

HARTLAND QUAY

BOULDERING

Hartland Quay is home to some of the best bouldering on the Culm coast. It was one of the first areas to be developed and has a wide range of excellent problems, the best of which are as good as anything else in the South West and beyond.

Until now, the only documentation of the bouldering here has been in the form of old magazine articles. While some of the more publicised problems have become popular, The harder-to-find areas and the most recent additions have been largely overlooked by visiting climbers. The purpose of this mini-guide is to provide both locals and visitors alike an updated tool for finding the problems and making the most of Hartland Quay.



by Dave Westlake

Hartland Quay Bouldering

By Dave Westlake (Copyright 2010)

Disclaimer and Acknowledgments

Welcome to Hartland Quay Bouldering! Every effort has been made to present all the problems that have been climbed in the area with the correct information, names and grades etc. As little documentation has existed previously, and info on some of the bouldering is patchy, it is likely that some of the information detailed here is inaccurate; some names may be wrong and some problems may be missing. The author apologises for any omissions or inaccuracies, and can be contacted (djwestlake@gmail.com) with any amendments/ additions as required. These will be included in any future editions.

Rock climbing and bouldering are dangerous. The author takes NO responsibility for any injuries incurred by users of this guide. It is recommended that you get appropriate training before bouldering or climbing outdoors. Check the tide times and sea conditions before your visit. Be careful and have fun!

The author would like to thank the following people for their invaluable input in producing this guide: Tom Newberry, Jake Surman, Mike Adams, Mike Cleverdon, Grant Edwards, Paul Westlake, Rich Hession, Stu Littlefair, Dave Henderson, Greg Chapman, Rob Gibson and Rick Legge at Beyond Hope. Thanks guys!

Special thanks go to the following companies who have supported Devon Air Ambulance Trust by advertising in this guide:



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Cover photos: Clockwise from Left;

**Sunset from the Carnage wall (Westlake coll.)
Tom Newberry on Supercede (Westlake coll.)
Jake Surman at Hartland Cave (Westlake coll.)**

**An index of all other photos can be
found on page 20**

The Bouldering

The rock is the smoothest of wave washed Culm (a type of sandstone). This means that slopers are in abundance and because the rock is often very smooth, many of the problems feel powerful due to the extra effort required to hold positions. Another reason they feel powerful is that a lot of the problems, especially the harder ones, climb roof features or steeply overhanging walls! This is in stark contrast to the traditional climbing in the area, which takes place mostly on slabs and vertical walls.

Rules

The great thing about climbing and bouldering is that there are very few 'rules'. However, we need to do our best to make sure the rock stays the way it should be. As well as the obvious "No Chipping" there are several other practices that will harm the rock and thus must be avoided, for hopefully obvious reasons:

- NO Wire Brushing
- NO Blow torching



Also, try to avoid crushing limpets and barnacles if possible—it was their home before we came along.

Landings

Like other areas on the coast, landings are often rocky (the Carnage wall is particularly treacherous). The best advice is to take lots of pads, and lots of mates to carry them (and spot!).

Another quirk of the Culm is that the height of the beach varies dramatically so problems (or at least starting holds) can be buried for long periods. As well as being pretty frustrating this can obviously have an additional impact on the grades stated...

Grades

The widely used 'Font' grading system is used almost exclusively here to describe the difficulty of the climbs. For the uninitiated, this web page gives a detailed explanation: www.rockfax.com/publications/bgrades.html

As always, grading problems to categorise their difficulty is a tricky game. Conditions make a huge difference and often the rock can feel 'greasy' from the sea. The grades in this guide are very rough estimates based on a variety of things, including a large helping of guesswork.

Some of the grades here are different to those given by the first ascensionists, due to consensus opinion or just to bring them in line with the other problems. Please use the grades how they are intended—as rough guides, and don't take them too seriously!



Tides

Most of the bouldering areas are accessible for around 3 hours either side of low tide. This can change in rough seas - always check the tide times and conditions

Tide information can be found either here: <http://www.climbers-club.co.uk/tides/tides.html>, or by buying a tide table at a local shop/ garage (2010 edition costs £1.30).

General Tips

The best times of year to climb are Spring and Autumn but good conditions can be found all year round. Bring plenty of chalk as holds can get greasy. Don't worry if you leave behind a chalky mess—the sea does a great job of cleaning it off. It's also wise to pack a 'brush on a stick' and towels/rags/sponges in case you need to dry holds out.



The nearest large towns are Bideford (16 miles) and Barnstaple (24 miles). Both these are North of Hartland, but similarly Bude (17 miles) to the South offers the usual array of shops, pubs, hotels and B&B's etc.

Take some change (£2) for the toll/ car park if you are planning a visit between Easter and October.

The area is also great for walkers, bird watchers and wildlife enthusiasts. The shop at the quay sells a wide range of walking guides and books on the Quay's history, geology and wildlife which are well worth reading. The coastline is also famous for its superb adventure climbing, which is not to be missed.

History

While trad climbers have been operating in the area for several decades, bouldering did not really kick off here until the summer of 2001. Simon Young made the first ascent of the brilliant Carnage, and this remains one of the best problems of its grade in the South West. Along with Jason Quinn, Young returned to develop the areas both north and south of the Carnage wall, establishing between them most of the problems contained in this guide. Some of the highlights from Young in this era are Clinical edge, Gloss over the mat, and Hartland roof. Quinn made a superb contribution too, climbing some of the more esoteric gems and the desperate Brutal spoon.

The jewel in the crown, and for some time the hardest boulder problem on the Culm coast, went to Young when he climbed the obvious line on the low cave just north of the hotel, which was initially spotted by Quinn. A few sessions of work and the brutally powerful and technical steep arête of Ache Ball was born. This saw early repeats from Stu Littlefair and Rob Sutton who confirmed the 8A grade and quality, leading to it becoming *the* problem of the crag, and one that visiting climbers sought out.

When James Pearson and Keith Bradbury made a visit in 2005 Pearson took advantage of a very low beach and added a low start, naming it "Aching Balls". Controversially, the pair suggested that this rated 7C+, and the original around 7C. Since then, more repeats have meant that the grade of Ache Ball has settled around 7C+. Despite recent hold breakages, it remains a much sought after classic and easily the most popular 'hard' problem on the coast.

More recently, after working their way through the established problems, Tom Newberry, Grant Edwards, Jake Surman, Mike Adams, Mike Cleverdon and Dave Westlake have added some new lines, including a couple of hard classics. These additions have re-established the Quay as one of the premiere bouldering venues in the South West.

Ironically, the most significant of the new problems is found next to the original problem to be climbed here. A number of well known climbers had attempted the obvious line to the right of Carnage but a mixture of the height, landing and sheer difficulty of the climbing had deterred all suitors.

Westlake and Newberry had tried the project off and on for a few years and had worked out the sitting start, but were getting shut down by the stand up.

In December 2008 they visited, along with a group of keen locals, and linked the sitting start then moved left to join Carnage giving a superb sequence. Westlake was first up Corridors of Power, followed by Newberry shortly afterwards. A few months later, Mikey Cleverdon made the 3rd ascent.

The following Easter saw a return visit from the pair, and the first ascent of the stand up version of the project by Newberry. Two days later Westlake repeated Supercede, and before long both climbers were dropping the top moves from sitting.

Several more sessions followed until 28th May, his birthday, when Newberry succeeded on the full line from sitting. In October 2009 Mike Adams, the prolific Northern boulderer, visited Hartland and made a quick second ascent.



In November 2009 his namesake, another Mike Adams (!) managed to climb the last of the big lines on the Carnage wall, after using a spell of trad climbing to acquire the bold approach demanded by Northern Exposure. Mikey Cleverdon's persistence paid off with the third ascent of Supercede the following January. He then returned to climb the obvious link of People of the Shire.

The crag now boasts a range of excellent problems across the grade range, and there is undoubtedly further potential for new lines.

Directions

(From the North)

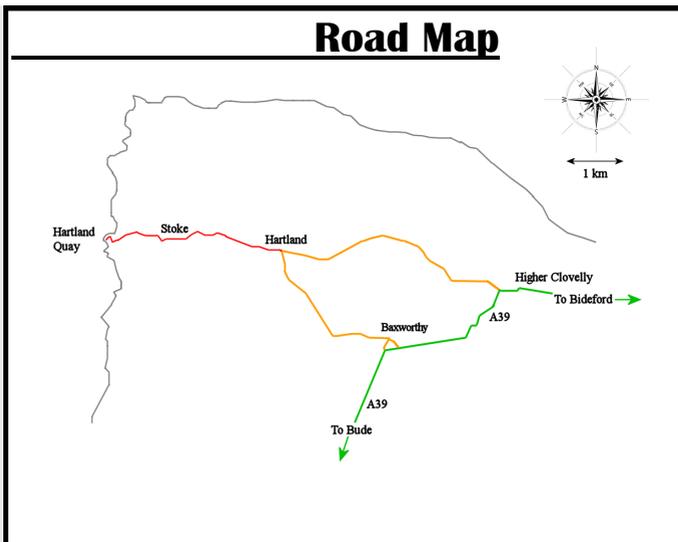
Leave the M5 at Junction 27 and follow signs for Barnstaple/Bideford. The right turn to Hartland is signposted from the A39 after passing Bideford and Clovelly. Drive through Hartland towards Stoke and keep going till you reach the coast.

(From the South)

Travelling north on the A39, a good shortcut is to take the left turn off the A39 at the top of the hill, just past the West Country Inn. Follow this road, over a cattle grid until you pick up signs for Docton Mill and Hartland Quay.

A toll is in operation (£2 in 2009) between Easter and September. Drive down the hill and park in one of the bottom two car parks (depending on which area you intend to visit—details on next page).

Road Map



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Grade Range

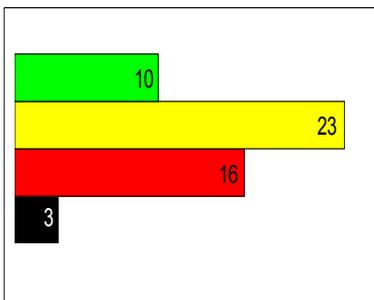
Hartland offers a wide range of grades, so there is something for everyone. This chart gives a rough idea of the spread of grades.

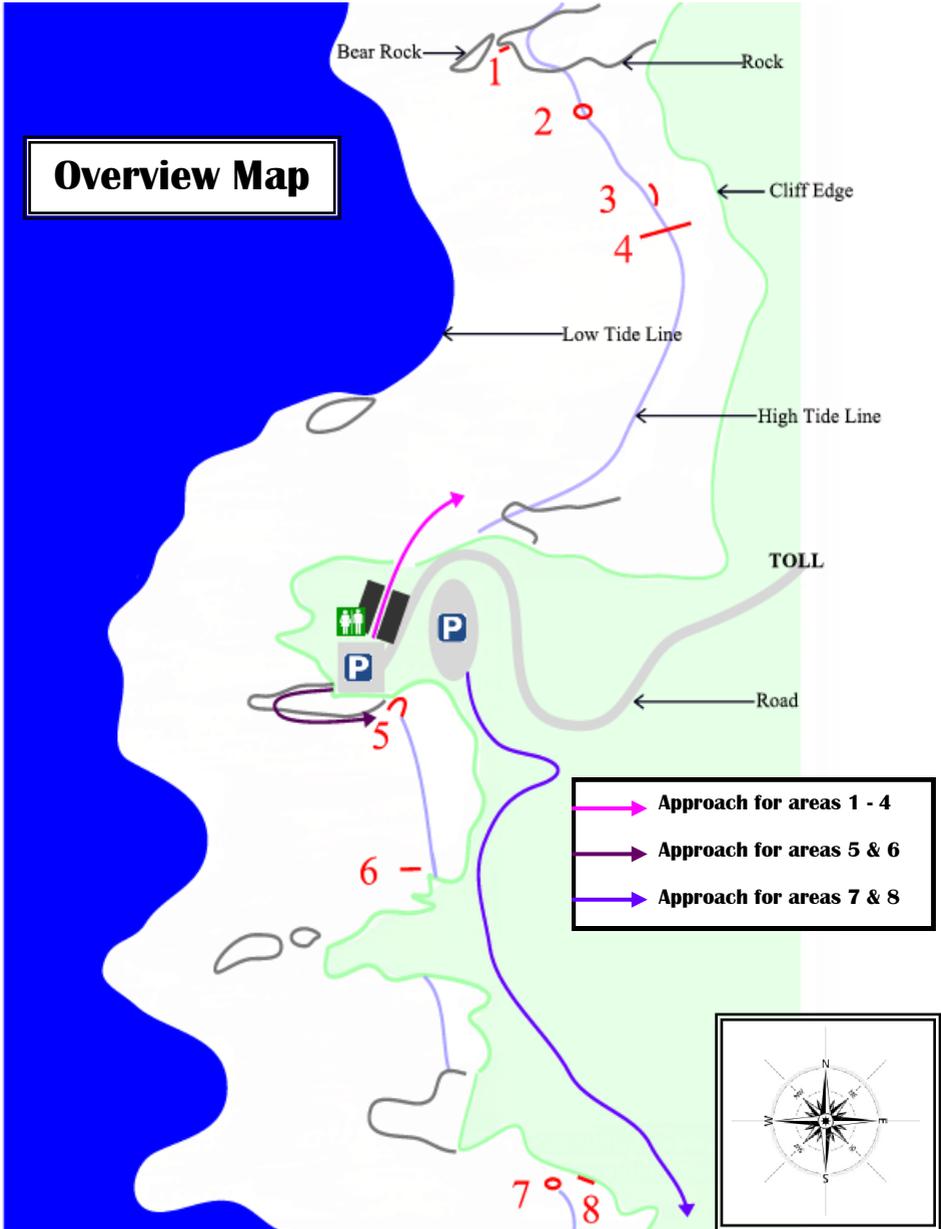
<6A

6A -6C+

7A -7C+

8A>





Numbered Climbing areas

- | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Gloss over the mat | 5 Hartland Cave |
| 2 Clinical Edge | 6 Carnage |
| 3 Ache Ball | 7 Rhinceros |
| 4 Trench | 8 Hartland Roof |



North of the Hotel

The beach to the North of the hotel is home to some high quality problems which span the grade range. The obvious feature of 'bear rock' is visible from the hotel, and the bouldering is located between it and the hotel. The problems are described in the order that you approach them from the parking.



The Trench

A great wall of compact rock, and the best place to start if you are new to the area. Numerous problems and eliminates have been climbed here. The most popular lines are described below but the others are there for you to discover for yourself. Sitting starts are possible for all problems but they make them a bit harder! A great session can be had trying links and eliminates, so have fun...

1 Left of the crack 5A

The wall to the left of the crack is short and fingery.

2 The crack 4B

The blocky crack gives a fine introduction.

3 Jas' wall (left hand) 5C

Just right of the crack, gain the slot as a gaston with your right hand and lock for the top - superb!

4 Jas' wall 5C

An excellent technical problem utilising a sidepull (RH) and a slot feature high in the wall (LH).

5 6B+

Starting on high undercuts, reach up left for a small crimp then go for the top.

6 Trench eliminate 7A

A popular problem that starts on the good horizontal slot. Grab a crimp just above the slot with your right hand, then an even smaller crimp with your left - paste your feet high and hope the top hold is a jug!

7 6B+

Another great technical challenge is found to the right; this one has less obvious holds and demands a patient approach.

8 Bloody Nora 6C+

A tricky test of crimping ability using the small cracks.

9 Trenchfoot 7A

More crimping near the white streak. Get established, then reach out right to a rubbish shallow pocket, then fight to the top via some slots - nails!

10 Trench Traverse 7B

A pumpy and technical traverse, following a natural line towards the white streak from the crack - this gives an excellent 'tour' of the wall.

11 Opposite traverse 5A

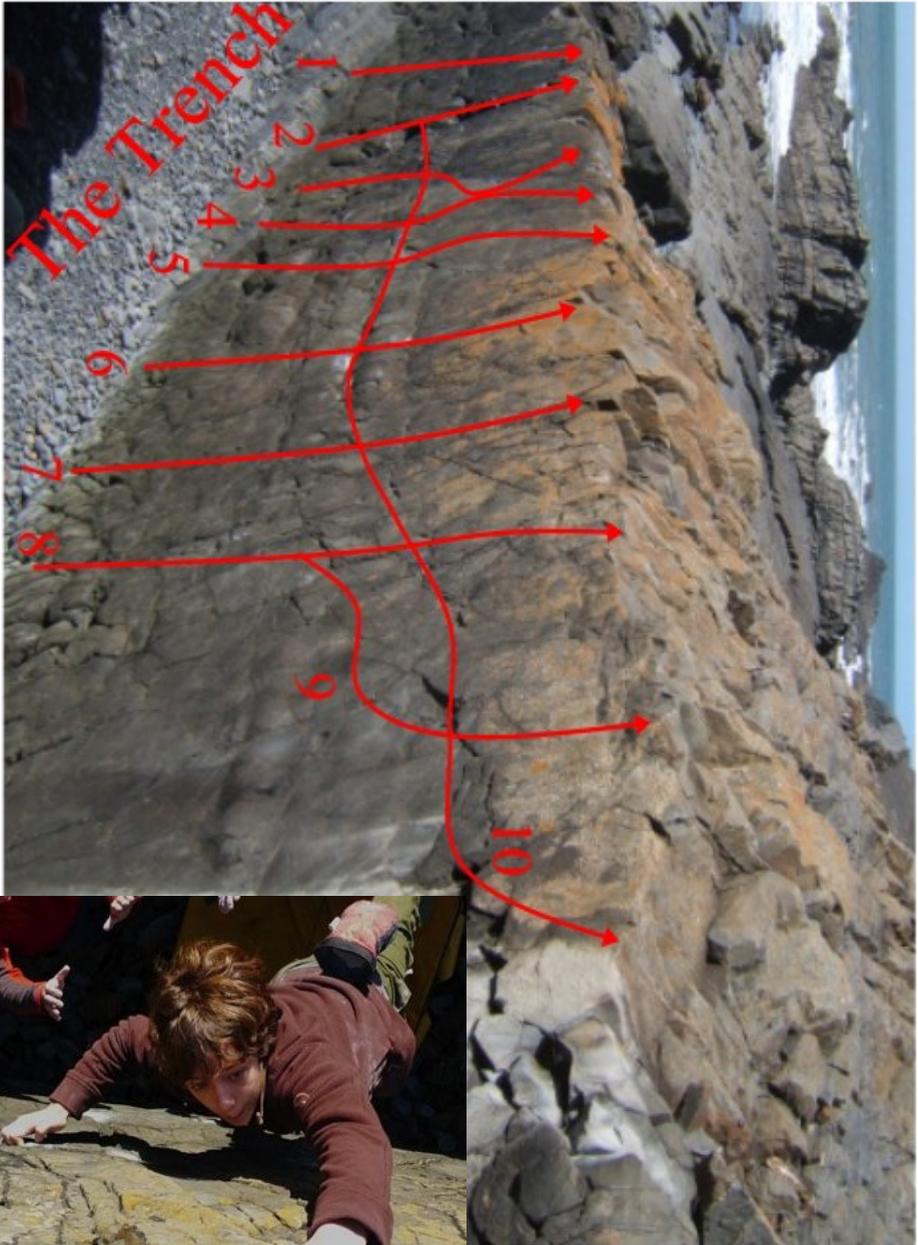
Traversing right to left on the N facing wall, starting wherever you like gives a nice warm up, although at the time of writing (Spring '10) this is buried thanks to a rockfall - hopefully it will wash out soon!

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See page 20 for an
index of photos

Ache Ball Cave

The next feature is a prominent low cave that is home to one of the area classics.



1 Ache Ball 7C+

Climb the left arête of the cave from a starting notch, using heel hooks and raw power. Depending on beach height this can be a standing or sitting start! One of the best.



2 Aching Balls 8A

A low start from a flat jug is possible only when the beach is very low. The break is not allowed.

3 Cave Traverse 7B

A fine traverse going left to right, starting at the large undercut/knee bar to the pedestal. Harder if you start further left, it has also been done right to left at a similar grade.



4 6B

The scrappy right arête is also powerful.

5 & 6 Projects

The cave is also home to 2 incredible roof crack projects that are crying out to be done.



Clinical Edge Area

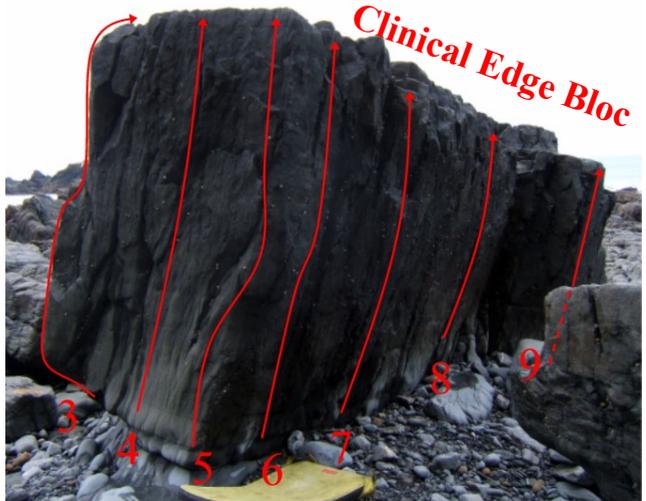
Continuing North from the Ache ball cave, you pass another roof feature on the landward side. This has a Juggy rail running along it.

1 Juggy Traverse 6B

Left to right, finishing where the rock quality deteriorates.

2 Spanner 6B+

Straight up the steep bulge, near the start of the traverse, this problem feels hard until you figure out the sequence.



Slightly further along is an isolated wave washed block, containing some fierce problems...

3 Arête with pocket 6A

The arête using a cool pocket provides a fun challenge.

4 4A

A nice easy wall problem.



5 Clinical Edge 7B

A great, powerful and subtle problem that would be at home in Fontainebleau. Also fun from standing, but much easier.

6 Me Julie 7B

Another burly problem, with hard starting moves—several methods are possible!

7 Egg Nishna 7B

Good, fingery and powerful climbing up the steep wall.

8 5B

A shorter, one move problem near the corner.

9 Ball Ache 7B

The powerful arête, on the right hand side is great and easier for the short!





Nearby a short south facing wall contains an assortment of rusty pegs and a few trad routes, and has a through hole at its landward end. This is home to one problem.

10 Quay to the Hart 6C

Climb the incipient crack at the seaward end to a ledge, from sitting.

On the backside of this there is a lovely arête problem that is a must do at the grade...

11 Hartland Arête 5C

Climb the smooth angular arête to the notch and drop off, this can be done using the crack for your left hand (easier) or without—both are excellent.

12 (Start of) Made in the Shade 5C

The E4 6a which takes a line to the right, up the broken crack system can be bouldered to a certain height, but you need to apply common sense to decide when to jump off!!

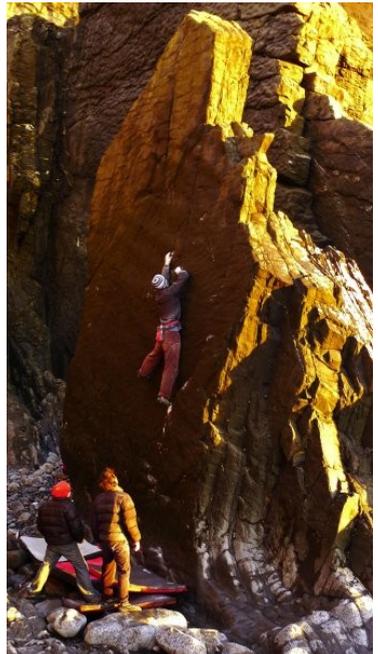
Walking further North, towards Bear Rock, the last problems are found...

13 Gloss over the Mat 7B [E5 6b]

This highball/ micro route is unrepeated (as far as I know) and the FA was done after roped practice. It is found on the North facing, freestanding slab just before Bear Rock. Use the jugs on the right to get established, then step left on poor smears and climb the centre of the slab to glory—superb! The left ramp is also good, and much easier.

14 The Snake 6B+

The slab to the left of the previous problem is marred by the snappy rock (it sheds its skin!).



South of the Hotel

Unfortunately heading to the Southern areas doesn't involve walking past the pub or the ice cream shop, but on the plus side you will be about to sample some of the best climbing the coast has to offer...

Hartland Cave

South of the car park is another beach, with the smooth slab of Screda point facing the car park and clearly visible. The next area is tucked in on the left, just over the wall. It is reached by a tricky scramble—the best route being to go over the wall and head seaward before turning left and contouring the loose descent back onto the beach

1 Sundance 7A+
Climb the steep arête using an array of cunning techniques.

2 Raindance 7B
The steep roof inside the cave, left of Sundance, starting on the left at a big undercut and finishing at the same place. Good but often wet.

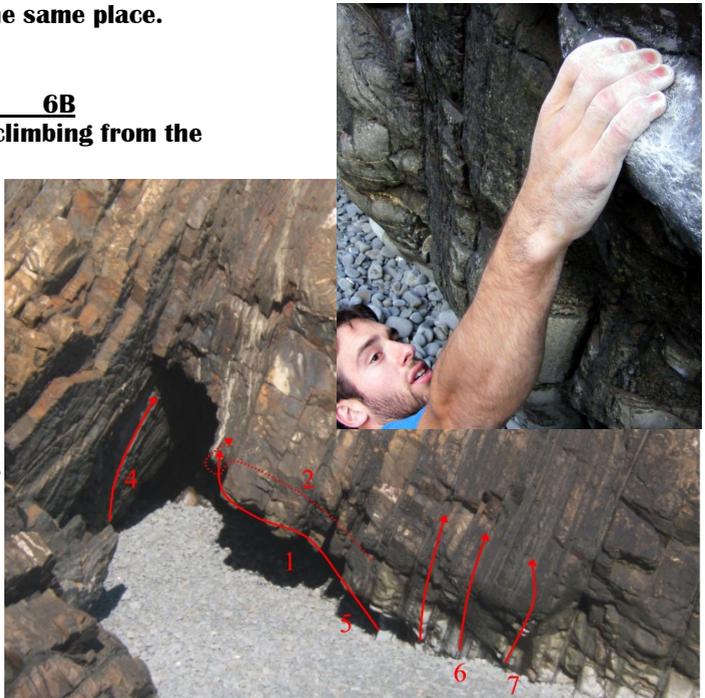
3 6B
Weird and wonderful climbing from the back of the cave, finishing on the shelf.

4 7A+
Climb the featured wall and slight arête opposite Sundance, finishing at a jug in the roof. High.

5 6B
Tackles the bulging wall to the right, from sitting.

6 6B
Straight up line using an obvious sloper.

7 6B+
The powerful right hand line.





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Carnage Wall

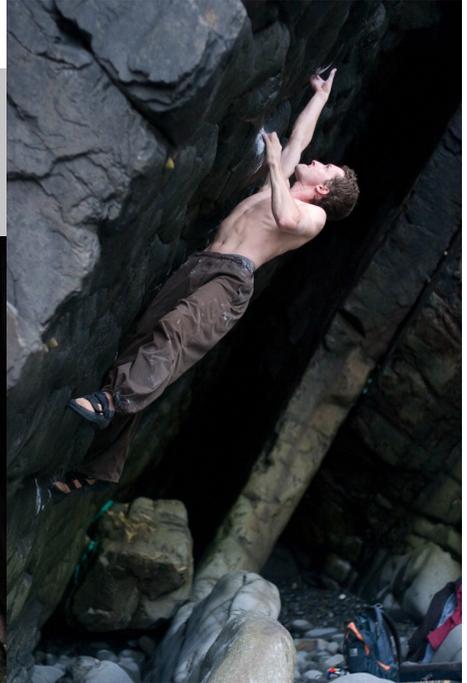
1 The Arete 6A

Starting on the shelf, big moves on good holds give a nice warm up.

All problems on this wall are high, and have poor landings. Several pads and spotters are advisable.

2 Carnage 7B

The original classic. A stiff pull from sitting gains a crimp and undercuts higher up, followed by a committing move for the top hold and an easy top out. Superb.



3 Supercede 8A

Sit start at an undercut below 2 slopey rails. Powerful moves on perfect fontainebleau-esque slopers gain the sidepull rail and more big moves lead up and left to a high and scary top out. The logical standing start is 7C+. An excellent problem.

4 Corridors of Power 7C

Sit start as for Supercede then make a big move left to the crimp on Carnage and finish up this problem. A great link that 'flows' very nicely.

5 People of the Shire 8A

Another reason to come back! Big moves link the start of Carnage with Super

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cede - a nice link up. Low in the grade but draining, and like the other problems on this wall, utterly brilliant!

6 _____ **Project**

The concept of starting to the right, and gaining the sidepull rail as a gaston may be possible but will be extremely tricky.

7 _____ **Northern Exposure 7B**

Probably worthy of an E grade, this is usually wet and always terrifying! Step off the block and engage in a burly sequence to gain the prominent undercut and reach into the pod above. Then take your brain out and finish it off! Unrepeated and subject to an abseil inspection prior to the FA.

Just South of the Carnage wall is Screda slab containing the classic E6 route, Canard, and the following problems are found between the two.

8 _____ **Misguided Ghosts 6C/+**

A diagonal slanting crack on the steep wall just beyond Carnage, from sitting, gives a fun packed introduction to crack climbing.

9 _____ **Labyrinth 6B**

Towards the cave to the right is an appealing problem that follows the vague lip (not reaching back into the jugs) starting from sitting and trending up and rightwards to good holds.

10 _____ **The Aerodynamic 7A+**

A morpho problem that is really the finish to a futuristic project can be found on the steep wall facing Canard. Pull on using a tiny crimp and spring to a horn.

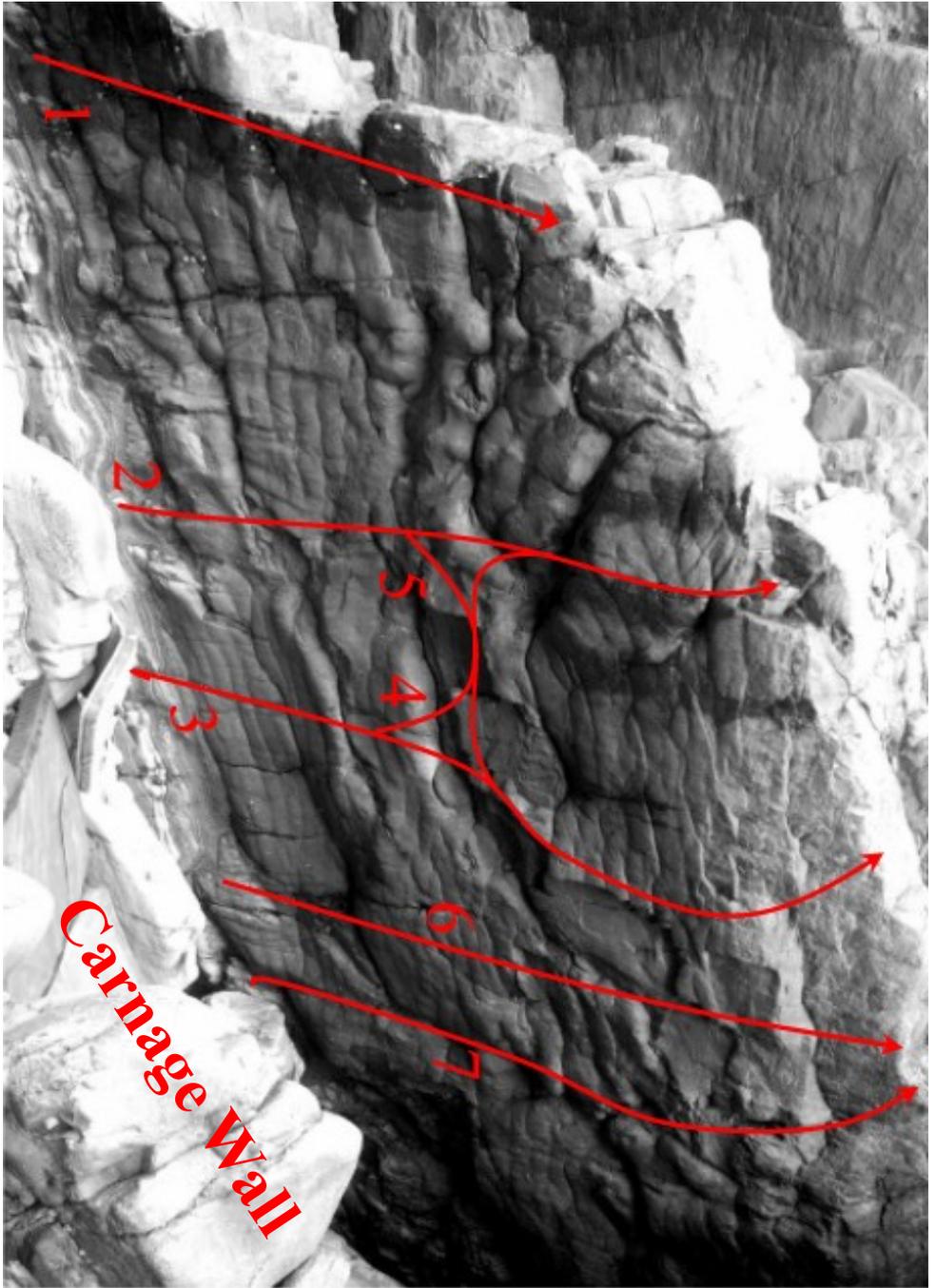
If you walk South towards the next bay, between the main slab at Screda and the isolated slabs that stretch out to sea, you will come across a gem of a problem that was surely done years ago but has recently been re-discovered (and named)...



11 _____ **Freddie Freeloader 6C+**

This is situated on a large block that lies in the gap between the two bays, and takes the arête/ lip feature from sitting. One of the best of its grade.

The blunt prow to the left has also been climbed at around 6a+.



Hartland Roof

The next area is further South, and accessed by parking in the middle car park and following the coast path past Screda point and towards Speke's Mill Mouth. Once you reach the prominent St Catherine's tor (hill cut in half by the sea) take a right along a small path to a fisherman's rope that leads down to the beach. Once on the beach, the Rhinoceros boulder is obvious and Hartland roof can be found to your right (looking out to sea).



1 Hartland Roof 7B (7C+)
Originally climbed as an eliminate, without the crack.

2 Brutal Spoon 7A+ (7B+)
More thuggery just to the right.

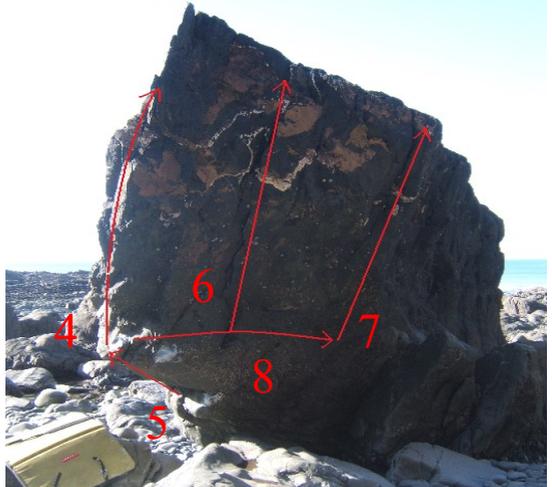
Unfortunately, the first two problems described here have suffered a massive rock fall since they were first climbed. This negatively affected their quality and difficulty which is a real shame. Original grades are shown in brackets.

Rhinoceros Boulder

3 _____ **4A**
The south face can be climbed anywhere at around this grade.

4 Full Power 6C
The landward facing arête starting from a prominent jug on the lip.

5 Total Power 7A
The low start to full power - start sitting perched between boulders. A powerful few slaps up and left allow a jug on the lip to be gained, then this is followed by an easier but still burly finish up the previous problem.



6 _____ **6B+**
From a sitting start at the obvious jug, tricky lay-backing leads up the slight groove.

7 7A

The steep wall from a standing start in the recess, using a small undercut with the left hand. Starting as for problem 6 is also good, but if a link up is what you are after then you might as well do...

8 Braunton Wanderers 7B

...The full and fun packed link, starting as for Full Power and finishing up problem 7.

Photo Index

Many thanks to all the people who allowed their photos to be used, and to those who appeared in the photos - this booklet would be pretty dull without them!

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Tick Lists, Notes etc.



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