



Steve Blake
William
Photo: Alec Burns

Northumbrian Mountaineering Club

Bob Smith
Capstan Wall
Photo: Steve Blake



A series of downloadable PDF guides to new bouldering venues , problems, highballs and routes in Northumberland, including:

The Stell
Caller Crag , Corby's and Edlington
St Cuthbert's Cave
The Wanneys Group
Cockenheugh
The Ravensheugh Area
South Yardhope
Shitlington
Howlerhirst

Whiteheugh
Greensheen Hill
The Bowden Area
Beanly Moor and Hunterheugh
Kyloe Out
Banno Crags
Brady's Crag
The Lost World
High Crag

Raven's Crag
Cateran Hill
Blakey's Bloc
Rothley
Titlington and the Turban
Coquet View
Lookwide



*cateran Hill—
A Bouldering Guide*

TECHNICAL NOTES

The location of each crag is indicated by its Grid Reference.

Maps

The County is covered by seven Ordnance Survey Explorer (1:25,000) maps. Sheets 339 (Kelso), 340 (Holy Island), OL16 (The Cheviot Hills), 332 (Alnwick and Amble), OL42 (Kielder Water), 325 (Morpeth) and OL43 (Hadrian's Wall). The majority of the crags lie on sheets 340 and 332.

General

On occasions the problems are referenced to routes that are not described in the climbing guide, or in the second edition bouldering guide. You may need these guides or to ask a local climber help you locate the problems.

Sit Starts

Most problems are written up as standing starts off one mat only! Generally sit starts are added at the end of a description where they add either to the difficulty, or quality. Only rarely will a sit start be separately named.

Rules

It has long been understood in Northumberland that if a twig is found on a 'good' foothold, then the foothold is out of bounds. The same applies to bedding planes, ledges and footholds in contact with the ground. Usually these are out of bounds. The previous guide wisely suggested that if you are wondering if the foothold is in, then it probably is not!

Further Information

The NMC website has a variety of resources relating to climbing in the County. If you have this PDF you've probably found it already. Otherwise go to: www.thenmc.org.uk

New Problems

Descriptions of new problems and routes should be sent to newroutes @thenmc.org.uk. A description, grade, date and name of first ascensionist should be included. A photo with a line marking the route would also help.



BOULDERING GRADES

It is true to say that there are only two grades, the problems and routes you can do, and those you can't. To the keen boulderer however it soon becomes apparent that this can be sub divided into the problems you can do and your mates can't, and vice versa! Grading boulder problems (and some routes) is an almost impossible task. The table below is a rough comparison of the common systems in use. Visitors to the County will probably find that, until they get used to the style of the problems and the intricacies of climbing on the County's various Sandstones, the accuracy of the table will be questionable. Grades are an art rather than a science, and while difficulty is central to bouldering, it is easily confused with quality. The pursuit of which is an equally rewarding endeavour.

The various grading systems are well understood, and like grades are an ongoing source of debate regarding their respective merits.

In these PDF guides we have retained the Font grades introduced in the last guidebook and their use is now established and understood.

Highballs

The height of many crags in the County demands a highball approach. Mats can reduce the consequences when highballing goes wrong, but there comes a point when they look very small. Many of these 'problems' would have been considered small routes not long back, (though some in this new series are not so small) and occasionally are compounded with bad landings. Falling off them should not be treated casually. While highballs are self-evident, many shorter problems have bad landings and need careful padding and spotting. Be careful!



FONT GRADE	UK TECH GRADE	V GRADE
3	4c	VB
4	5a	V0
4+	5b	
5		V1
5+	5c	
6a		V2
6a+	6a	V3
6b		
6b+		V4
6c	6b	V5
6c+		
7a		V6
7a+	6c	V7
7b		
7b+		V8
7c		V9
7c+		V10
8a	7a	V11
8a+		V12
8b	7b	V13
8b		
8b+		V14
8c		V15
8c+		

SUSTAINABILITY

The quality and durability of Sandstone in Northumberland varies significantly both on and between crags. Iron hard rock with a case hardened patina can coexist with a super soft cheesy substance soft enough to be shaped by hand. Sadly there is much evidence that the tough patina when worn away reveals a soft inner that rapidly erodes. There are many examples, but Vienna at Bowden Doors is probably the most famous example, which in its current deplorable state is a much easier and sad shadow of the original .

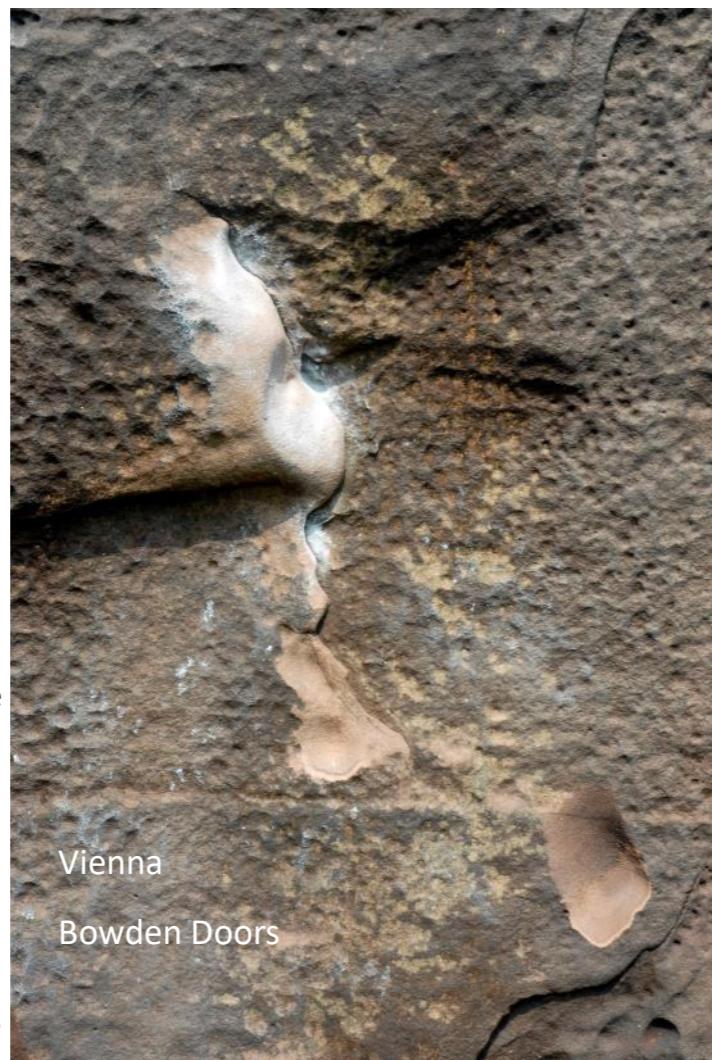
Over the last thirty years the popularity of Rock Climbing and Bouldering has accelerated and there is much similar evidence of our impact on the crags. Routes and problems on Sandstone, especially on fragile and well-used Sandstone, are a finite resource and need careful and sensitive protection if they are to survive.

It is worth repeating that you should not climb on sandstone when there is any evidence of dampness. The rock becomes significantly weaker losing its bonding when damp, and is susceptible to accelerated erosion and breakage. Once a break occurs, or the outer patina is penetrated, then the effects of erosion are exponential.

Many magnificent routes in Northumberland have escaped significant damage, principally because the habit of top roping hard routes has not been adopted as readily as elsewhere. Bouldering however, is a particularly intensive game which can see a team cycling through repeated attempts on a problem, brushing and ragging between each effort. The impact of this can be seen on relatively recent problems on which holds are already bleaching out, and this is on rock thought of as hard.

We are the stewards of these places. There are many things we can do to minimise our direct impact on them:

1. Everyone should acknowledge and understand the fragility of the medium and learn to walk away if there is any suggestion of dampness and the rock is not in condition.
2. Set yourself a realistic number of attempts at a problem, if you can't do it, leave it until you can do it without beating it into submission. We need to have enough humility to understand that the rock's needs are more important than our egos. Learn to walk away and come back when you're capable.

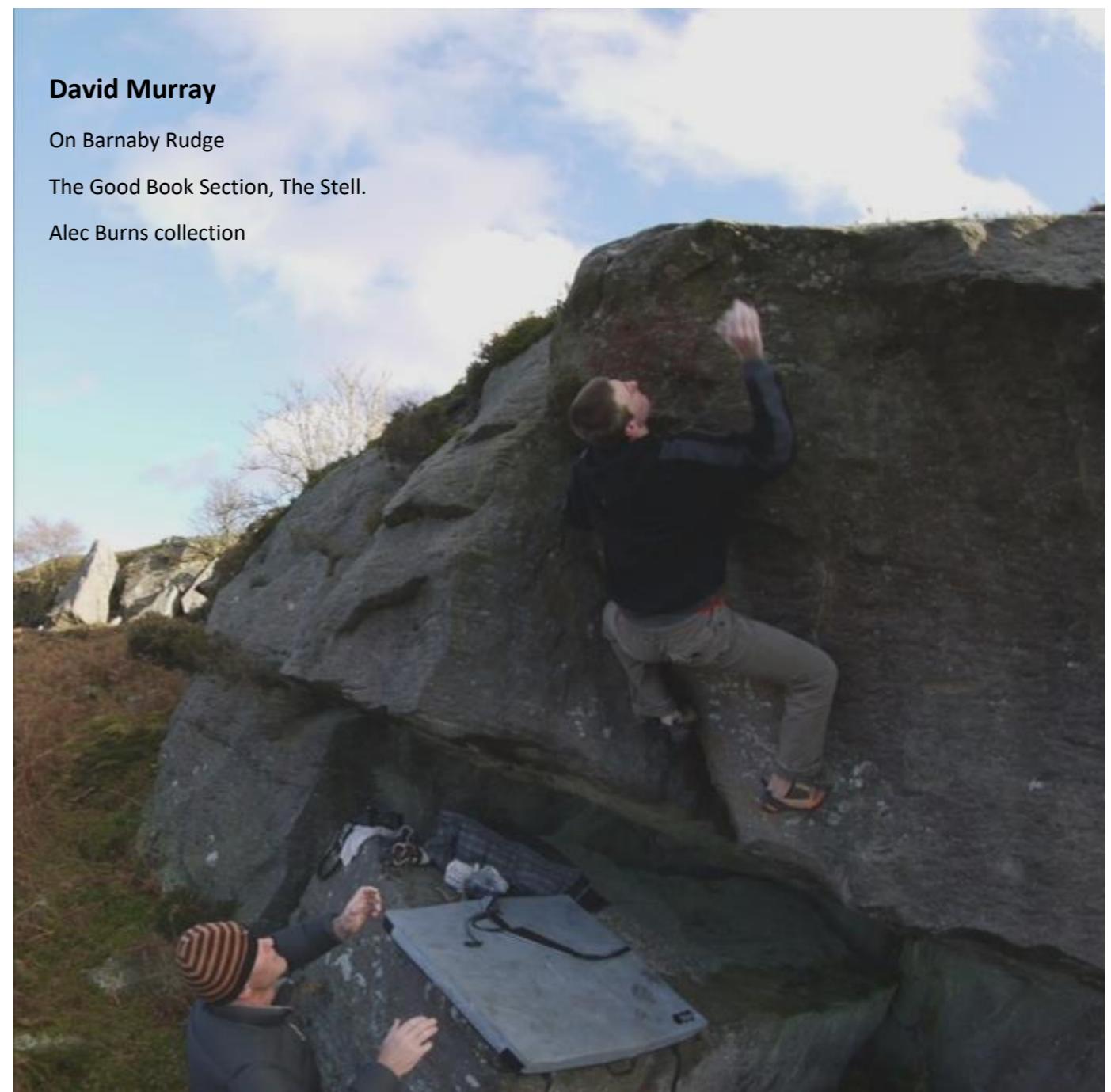


3. Be gentle with brushwork, and minimal with your chalk. Climbing indoors, we can brush the holds to our hearts content; outdoors, the effect can be catastrophic.

4. Poor footwork also impacts, so clean your shoes before you begin an attempt. Modern shoes allow a huge amount of force to be exerted through the feet, eg twisting on smears has a grinding effect that speeds up erosion. Be aware, use good footwork and tread lightly.

5. Don't use the problems for training. Running laps may look cool, but do it indoors on plastic, not on the rock.

6. Take your junk home, don't light fires, don't leave gates open. If you must, learn how to shit in the woods. Do not be generally antisocial.



David Murray

On Barnaby Rudge

The Good Book Section, The Stell.

Alec Burns collection

Cateran Hill Boulders

The crag is on CRoW land.

OS Map Sheet 332 : GR NU 101231

Altitude: 250m

Aspect: South West Facing

Approach: 20 Minutes

Approach

From the A1 take the minor road signed to Chillingham Castle six miles North of Alnwick, through the hamlet of North Charlton. (As if you were going to Hepburn) Continue across the moor for 4.5 miles to the large telecommunications mast at Quarry House Farm. Continue past the farm for a further 350m to a junction with a bridleway to Blawearie (see opposite). There is parking here.

Follow the bridleway for almost 800m to a junction with a track that branches left (South) and which leads up Cateran Hill.

Follow this path for a further 900m to the second of two cairns on the top of Cateran Hill and fine views to the sea and Farne Islands.

Your destination can't be seen from the top so, at the second cairn look due west and a crag is visible on a distant slope—head for this for a further 200m, at first over heather, then bracken. Rocks will appear on your right, these will lead quickly to the crag.



PARKING GR: NU1011246

History

The crag was seen by Steve Blake during a walk around Blawearie. A subsequent visit confirmed it a worthwhile venue. The crag was then developed over several visits by Steve and Tim Blake, Martin Waugh, Alec Burns and Bob Smith.



Steve Blake

Starting Round the Horn

Photo: Bob Smith



Alec Burns

Starts Gym Lad

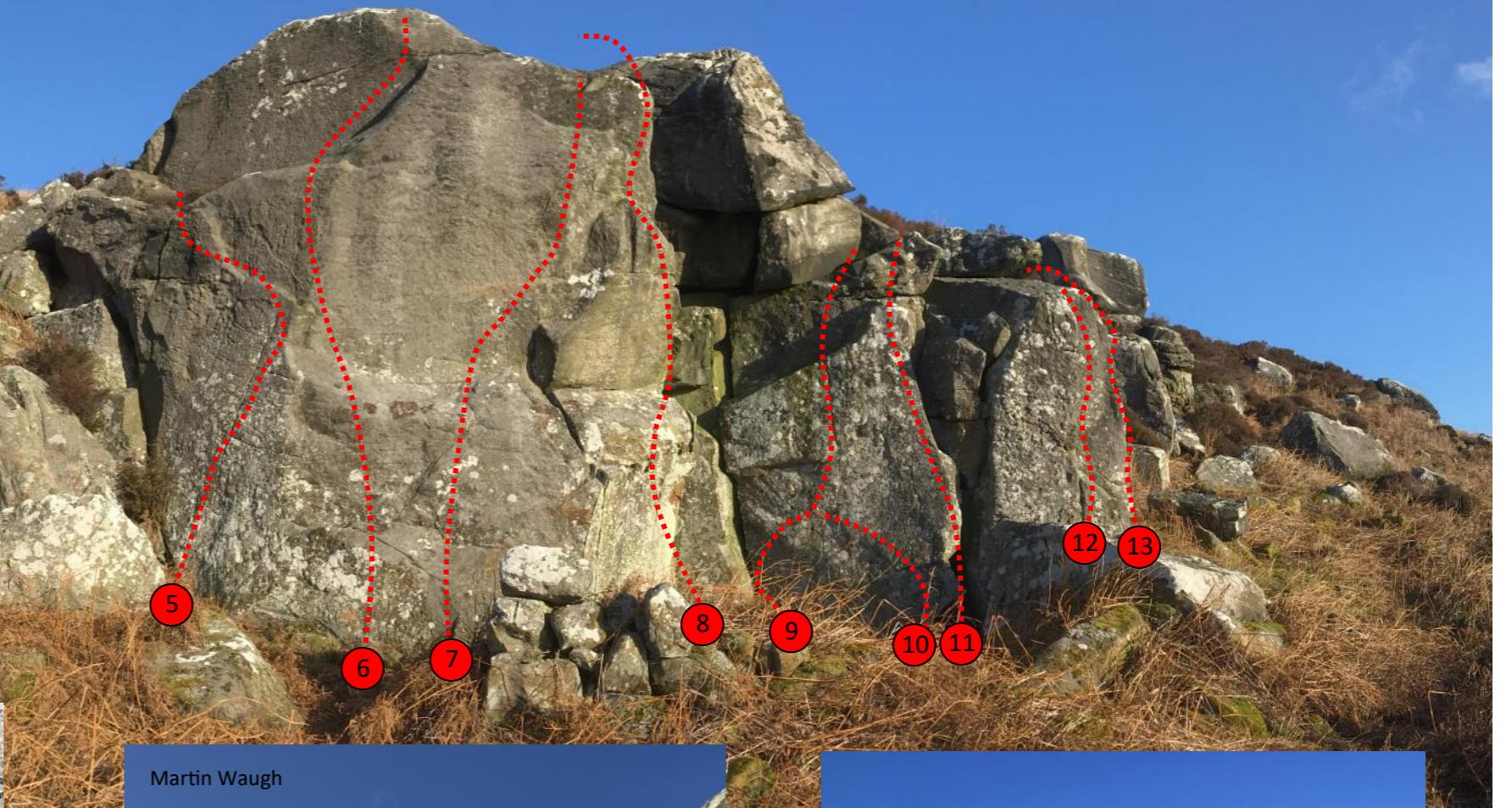
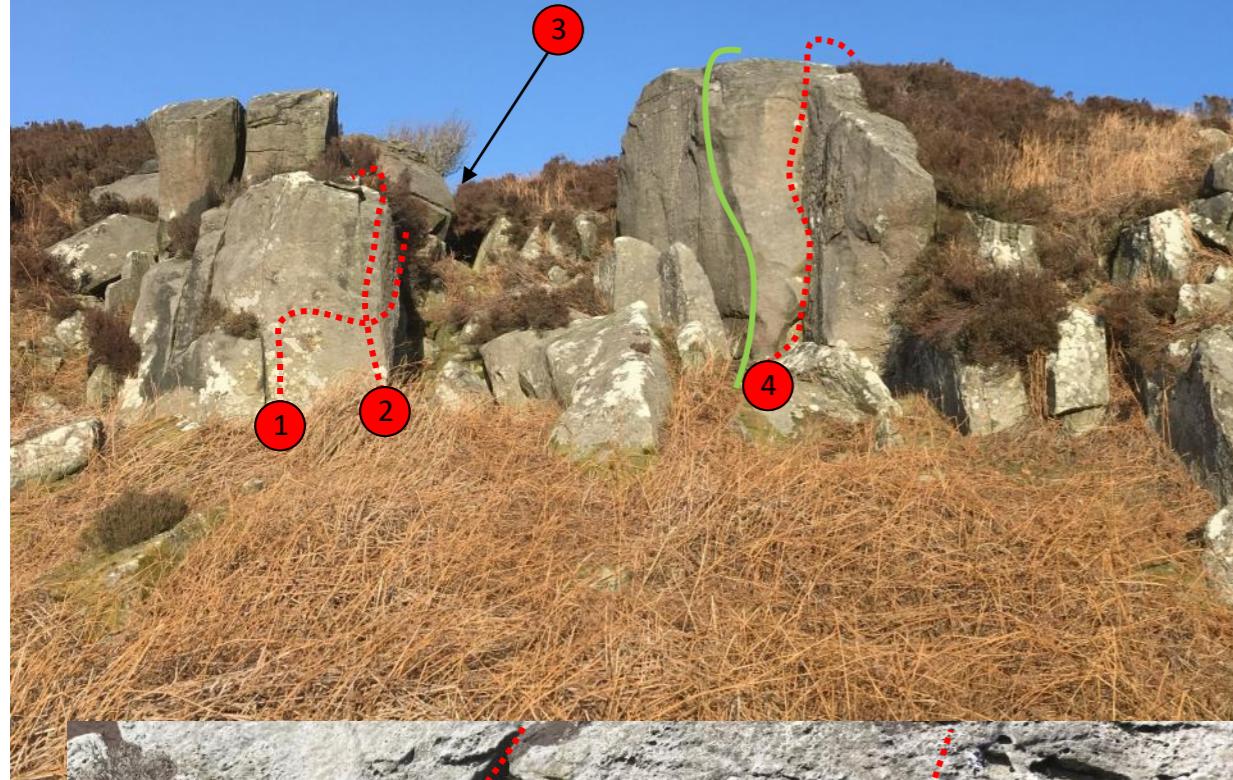
Photo: Steve Blake

Situation and Character

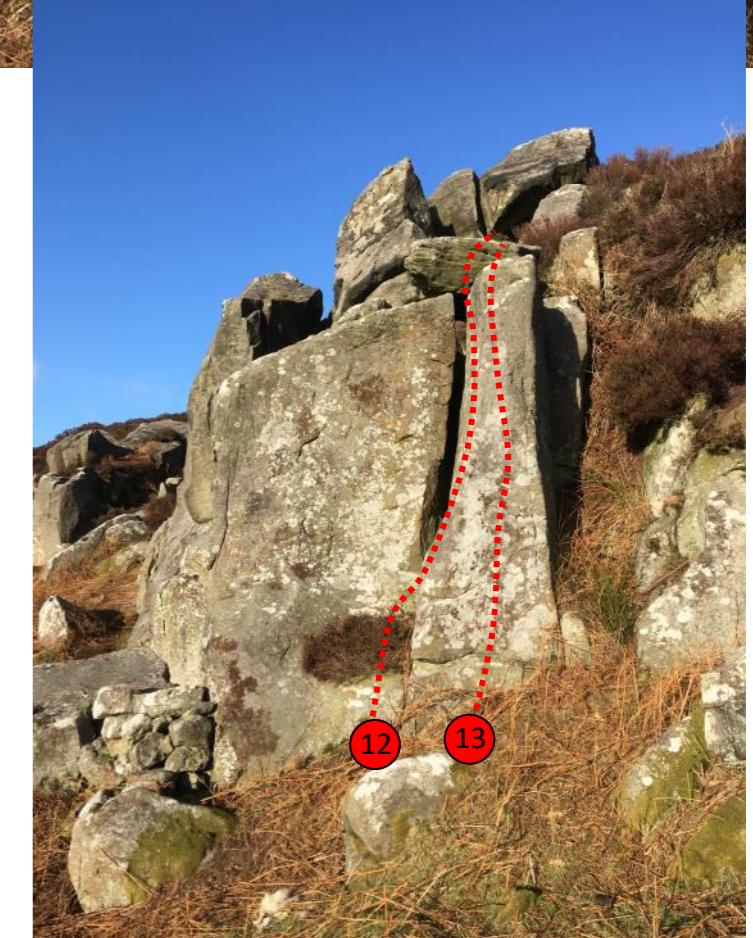
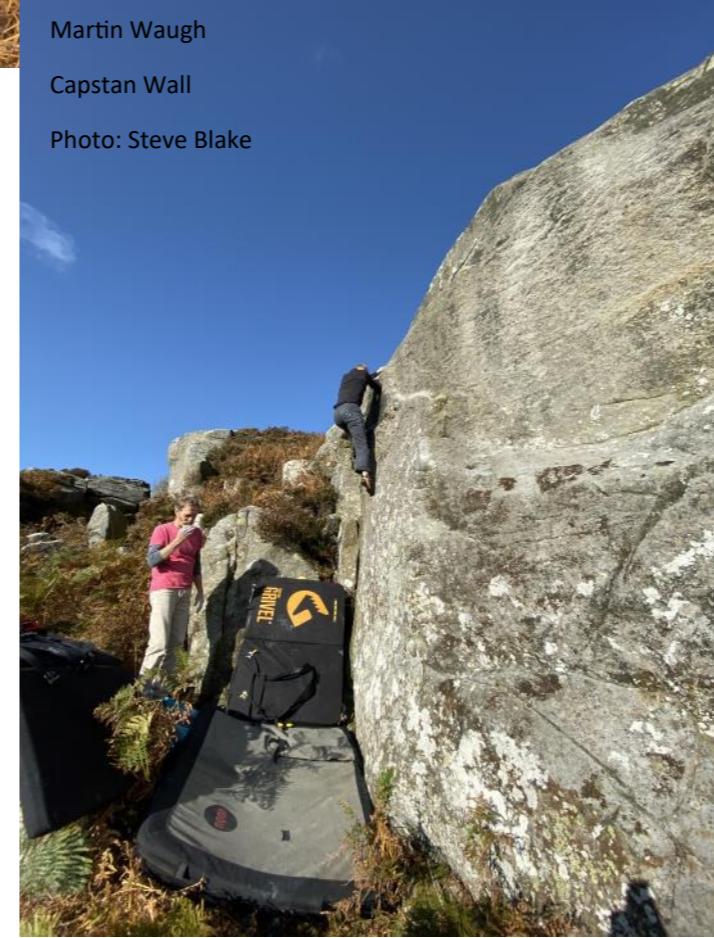
The crag consists of a South West facing wall and series of boulders. The rock is good quality sandstone with no seepage. It gets a lot of sun and being exposed dries quickly in any wind. Any visit should incorporate a short diversion to the Cateran Hole— See opposite. The crag is on CRoW land and there are no known access issues.

It is not a 'hard core' venue, but there is enough to interest most folks. The lines on the main wall are quite high, but not that difficult. There is potential for a couple of very hard problems on the crevasse wall—these are both obvious 'open' projects. There is scope for a few more problems on the broken blocs to the left of the main area. It's as 'child friendly' as any crag.

The Main Area



Martin Waugh
Capstan Wall
Photo: Steve Blake



The Problems

1. Round the Horn. f6a+. BS. Sit start on the left, pull onto the break and traverse the bloc finishing as far to the right as possible.
2. The Horn. f5. MW. Sit Start. Pull onto and up the blunt rib.
3. Gym Lad. f6b. MW. Sit start in the depth of the cleft. Monkey along the break to a layback exit out left. Alternatively pull unto the slab.

Green Line— Open Project

4. The Admiral. f6b. SB. Sit start the fine corner and continue.
5. Capstan Wall. f5+. SB. Up the fingery wall to a jug, span left to a crack and up.
6. First Rate. f5+. SB. Up ledges to reach the crescent edge and the top.
7. Copper Bottom. f5+. SB. The right side of the main wall trending right to good holds at the top.
8. The Bowsprit. f5+. SB. Sit start the arête at the end of the wall. Jugs at the top.
9. JollyBoat. f6c+ SB. Sit Start the short wall pulling right to the centre then up. Cunning Ham.
10. Or, f7a+/7b. TB. Sit start on the right and pull left to the centre and up.
11. The Limey. f5+. AB. The left side of the arête.
12. Rum, Bum and Baccy. f6b. BS. The slabby wall left of the rib is trickier than it looks.
13. The Cat. f6a+. SB. The rib is tackled direct.

The Pitcairn Bloc is approximately 60m West of the main crag.

14. Fletcher. f6c. SB. Sit start the sloper arête and pull up to a mantle finish.
15. William. F6a. SB. Smear up the centre of the slab.

The Cateran Hole

450m up the track that heads uphill another track branches off left. This point is marked by an inscription CH and an arrow pointing to the Cateran Hole. The hole is a geological curiosuty an underground vertical fault that runs east west for 350m and worth the short diversion. Follow the track, this leads to a crater with a short flight of carved steps that lead into the cleft. Legend has it that the fissure reaches Chillingham Castle and that the hole was used as a smugglers lair. Neither are likely to be true.

