux).

FA S Day, J Martin 13.6.13

## **Right-Hand Lower Tier**

This crag is best approached by continuing along the main foot path past the oak tree to reach some woodland. Go through the gate and head immediately leftwards up through the trees to the crag. You can also traverse the hillside from the left hand crag past a minor outcrop to arrive at *Sven*.



© THE CLIMBERS' CLUB

### **1. Sven** 18m VD

At one time this climbed the rib and huge block left of *Bramble Pie*, but has now been lost to nature.

FA JA Sumner, SR Sumner, CA Sumner, 18.3.90

### **2. Bramble Pie** 20m HVS 5a

The striking ramp line is one for the connoisseur. To the left of *The Cheshire Cat* wall there is an easy-looking scoopy slab leading to an obvious left-trending crackline under a steep wall. Start at the right hand side of the dirty slab. Climb the bold slab (crux) to the base of the ramp line and fight the brambles to gain the oak tree. (Secateurs recommended.) The wall above the ramp line suffers from loose rock. Nevertheless, pull over a small overhang to the base of the left-trending crackline, which can be followed easily to a tree belay on the far left of the crag.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 12.10.86

**3. Clark the Toothless Shark** 21m E4 6a/b

The sinuous pod just left of *The Cheshire Cat*. Climb the slab left of *The Cheshire Cat* to intersect a right-to-left ramp at 5 metres. Reach a monster jug in the foot of the groove; then make a long reach up the left wall of the groove and gain big holds leading to a blocky ledge. Take the front of the arête above to a less-than-healthy looking belay/ abseil tree.  
FA M Crocker, JA Sumner 4.5.96

**4. The Cheshire Cat** 21m E2 5c 

The thin crackline which starts half-way up the largest unbroken wall. Excellent, sustained and pumpy, but with only about 11 metres of actual climbing. The route is bold in its lower half but the crux is fairly well protected. Go up steep rock directly below the crack line, and move slightly left to a resting place. Step back right to a hold in the small overhang (rotten peg, but good small wire) at the start of the crack itself. Pull over the overhang and continue up the crack, keeping to its left-hand side. Belay to the oak tree on the right. Abseil off.  
FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 19.10.85

**5. The Gargoyle** 20m HVS 5a

Good if slightly grubby climbing, as the line suffers from vegetation and there's some loose rock towards the top. Climb the obvious corner/ chimney-line direct to an oak tree. Climb the steep corner to gain a niche below the huge chockstone. Pull over and continue direct to the oak tree. Abseil off, or climb the continuation groove at 4b and belay a long way back.  
FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 19.10.85

**6. Tanat** 21m HVS 5a 

Excellent rock, though protection is rather sparse. Start at the lowest point of the crag. Step off a block and make a thin move left to the arête; climb this, and move slightly right to good holds below a steep wall. Take the excellent wall direct to a ledge and move left to the oak tree. Abseil off.  
FA B Phillips, P Hill, J Jenks, Summer 1962

**7. The Hud** 20m E1 5b 

The first peg protecting the pull over the roof is loose although there is a good alternative nut placement. The top groove is a little dirty and the route is only 14 metres to the tree. Start to the right of *Tanat*, below a short groove capped by a small triangular roof: there is an orange mark on the rock at the base of the groove. Go easily up a chimney and step right to gain the groove. Pull over the roof on big jugs (peg) to the left. Reach the traverse ledge of *Quartzzone Injection*, move up to a peg in the wall above, and finish directly up the little groove. Abseil from the tree on the left.  
FA JA Sumner, R Norris 29.11.86

**Quartzzone Injection** 30m VS 4c

Quite good, if meandering, climbing. The pitch can be split at the tree belay, but this is very awkward. With careful rope work, the route can be climbed in one pitch, which is better. Pitch two is quite bold and the line is not obvious. Start just right of *Tanat* at a detached slab leading up to a corner.

1. Climb the slab and start up the corner before breaking out left. Reach a traverse-line above the overhangs on the right and follow it to an optional tree belay.
  2. Move back left across a mossy slab and go up to a ledge; continue up the steep arête above, first on its right, then on the left. Finish up the arête direct on big holds. The belay is a long way back and needs care.
- FA JA Sumner, R Norris 12.85

**Paper Lace** 30m HVS 5b

On the right-hand side of the crag is a gully separating an overhanging section from the main buttress. Formerly a worthwhile one star route, the bottom of this route is currently quite dirty and a belay at the top may prove troublesome. This route itself is just left of the gully and makes for a slab in a corner with a large pinnacle directly above. Go up, climb the slab and move up into the corner. Make an awkward move to its right edge and climb this to a belay on the right-hand side of the pinnacle. Step left from the pinnacle top to a ledge below an arête and climb its right edge to the top.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 15.9.84

**Upper Tier**

**Approach** as for the left hand crag and continue rightwards from the *Ivory Tower* and the head up the first of the steep gullies that separates the left and right hand crags. 15 minutes.

In a break with convention, the Upper Tier routes are described from **right to left** as the only means of approach is from the right. At the right-hand end of the upper tier is a prominent tower with a groove-line running up its centre; this is *King of Maybe*. *Cavalier Attitude* takes the right-hand edge of the arête to its right.

**Cavalier Attitude** 24m HVS 5a

Start to the right of the *King of Maybe* just before a rock step. Pull on steeply then move up and slightly right into a slight niche before moving back left towards the arête. Climb straight up from here and step right to finish as for the *King of Maybe*. It is possible to finish more directly through the bulge onto the short slab, but this feels artificial and is 5b.

FA JA Sumner, AN Other, 10.85 (Direct Finish FA S Day, J Martin 2013)

**King of Maybe** 26m HVS 5a ★★

A sustained and not to be underestimated route that requires a determined approach. It is better climbed with a direct start, (which avoids the peg), rather than by traversing in. Otherwise, gain a crack from the left (peg), go up into the groove to a bulge, and make a bold and exciting traverse left on big handholds. Go directly up to the summit block and climb its short overhanging groove via a reachy move. Twin metal spike belay hidden in heather about 4 metres back.

FA B Phillips, P Hill, J Jenks, Summer 1962

< Jill Sumner on *King of Maybe* (VS) in the early 1980s. © JOHN SUMNER/CC





### Queen of My Soul 21m E4 6a ★

The fingery and sequency thin crack just left of *King of Maybe* has superb rock and is a fine test of skill. As a route, it initially requires a blinkered approach as it is very easy to wander into *King of Maybe* near the start, although as the climb progresses it gains more independence. The climbing itself is nonetheless excellent. Start by ambling up to the foot of an off-fingers crack. Traverse right along a sloping break to the thin crack and follow it quickly (peg runner) to massive holds above on *King of Maybe*. Continue to the capping tower and, from a wide crack, swarm up the front arête to the top.  
FA M Crocker 5.5.96

< Stuart Day on *Queen of my Soul* (E4)  
© DAVE WILLIAMS/STEEP STONE

### Thunder Road 24m VS 4c

Well to the left of *King of Maybe* is a chimney/ groove-line running the full height of the crag. Now heavily vegetated and possibly unclimbable in its current state. The route follows the chimney-groove to move out left near the top just below a small tree. Metal spike belay well back in a small outcrop.

FA B Phillips, P Hill, J Jenks, Summer 1962

### Remember Bob Brevitt 30m E1 5b ★

A good route, apart from the top out which is adversely affected by thick gorse and heather. Climb *Thunder Road* for 6 metres; then follow a weakness in the steep left wall to a good peg. Continue up and left again to a ledge. Climb a broken groove on the left edge of the wall and then move back right to climb the centre of the upper wall to finish. Belay spike in a small outcrop a long way back from the top; alternatively there is a large nut/ hex and medium cam belay in the small outcrop where the route tops out.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 18.3.90

### No More Lives to Lose 24m E3 5c ★

The bulging wall left of *Thunder Road*; strenuous in its bottom half gives an excellent, if somewhat bold, route. A pre-placed rope is recommended for the top out as it involves a heather and gorse cornice. Start 5 metres down and left of *Thunder Road*. Crank through a bulge to a jug in a broad white scoop. Traverse right for 2 metres (good wire low on the right) to a flake-line which leads up to a hand-ledge. Move left to a white ledge; then pull up onto the slab crossed by *Remember Bob Brevitt* (peg runner). Continue direct (*in-situ* thread – replaced 2014) to big holds and slabbier rock to the top.

FA M Crocker, solo with trailing back-rope 5.5.96

### Fifty and Rising 30m E2 5c

Strenuous and technical. Climb the overhanging crack to an oak tree. Step right from the tree and climb up diagonally right to reach an easy slab above. Tree belay just below the top of the crag.

FA A Grondowski, CW Little, JA Sumner 3.85 (*The initial crack had been climbed by D Bishop and D Thomas in 1970.*)



**Wrong Direction** 20m E2 5c

Climb the steep crack of *Fifty and Rising* to the first oak tree. Then head left (the 'wrong direction') across the base of a slab behind the oak tree to a short open groove. Climb this and continue more easily (but carefully) up the slab to a tree belay just below the top of the crag.

FA S Day, P Wilkinson 9.6.15 (*Climbed in error during an attempt on 'Fifty and Rising'.*)

**Stickle Back Man** 27m VS 4b

The undercut chimney/groove-line starting half-way up the crag. Start by gaining an easy ramp below a large tree at the top. Follow the ramp rightwards; then go up directly to the chimney-line and climb it to the top.

FA JA Sumner, AN Other, 10.85

**Chacmool** 27m VS 4b

Start as for *Stickle Back Man*. Follow the ramp rightwards; then go up to gain and follow a leftward weakness crossing a slab and a groove to a ledge on the right of another groove. Climb this groove to a large tree at the top of the crag.

FA JA Sumner, AN Other, 10.85

**Luddites Demise** 21m HVS 5b

Basically a direct start to *Chacmool*. Start as for *Chacmool* and climb directly up steep rock to the groove; then continue as for *Chacmool*. This pitch would benefit from more traffic, which would help keep it cleaner, as the climbing is rather good.

FA C Nunn, S Coneys 6.85



Phil Wilkinson on the first ascent of *Evening Wall* (E4) © DAVE WILLIAMS/STEEP STONE

**Evening Wall** 18m E4 6a ★

Hard for the grade, this climbs the leaning headwall above the initial groove of *Buzzard's Nest Crack* which is accessed via a hanging ramp from the arête. Climb the initial groove/chimney of *Buzzard's Nest Crack* to where it heads left. Traverse right for 3 metres to an obvious ledge on the arête and compose yourself (good gear in the low break). Boldly climb the hanging ramp to reach a wobbly jug (sling) at the base of the head wall. Make a short traverse left in an exposed position on good but sharp holds until it is possible to move up to a higher set of jugs right in the middle of the wall (good cam further left). After a brief shake

out, launch up the centre of the steep head wall on crimps and layaways to reach good holds just below the top (micro-cam in a tiny slot) and mantel for glory.  
FA P Wilkinson, S Day 2.6.13

### **Buzzard's Nest Crack** 24m HS 4b

The big leftward-trending ramp-line below a steep wall was once a very popular route, but there's no reason why it can't be one again. Climb a crack in a corner to gain the ramp and continue up to a steep little wall. Climb this awkwardly to a ledge and an optional tree belay. The continuation, up a shallow and invariably very dirty groove on the right, leads to an equally unpleasant top-out and an awkward belay in a rocky bluff.

FA D Shone, D Bishop 8.70 *(The route isn't worth a star if the top groove is climbed and it is probably best to stop and then abseil from the optional tree belay. The nest has long gone.)*

About 75 metres above *Buzzard's Nest Crack* stands a good looking, compact block. Appearances deceive as on closer inspection the rock is quite dirty and worryingly flaky in places, particularly on the left hand side.

### **Achy Flaky Heart** 10m HVS 4b †

This takes a line of weakness across the heart of the wall. Start 2 metres right of the large crack at an insignificant groove. Climb directly up the wall to a large hold/hole and move up left following the good holds in the weakness until forced to move vertically on creaking flakes. With heart in mouth, step up and left on worrying holds to reach the safety of the top.  
FA S Day solo 1.6.13

## **Rocho Crag**

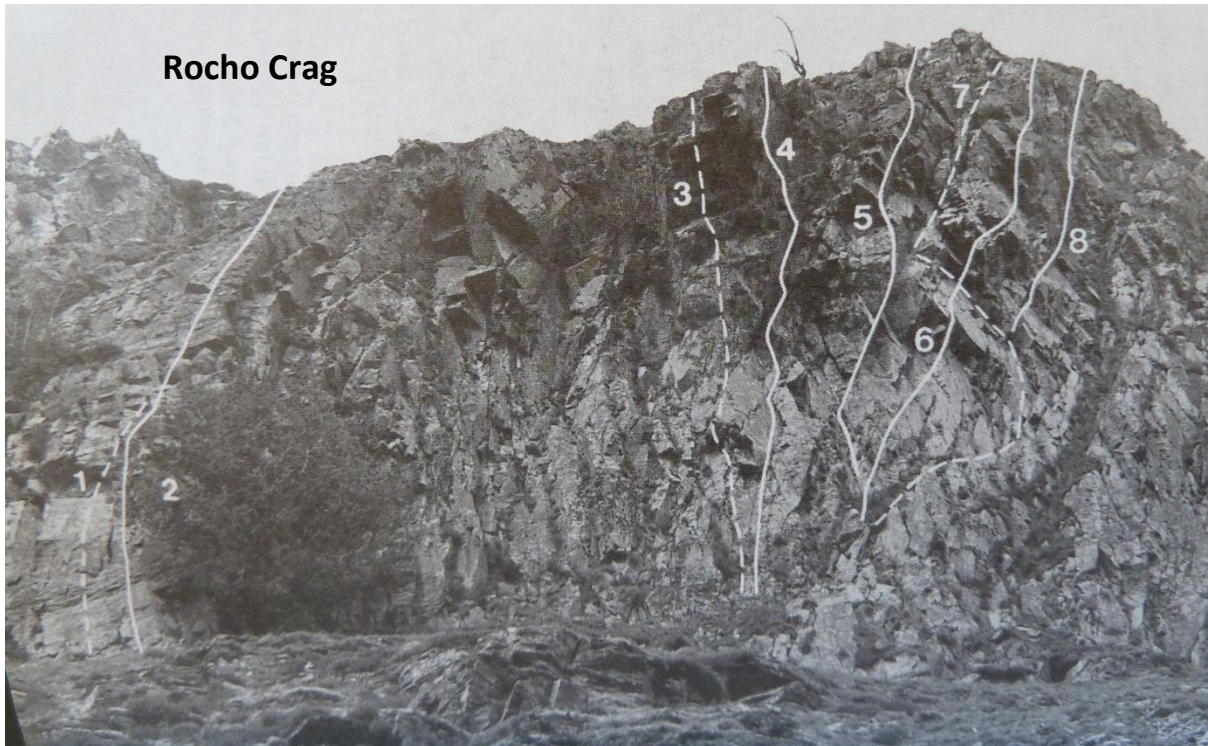
OS Ref.: SJ 061 272

This is an impressive looking, east-facing crag high up on the northern slopes of the Nant Sebon side valley, immediately east of First and Second Crag. Rarely visited, but if this crag was in the Gwynant Valley, climbers would probably be drooling over it. The crag has two very different sections, the left-hand side being steep with overhangs, the right (with no routes at present) being an easier-angled columnar structure of grooves and arêtes which are capped by a prominent black band of overhangs. The columnar rock is very compact while the black band is seemingly composed of much poorer quality rock.

**Approach:** From beneath Craig Rhiwarth, continue east on the public bridleway through the woods before contouring the hillside to join a farm track. Then head up the Nant Sebon valley for a few hundred meters; the crag now becomes visible high on the left past the point where the bridleway veers right to cross the Nant Sebon. Just beyond, take one of many vague sheep paths that head steeply up the hill side towards the left hand side of the Crag. The final section is quite a slog; 45 minutes.

**Descent:** All of the routes finish on a steep terrace below a band of heather. Climb carefully up through the heather the head leftwards (facing in) to contour round past a couple of steep gullies to return to the base of the crag. It may be prudent to set a safety rope to assist moving up through the heather band, although this is in itself difficult as there is no belay above the heather unless some form of temporary ground anchor is used.





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### 1. Bleeting a Retreat 27m E3 6a

A very worthwhile eliminate, with some nice features, up the centre of the slab taken by *Blitzkrieg*. Currently a little vegetated and would probably benefit from a clean. Start 1½ metres left of that route. Climb a sinuous pocketed crack to the obvious layback edge. Follow the edge to a small roof at the top of the slab. Bear left over the roof, climb direct for 3 metres, and then step right into the final long groove of *Blitzkrieg*.  
FA M Crocker, J Harwood 2.6.96

### 2. Blitzkrieg 30m E2 5c ★

The clean steep slab on the left-hand side of the crag between a detached pinnacle and a large holly tree. Again, a little vegetated and would benefit from a clean. Climb cracks on the right-hand side of the slab, and make a difficult move to enter a groove through a band of overhangs. Continue up the groove to exit onto vegetated slabs. Good block and nut belays beneath a short wall.

FA JA Sumner, M Crocker 5.5.96

### 3. Cougar 24m E5 6b ★★

A wild route on a radical feature: the great prow towards the left-hand side of the crag. Climb an obvious groove to a good ledge beneath the prow. From the right arête, a sort of overhanging ramp leads up leftwards to a capping roof: attack it with an initial lunge (peg runner); then follow a series of amazing buckets to the roof (hidden peg). Battle through the off-width in the prow to the top. There is a good finishing jug on the left.

FA M Crocker 5.5.96

### 4. Stew the Orthodox 24m E3 5c

Bored of the 9 to 5? In need of adventure? Then embark on this! A spacy excursion onto the right-hand edge of the overhanging black prow of *Cougar*. Start as for *Cougar*. Climb an obvious groove to a good ledge below the prow. Step right and climb the steepening groove right of the prow until it closes and forces a swing left to a crack. With cam protection in the crack, move down left to a line of good handholds on the very edge of the prow. Cut loose

across these to a hollow-sounding ledge; then finish direct more easily.  
FA M Crocker 2.6.96

The next four routes start from an obvious pedestal ledge, gained by a scramble from the right.

**5. Experimental** 21m E5 6a † ★

A satisfying test-piece that would be equally at home at Tremadog. From the pedestal, go up and climb the left-hand of two striated inverted-V grooves to a bulge. Pass the bulge with precision to reach the foot of the groove of *The Rocho Machine (Friend 2)*. Swing left immediately to a steep flake-line and take this on big holds to a step left to exit.  
FA M Crocker, J Harwood 2.6.96

**6. Man with a Mission** 27m E5 6a/b ★★

Solid three-star climbing on a super-sustained and varied line through the complex of slabs and roofs, right of the second broken groove right of the prow. Bear rightwards from the pedestal, move up a groove, then a rib rightwards to a good jug beneath a gap in the first roof, which underlies a prominent green slab. Go over the roof onto the slab (junction with *The Rocho Machine*); then step right across the slab (peg runner) to the second small roof. Pull up and over with a thin move direct to the third roof (*in-situ* thread; replaced 2015). Surmount this roof, and follow cracks above through the fourth and final roof to exit direct via a short wall.  
FA M Crocker 5.5.96



**7. The Rocho Machine** 32m E1 5b ★★

The obvious green slab and right-slanting groove accommodate a somewhat easier but nonetheless impressive voyage through the overhangs.

**1** 8m From the pedestal, make an easy traverse right to spike and nut belays close to the vegetated gully/groove.

**2** 24m 5b Move up to the right-hand side of the green slab via a short groove. Go diagonally up left across the slab using good side-pulls in the overhang above, to a niche on the left (peg on the slab just before the niche). Move up to another peg and step right above an overhang. Climb the broken, right-slanting groove above to the top.

FA J Sumner, A George 18.5.96

< Steve Cameron, established on the green slab and getting to grips with *The Rocho Machine* E1

© JOHN SUMNER/CC



**8. Experiential** 30m E5 6a † ★

A big pitch full of technical interest, which takes the crack rising through the overlapping slabs right of *Man with a Mission*. Some care is advised with the rock low down. Climb diagonally right from the pedestal for 8 metres to the right-hand end of a green slab. Reach a crack above the overlap and follow it over a second overlap, using a good hold or two on the left, to a resting-place on the slabby ramp beneath a leaning wall. With sole protection from a (nevertheless good) twisted wire in a pocket on the right, launch straight up the leaning wall, following increasingly large holds to the top; a somewhat committing finish to say the least!  
FA M Crocker 2.6.96

**Redstart** 36m E1 5b ★★

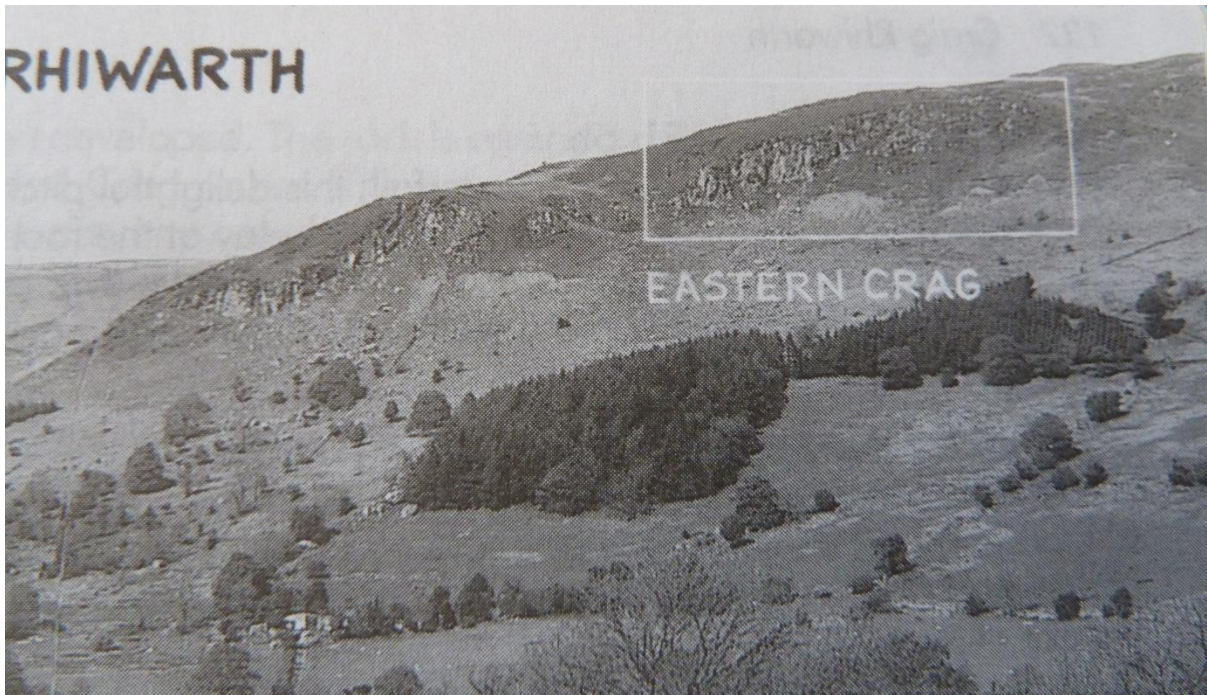
At the back of the amphitheatre which lies between the two sections of Rocho Crag there is a rightward-curving corner with a clean wall above between two mossy sections. This gives a worthwhile excursion.

**1** 18m 5b Climb the corner to an *in-situ* thread and peg runner. Move left and go directly up the clean wall to a second peg. Then climb a groove to a horizontal break beneath the black overhangs. Old metal spike belays.

**2** 18m Traverse easily leftwards along the break to finish.  
FA JA Sumner, S Cameron 15.6.96

**Eastern Crag**

OS Ref.: SJ 068 268



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There is a section of very worthwhile, although very rarely visited rock on the continuation of the Rhiwarth escarpment, located vaguely opposite Rocho Crag on the hillside to the east of the Nant Sebon. The main eastern crag is to the right of the more broken left-hand crag.

**Approach:** Take the minor road that runs beneath the main crag for approximately 1 mile. Drive 100 metres past the gated entrance to Tŷ Glas and park carefully on the grass verge just before another gated entrance. Walk back along the road and follow the way-marked bridleway to Tŷ Glas. Follow the road uphill past a few cottages to another gate at SJ 0651



2670. Go through the gate and turn immediately right to follow the fence line steeply uphill towards a small wood. Once on the other side of the small wood, the left-hand crag is now directly in view.

Before reaching the main crag there are a number of interesting little outcrops on the left. Twenty metres before *Jonny's Rib* is a small clean bay with a good leaning block.

**Eastern Block** 6m HVS 5b

Make a series of committing rock ups/mantels above a good landing on the slightly overhanging wall. There is potential gear in the break near the top.

FA S Day solo 10.6.13

**Jonny's Rib** 11m VS 4b

Start at the toe of the buttress. Climb easily up the rib to a steepening and make a blind and bold move to a good but hidden hold. Finish to the right hand side of the capping tower.

FA J Martin, S Day 10.6.13

**Sore Paws** 11m HVS 5b

This route is essentially a direct start and finish to the previous route. Climb the short sharp crack to a good ledge move left to a shallow groove that lead to the capping block. Finish up the steep left side of the block on good but slightly hollow sounding holds.

FA S Day, J Martin 10.6.13

Towards the right-hand end of the main crag there is a prominent arête with a blank overhanging wall to its left, which forms the right wall of the striking corner-crack of *Class 87/2*. Near the left-hand end of the crag there is a large bulge below and to the left of an oak tree at the top. The first two routes take the arête and groove beneath the oak tree.



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**1. Full Body Transplant** 21m E2 5c ★

Excellent climbing, surprisingly independent (and bold) once you commit to the left-hand arête. Start as for *Huggy Bear Goes to School* but exit leftwards from the bottomless corner-crack to gain the arête. Climb this in an exciting position, both with increasing steepness and little in the way of protection.

FA M Crocker, JA Sumner 4.5.96

**2. Huggy Bear Goes to School** 23m HVS 5a

A little awkward and loose at the start but, nonetheless, a strong natural line. Start by some reddish rock with a bottomless corner-crack leading into a deep V-niche. Climb the obvious corner-crack/ groove line, step right to a short steep slot crack (crux) and follow easier ground to a good spike belay.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 20.3.88

**3. Who Ate all the Croutons?** 18m E1 5a

A very poor route, which is both serious and loose. The large block above where the route starts is worryingly hollow and most of the holds are potentially disposable. Start, if you must, to the right of the exfoliating groove and beneath the large block a few metres right of *Huggy Bear Goes to School*. Teeter up leftwards into the groove and exit this with great care. Follow the crack and belay as for *Huggy Bear Goes to School*.

FA M West, K Surry 17.6.12



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**4. Old as you Feel** 21m E3 6a

Twelve metres left of the corner of *Class 87/2* is a blunt arête. Climb the left edge of the arête, past a hard section at 6 metres (*in-situ* thread); then continue more easily to a stout bush above. Either retreat from the bush, or continue slightly rightwards to the top with care.

FA M Crocker, JA Sumner 4.5.96

**5. Spare Parts** 24m E3 5c

A deceptively difficult and a tricky-to-protect line, which climbs the black left wall of the *Cloudwaltzer* groove. Start as for *Cloudwaltzer*. Climb direct, just left of the groove, to a ledge and flakes at 8 metres. Reach a small niche above a bulge, and go straight up, then left slightly to jugs in the base of a big black scoop. Cross rightwards beneath an overlap, step back left above it and finish direct over a small roof. High in the grade.

FA M Crocker, JA Sumner 4.5.96

**6. Cloudwaltzer** 24m HVS 5b

The groove immediately left of *Class 87/2*. Gain the base of the groove from the right and climb it direct, passing a peg at mid-height.

FA JA Sumner, JP Sumner 29.8.87

**7. Class 87/2** 24m HVS 5b

The obvious corner crack. The first pitch's steep dark left facing groove succumbs to a forceful, determined approach and provides excellent climbing. The second pitch, however, is a very different story.

**1** 15m. 5b. Climb the corner-crack with increasing difficulty to a large ledge.

**2** 9m. Follow the right edge, then easy ground rightwards to a tree.

FA JA Sumner, C Norris 17.10.87

**8. Rust in the Machine** 24m E5 6a

The overhanging arête right of *Class 87/2* is protectable and just makes the grade. Climb the left-hand of two grooves in the arête; then follow a more definite thin crack with more exertion to jugs slightly left of the arête. One final steep move up its left-hand side leads to slabbier rock and the belay of *Class 87/2*.

FA M Crocker, JA Sumner 4.5.96

**9. Forty and Falling Apart** 18m E2 5c

Steep and shaky above half-height. Start below an obvious crack 5 metres right of the arête. Go up the crack in the leaning wall, then follow good handholds above it rightwards before pulling over onto a slab. Carefully take the groove on the right to a large tree on the right.

FA M Crocker, JA Sumner 4.5.96

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