

Welsh Grit Selected Area Guides

Craig y Fotty

An Interim Climbing Guide

By Dave Williams

(Photo-topos © Mark Davies/Great Western Rock)

"Craig y Fotty deserves popularity. It is very nicely positioned, with relatively easy access, excellent rock, a sunny aspect and a good range of grades."



Steve Culverhouse &
Martyn Davidson on
Flight of Time E1 5b

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The Rhinogydd

The **Rhinogydd** are a range of mountains located in Central Snowdonia, south of the Afon Dwryd, east of Harlech, west of the A470 and north of the Afon Mawddach.

Rhinogydd is the Welsh plural form of *Rhinog*, which means 'threshold'. It is thought that the use of Rhinogydd derives from the names of two of the higher peaks in the range, namely Rhinog Fawr and Rhinog Fach.

The Rhinogydd are notably rocky towards the central and northern end of the range, especially around Rhinog Fawr, Rhinog Fach and Moel Ysgyfarnogod. This area is littered with boulders, outcrops and large cliffs, all composed of perfect gritstone. The southern end of the range around Y Llethr and Diffwys has a softer, more rounded character, but this does not mean that there is an absence of climbable rock.

Steep Stone's Rhinogydd series of Interim Climbing and Bouldering Guides

For the rock climber, the Rhinogydd is arguably one of Wales' greatest yet least-known treasures.

Work is ongoing on **Steep Stone's** new **Welsh Grit** guidebook, which will detail the very best of over 1800 single and multi-pitch climbs and boulder problems. The Climbers' Club *Meirionnydd* 2002 guidebook did the area no favours. Poorly written and edited, totally lacking in inspiration, its overly complex and consequently confusing description of the area and its climbing has done little to motivate any real interest. As a result, a whole generation of climbers may now be unaware, or at least unsure, of the Rhinogydd's climbing potential.

Steep Stone's *Welsh Grit* aims to right this wrong. While work on the new guide steadily progresses, Steep Stone will also produce a short series of definitive interim guidebooks with the aim of encouraging climbers to take a serious look at what the Rhinogydd has to offer. Building on **Steep Stone's** 2018 **Central Wales - Elenydd** guidebook, these well-researched, free-to-download PDF interim guides will provide easy to follow access notes, together with accurate route descriptions and photo-tops.

The Welsh Grit Selected Area Interim Guide Series

Cefn Cam

Cwm Mynach

Craig y Fotty

Craig y Ffridd

Cwm Nantcol Lower Craggs

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Craig y Fotty *Crag of the Summer Dwelling*
aka **Carreg Clust** *Ear Rock*

OS Ref 676 214

Overview:	A very nicely positioned linear outcrop with excellent quality rock, a very sunny aspect and with a relatively straightforward approach.
Altitude:	300 metres (Craig y Fotty (main) crag)
Approach:	AG1: Easy walking on a former mine track (public bridleway) and footpath to within 10 minutes of the lower crag and 15 minutes or so of the main crag.
Approach time:	30 minutes (Craig Tŷ Powdr (lower) crag); 40 minutes (Craig y Fotty)
Aspect:	South west facing
Drying:	Very quick drying but with some seepage in places after prolonged rain
Winter sun:	Yes
Summer sun:	Yes, until mid-evening
Access Land:	Yes
Grade Range:	D – E4

This attractive, well-positioned crag overlooks the glacial hanging valley of Cwm Llechen on the southern slopes of Mynydd Cwm Mynach, with excellent views northwards to Diffwys and southwards to Cadair Idris and the Afon Mawddach estuary. In addition, the total absence of forestry in this valley makes for an extremely pleasant contrast to the adjacent Cwm Mynach valley, which is just to the east.

The crag appears to have two names. The original name is **Craig y Fotty**, but locally it is also referred to as **Carreg Clust**, a name given to it by 19th century manganese miners. (The reason for the name **Carreg Clust** may become obvious when looking at the crag from the opposite side of Cwm Llechen on the walk-in.) There are two separate crags; the small, lower, compact outcrop of **Craig Tŷ Powdr** and the much larger main crag of **Craig y Fotty** which forms a long, north to south escarpment along the hilltop above. Both crags are visible more or less the whole time on the walk-in and cannot be missed.



Craig y Fotty deserves popularity; its myriad variety of clean slabs, walls and cracks are well worth a visit. It is very nicely positioned, with relatively easy access, excellent rock, a sunny aspect and a very good range of grades. Climbing is possible here throughout the year and the crag is a good option for dry and sunny winter days. It is, however, quite exposed and catches the wind. The only note of caution is that the highly jointed and blocky structure of the cliff means that some loose rock may be encountered, particularly on

descents. Note also that wide cracks feature on a number of routes and, consequently, very large cams (eg. Camalots 4-6) can be useful additions to a normal rack.

A note on the use of Approach Grades AG

The Rhinogydd are different and here you'll rarely find the close-cropped grass of the rest of Snowdonia. This is predominantly a rough, scruffy terrain with boulders and heather. As a result, a Rhinogydd mile is about as long as a Scottish one. Covering ground can sometimes take ages due to the Rhinogydd's *Three Amigos* of heather, bilberry bushes and boulders - with an added *soupçon* of bracken when in season. Rhinogydd devotees will know what to expect, but the first time or occasional visitor may be caught unawares.

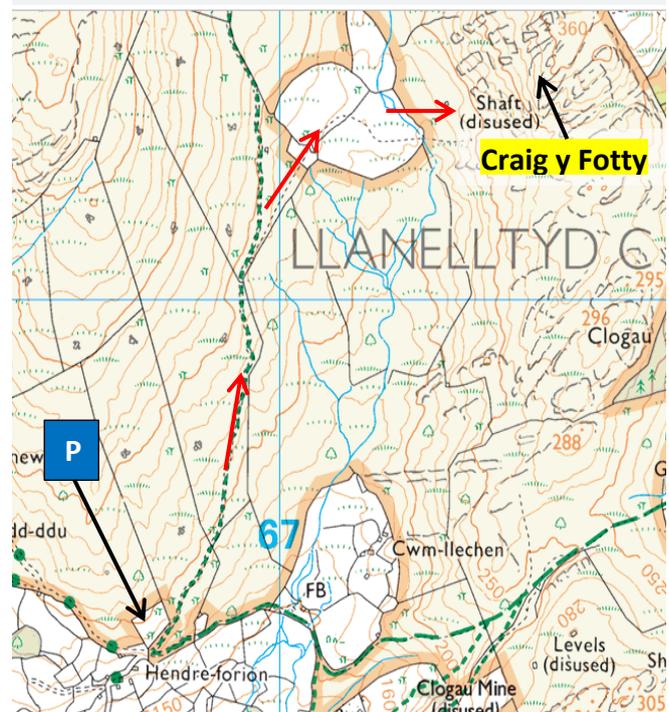
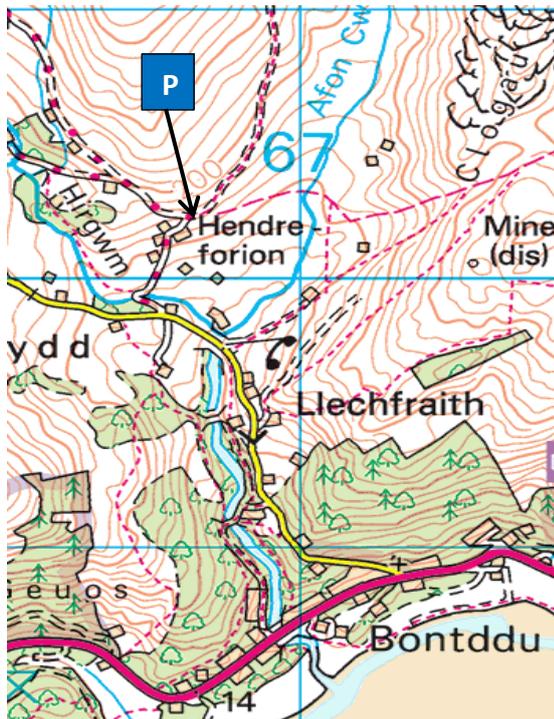
As a guide, the approaches to crags have been very subjectively 'graded' from 0-3 according to the ease of walking, or indeed, the lack thereof....

AG0 'A walk in the park'

AG1 Relatively easy going, reasonable paths

AG2 Hard going on mostly pathless terrain

AG3 Extremely difficult, pathless terrain



Approach: From Dolgellau take the A496 road to Bontddu. Turn right by a bus stop in the centre of the village and take the steep, narrow road up the hillside. Cross a bridge over the Afon Cwm Llechen and then take the first road on the right down to a second bridge over the Nant Hirgwm and a gate. Pass through the gate and continue uphill around a sharp right hand bend and on past Hendre Forion farmhouse on the right. Just beyond is a sharp left hand bend with a gateway and stile on the outside of the bend; park here. (OS Ref 666 202)

Note that parking space is very limited, with room for a couple of cars only. A single vehicle can be parked to the right of the stile and there is room for one other on the very inside of the bend. Park considerately; allowing enough room for farm lorries to swing wide on the sharp bend. **Do not block the gateway to the hill as this is in regular use. If both spaces are taken, park further back down the road; again avoiding blocking access and gateways.** The local farmer is very kindly disposed towards climbers, so all courtesies should be maintained.

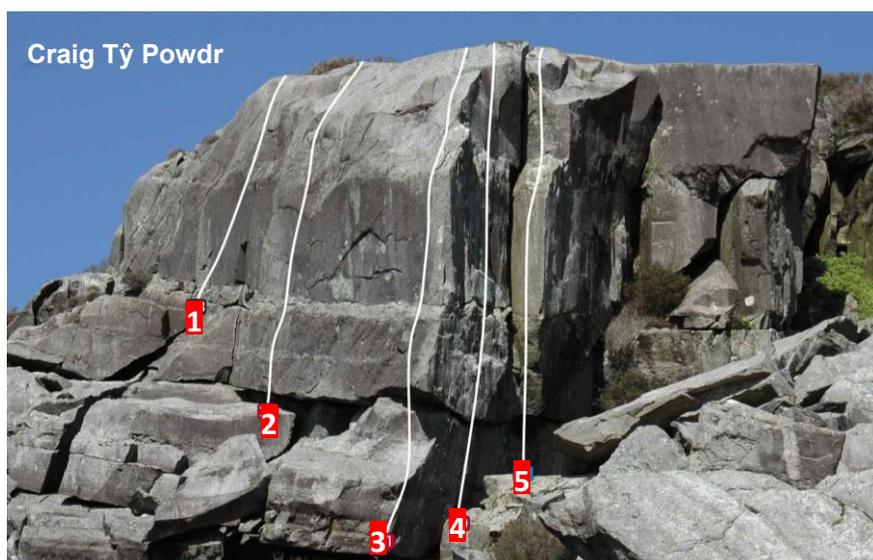
From the stile, continue on foot and follow the former New Diffwys Mine track which undulates as it rises along the western side of Cwm Llechen towards the head of the valley. At a fork just beyond a gateway in a wall (OS Ref 669 210), take the right hand track which leads down to the Afon Cwm Llechen, ending by a stile over a wall and an old stone miners' bridge over the river. From the bridge, faint and usually overgrown paths then lead past the long disused Fotty manganese mine workings to both crags. The path to the upper crag of Craig y Fotty can be particularly difficult to find, but at least it is not that far to walk from this point.

The walk-in can be very waterlogged after prolonged wet weather and even after a long dry spell, it may still be wet in places. It is recommended that the crag is best visited before the bracken is in 'full bloom' but, even so, the quality and variety of climbing on offer means that a visit in high summer should not be precluded..

Descent: Descents are possible in a variety of places on the main crag and are not described individually. Some climbs finish on the top of immense detached blocks separated from the parent cliff by deep crevasses (eg routes 1-6, 10-11); descending from these involves some easy down climbing as walking off is not an option.

Craig Tŷ Powdr *Powder House Crag* OS Ref 674 213

The small lower buttress is composed of top quality rock and towers above a jumbled chaos of huge blocks and boulders. The crag derives its name from the nearby old manganese mine's explosives building, or powder house, the remains of which are nearby. It may only be 10 metres high at most, but it is an impressively imposing little outcrop with some very challenging climbing. Climbs are described from left to right.



There is a short, unclimbed chimney on the left side of the buttress.

1 No Time for Tears 7m E4 6a ★ †

Bold and precarious climbing above a terrible landing; protection is illusionary. Climb the short slab 2 metres left of the short chimney to reach a small overlap. A good edge above needs matching before rocking up and right to an easier finish.

FA T Taylor solo (*After practice on a top rope*) 9.5.11

To the right of the chimney there is a blank-looking little wall.

2 La Saison des Pluies 7m E2 5c †

Layback up the wall just to the right of the chimney. There is a very high and precarious step up at the half way point.

FA T Taylor solo 9.5.11

3 Gilt Edge 10m E2 5c ★★

Start below the arête forming the right edge of the blank face and pull up onto the ledge up left. Balanced layaway moves past micro-wire protection bring good holds within reach. Pad up the slab to finish. Excellent climbing.

FA T Taylor, C Taylor 24.4.11

To the right of the arête is a second steep little wall split by a deep chimney-crack.

4 Slick Feelings 10m E3 6a ★ †

Start 1 metre right of the base of the arête below the vertical crack. Use the arête and crack to go directly up, then make a hard and committing move to gain a good hold at the top of the arête. Pull up onto the easy slab above.

FA T Taylor 24.4.11

5 Golden Nuggats 10m VS 5a ★

The vertical chimney-crack is a classic struggle. Enter it with difficulty, then battle desperately and determinedly upwards to a finish on the right.

FA T Taylor solo 24.4.11

Craig y Fotty Main Crag

Climbs are described from left to right, with the first few routes located on a hidden slab a short distance left of **Four Crack Wall**. A faint path leads up to this area from near **Carreg Holt**; this may, however, be obscured by bracken later in the season.



On the very far left of the escarpment is a steep, clean, North-facing slab.

1 Time of Flight 8m

HS 4b ★

The slab is bounded on its left by an easy angled corner. Take a direct line two metres right of the corner to finish up the crack.

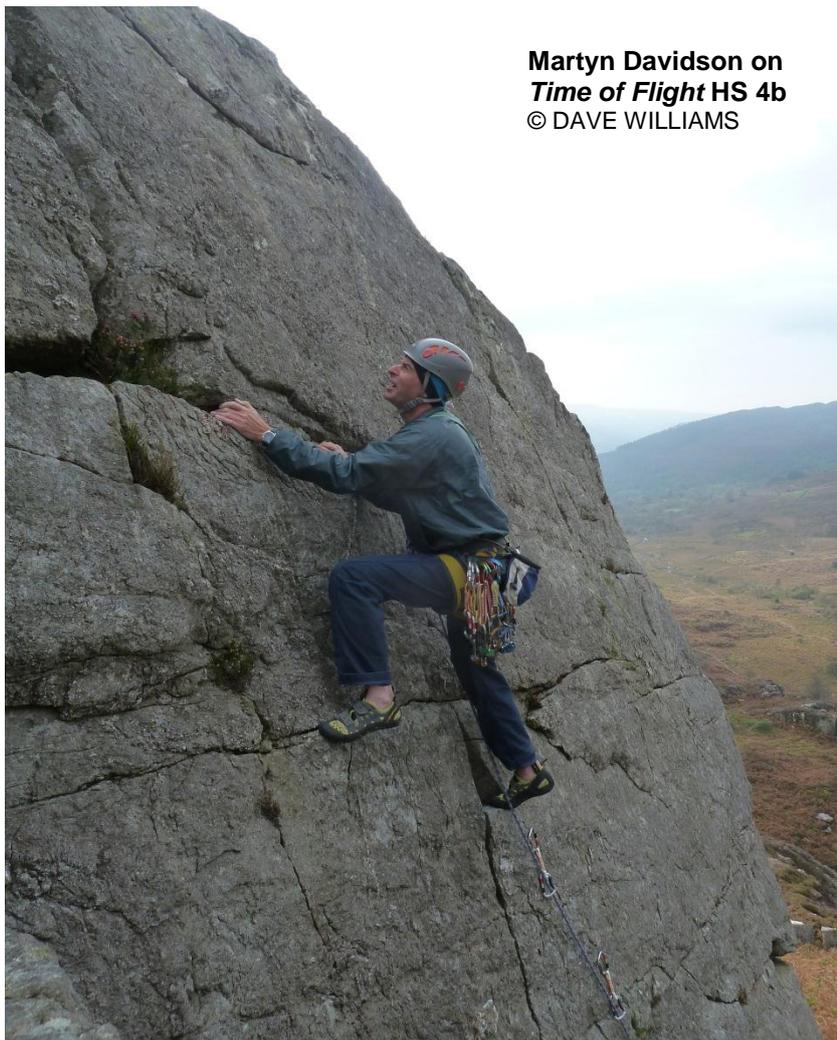
FA T Taylor 26.3.11

2 Flight of Time 8m

E1 5b ★

The slab is bounded on the right by a good edge. Start two metres left of the edge and go directly up past some good breaks before finishing up a short crack. Quite sustained, but with good climbing and adequate protection.

FA T Taylor 26.3.11



**Martyn Davidson on
Time of Flight HS 4b**
© DAVE WILLIAMS



Stay Little 8m VS 4c

Essentially this is just an easier (and inferior) start to the next route which is rather bold in its upper half. Climb directly up the right edge of the slab to the obvious horizontal break, then continue as for *The Edge of the World*.

FA M Davies solo 23.9.13

3 The Edge of the World 12m E2 5b

This takes the edge bounding the right side of the slab. Start directly under the edge and follow it, passing a short, hard and committing sequence, to gain the horizontal break and the first (and only) gear placements. Step left and continue more happily up the arête on its left hand side to the top.

FA T Taylor 26.3.11

The next two routes struggle to maintain their independence, but are worth seeking out.

4 **Friend of the Ancients** 12m VS 4c ★

The vertical crack to the right of *The Edge of the World* is followed directly.

FRA T Taylor, C Taylor 26.3.11 (So named as a very rusty cam was found near the top).

5 **Ragnorak** 14m HVS 5a ★

The right edge of this excellent, steep little wall has good protection and great moves. Low in the grade but with sustained and interesting climbing.

FA T Taylor, C Taylor 26.3.11

6 **Reggaerock** 14m E1 5b †

This takes the vague groove in the wall in the gully to the right of *Ragnorak*. Stepping off the boulder onto the face right of the edge decreases the climbing by 4 metres. Take the centre of the wall to the top.

FA T Taylor solo 26.3.11

Next right is **Four Crack Wall**, a quality piece of rock.



7 **Golden Girl** 10m HVS 5a ★

Start directly below the left hand crack and gain the ledge. Follow the crack above past small (and hopefully securely wedged) blocks to the top.

FA T Taylor, A Taylor 31.8.11

8 **Aurora** 10m HVS 5b ★

Start 1 metre right of *Golden Girl* and pull onto the ledge. Move up the vertical crack to the horizontal break. Use this to traverse right and use a good layaway to make a gymnastic move onto the nose. Enter the niche and finish directly.

FA T Taylor solo 31.8.11

9 **The Midas Touch** 10m VS 4b ★

The flared crack is hard to start but eases as it goes leftwards near the top to finish as for *Aurora*.

FA T Taylor, A Taylor 31.8.11

10 **The Dog's Pollack** 10m VS 4c ★

The right hand crack. Pull up onto the ledge then enter the flared crack with some difficulty. Nice moves lead up to an easier finish.

FA T Taylor, C Taylor 26.3.11

Right again is a short, slabby wall with a crack on the right. (**The Carat and the Stick** VD 8m
FA T Taylor, A Taylor 31.8.11)



11 Crystal Tips 9m HVS 5c †

A well-protected eliminate on excellent rock which searches for difficulty up the impending wall just right of *The Carat and the Stick*. Climb the short chimney-groove to a sloping ledge below the steep wall and make a hard move up this to a good hold. The inviting crack on the left is out of bounds at this grade.

FA S Day, D Williams 25.3.14

Around the front of the buttress to the right is a crooked, off-width crack.

12 For Reasons Unknown 9m VS 5a ★ †

The curving, off-width crack is aptly named. The start is decidedly awkward, gaining the niche near the top thankfully less so. A number of very large cams (eg. Camalots 4-6) provide the only protection.

FA S Finch, D Williams 29.1.14



13 King Raven 8m E2 5b

Start below the right edge of the short steep face and make bold, committing moves to gain some good holds up and left. Pull up to finish directly. The start may be harder for the short.
FA T Taylor 18.3.11

To the right is a deep canyon with a huge, old raven's nest. The bay to the right of this has a vegetated corner at its back.

14 Frog Storm 10m HVS 5a

Start just right of the corner and climb to a tiny sapling, then continue up the excellent, thin and sustained crack. Harder than it looks and high in the grade.

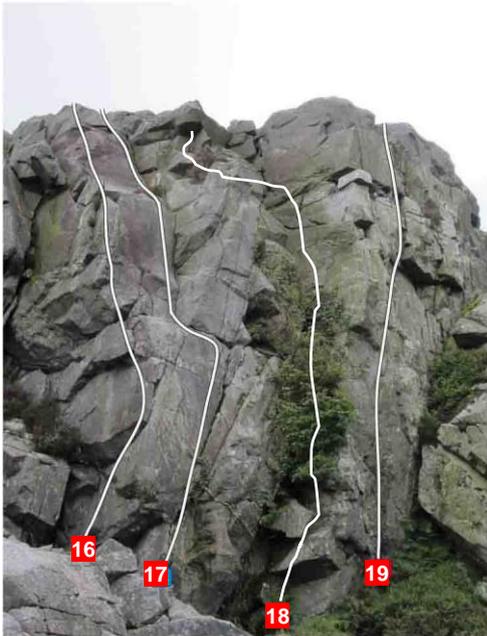
FA T Taylor 18.3.11

Right of *Frog Storm* is a section of broken rock. Right again is a small, clean undercut slab.



15 Salty Dog Nuts 7m S †
 Very slight, but enjoyable. Step onto the exposed hanging slab from the left and climb it, past the rock scar, to the top.
 FA D Williams, S Day 25.3.14

Right, beyond an area of broken rock, is the steep and impressive **Central Buttress**, which gives the longest climbs on Craig y Fotty. The buttress is split by a deep cleft; the striking line of *Titrwm Tatrwm*.



The leaning chimney of *Titrwm Tatrwm* – before and after some determined ivy pruning

16 The End of Extremism 15m E2 5c ★ †
 This takes the well-defined left edge of the buttress. Start by gaining the finger crack and make a difficult sequence of moves to the good horizontal break below a slim overlap. Continue up the rib directly above.
 FA T Taylor 24.7.11



17 The Boot is on the Other Foot 15m

HVS 5a ★★

Excellent, nicely sustained and possibly the best climb here. Start two metres right of *The End of Extremism* and pull up with difficulty using a good deep crack. Move left, either high or low, at the top of the crack before finishing up the easier groove.

FA T Taylor, C Taylor 24.7.11

18 Titrwm Tatrwm 17m VS 4b ★

The well-protected, central chimney-groove is low in the grade but is unusual and worthwhile. The undercut start is awkward and once overcome, the trap is seemingly sprung. The cleft continues to give interesting climbing until the angle relents. Finish pleasantly up the open groove.

FA D Williams 31.5.14

< Martyn Davidson and Steve Culverhouse on the tricky start of *The Boot is on the Other Foot* HVS 5a
© DAVE WILLIAMS

19 Wicca 16m E2 5b †

Start in the small bay right of *Titrwm Tatrwm* and bridge up moving slightly right. A tenuous finger traverse then leads back left to the edge. Finish directly up the edge passing the huge ravens' nest on its right. The prominent block beneath the nest is loose.

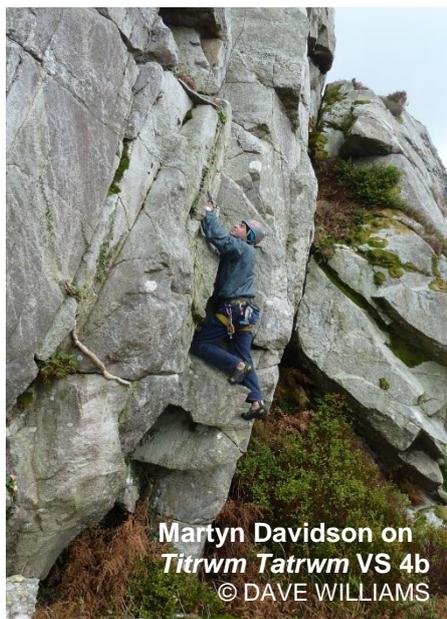
FA T Taylor 18.3.11

There is a huge shield of rock to the right with a clean, sharp edge on its right-hand side.

20 The Cian and I 16m VS 5a

Start below the fang on the left side of the shield and make a short, difficult layback to the cleaned recess. Step left and go directly up the easier slab to the big ledge before finishing up the short, stepped headwall. For those with an aversion to awkward laybacks, there is always the option of climbing directly up to the recess at HVS 5b.

FA T Taylor, solo 22.6.12 (Direct start: D Williams 25.3.14)



Martyn Davidson on *Titrwm Tatrwm* VS 4b
© DAVE WILLIAMS



21 Raven Lunatic 15m E3 6a ★

Start 2 metres right of *The Cian and I*. After a difficult start, layback the good edge at the right base of the shield until it is possible to move out left onto the face. Finish directly. Good climbing, but protection is worryingly absent when needed most.

FA T Taylor 18.3.11

Immediately right of *Raven Lunatic* is a narrow inset slab which is capped by a small roof.

22 Gwaed ar Eira Gwyn 15m HVS 5a ★

Climb the slab to a good wire, then move delicately up to holds under the roof (crux). Step left and climb the short hanging groove to finish. Nice climbing on superb rock.

FA D Williams 31.5.14

Right again, just beyond a scruffy capped corner, there is a cracked slabby wall.

23 Numb of the Above 15m S 4a

Climb the cracked wall directly, finishing up the obvious crack. A rattly block adds a little spice to the proceedings.

FA D Williams, S Finch 29.1.14

24 Rain of Stone 15m HS 4b

A poor climb which lacks balance. Start 1 metre right of *Numb of the Above* and make steep moves up a short, thin crack to a ledge. Step left and finish easily up the rounded rib.

FA D Williams, D Kerr 21.7.14

To the right, beyond some broken ground, there is a small buttress with a little square-cut roof split by a hanging finger crack on its right side.



25 Fotty and Medals 5m E1 6a/ f6a+ †

Essentially little more than a boulder problem above a poor landing. However, roping up for the hanging crack gives a safe and worthwhile challenge, with some excellent moves.

FA S Finch, D Williams 26.2.14

Right again, beyond more broken ground, is a small buttress split by a very wide crack.

26 Fotty and Biscuits 8m S 4a †

Starting from the base of the wide crack, swing left to the thinner crack and follow this with pleasant moves and good protection.

FA S Finch, D Williams 26.2.14

17d

27 Rock Addiction 8m HS 4b

The surprisingly independent off-width crack is protectable with very large cams.

FA D Williams, D Kerr 21.7.14

28 Pure Heroine 8m VS 4c ★ †

The blunt rib just right of *Rock Addiction* gives good climbing on immaculate rock. The crux is right at the very top. Adequately protected if very large cams are used as side-runners in *Rock Addiction*.

FA D Williams, S Finch 26.2.14

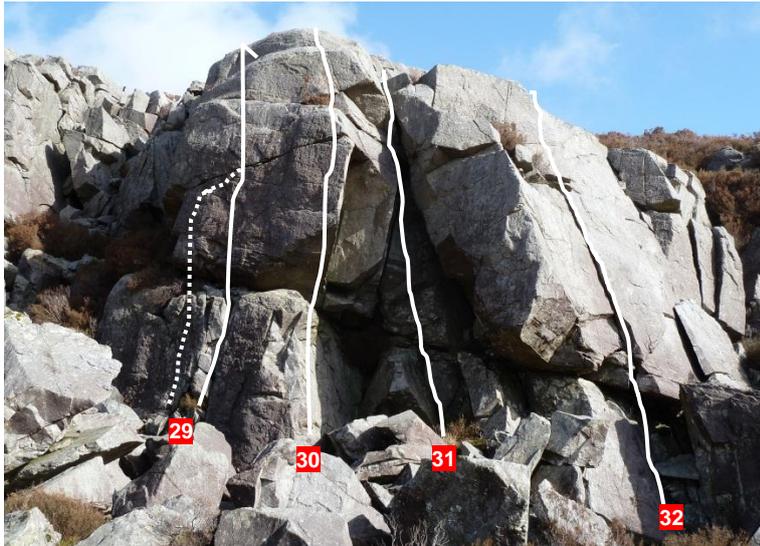


At the extreme right of the escarpment is a short, rounded buttress, **Carreg Hollt**, where an inverted V-chimney separates two walls.

29 Half Cut 8m E1 5b ★

The centre of the steep wall with a long stretch past the undercut to reach the thin break is adequately protected. Finish rapidly up the slabby wall above. The thin break can also be gained by starting just to the left.

FA D Kerr, D Williams 26.3.14



30 A Cut Above 8m E3 5c

The short arête leads to the undercut. A perplexing sequence using the right arête, poor undercuts and a knee bar are required to make a long reach to the good break (small cam). Finish much more easily up the arête. Protection is woeful and the landing is awful, but apart from that you will be fine.

FA T Taylor, solo 9.5.11

31 Fotty Vice 8m VS 4c ★ †

As the name suggests, the inverted V-chimney is a thoroughly engrossing struggle.

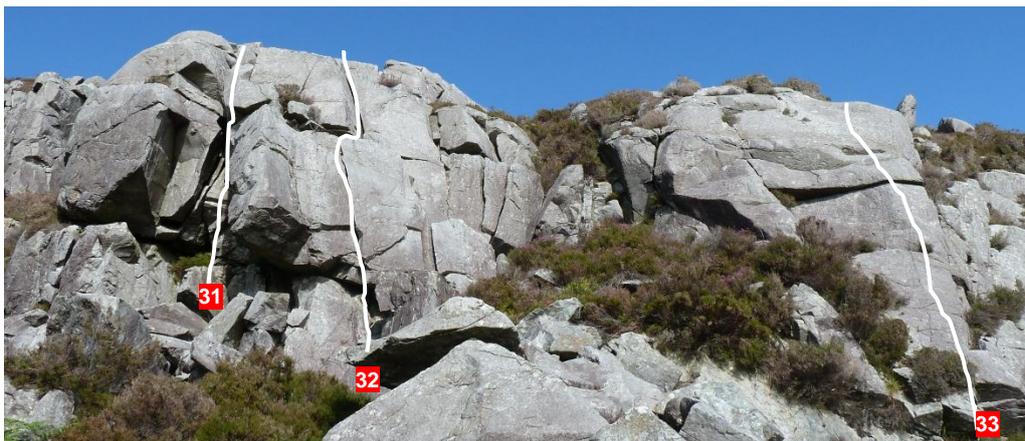
FA S Finch, D Williams 26.2.14

32 Hollywood Cliché 8m HVD ★

A pleasant little route up the nice cracked slab right of the V-chimney.

FA D Williams, S Finch 26.2.14

To the right, beyond some broken ground, is a narrow, clean little slab.



33 Missing 11m HS 4b ★ †

The tapering slab, starting just on the right, is climbed direct with a long stretch at half height. Pleasant climbing.

FA D Kerr, solo 21.7.14