

North West Area News

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Welcome to the first official newsletter produced by the North West Area Meeting. In this and subsequent issues it will provide a means of communicating progress and information about what the volunteers who attend the meeting have achieved. The last couple of years have been busy and much has been achieved. Climbing in Lancashire has seen something of a renaissance as a result of several high profile cleanups and the forthcoming guidebook.

In this issue, you will find the latest information about access to the crags of the north west, progress on the forthcoming Lancashire Guidebook as well as articles about one of the quieter climbing areas in the country. Enjoy.

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Area Meeting News

Next Area Meeting: 19th November 2007
7.30pm at the Black Dog, Belmont, Nr Bolton. Food and drinks provided to all attendees.

Agenda:

- Guidebook update
- Longridge party planning
- Programme of crag clean ups for 2008

Bolts in Lancashire



At the last area meeting, a comprehensive debate was held on bolts. Despite the controversial nature of bolting the debate was good natured and surprisingly, the

Attendees were all in agreement with the proposals that were put forward. The full minutes of this meeting can be found on the BMC website but a brief summary of what the meeting felt was acceptable is as follows:

- That the request by the Cheshire climbers for bolts from the BMC bolt fund be supported and used to replace the old lower-off bolts at Frogsmouth.
- Following the fact that one or two people have been cleaning up Ousels Nest, it was decided that a couple of bolt lower offs could be placed under the trees where the top outs are difficult. If these were to be accepted by the climbing community at large, a review would be held about other locations in the quarry.
- That bolt lower offs should be allowed on Coal Measure Crag and Tangerine Trip at Anglezarke.
- That established and accepted pegs of dubious quality should be replaced with pegs on a proactive basis.
- That despite these relaxations, Lancashire and the North West, as a whole, should be a bolt free climbing area. Requests for bolts elsewhere in the area would will be considered carefully on a case by case basis. However, in making these decisions the consideration would be safety and not convenience.

Craig Y Longridge

Last summer it was 'looking promising', in January it was 'weeks away', by Easter it was 'almost sorted', now at last, the BMC are legal owners of Craig Y Longridge. Arrangements are now being made to undertake some site work, which includes fencing and sorting out the ground levels below the climbing to enable the original starts to be accessed. The plan is then for a management group of local climbers to look after the site.

The purchase of Craig Y Longridge was funded by local donations, topped up by the BMC. Without this purchase, this important bouldering venue would have been lost to climbers and it shows that local climbers can act effectively to safeguard our climbing interests. Pete Black must be thanked for all his efforts to set up the purchase fund and to persuade so many climbers to contribute.

The legal side of the purchase has been a long haul for the BMC and climbers can be assured that the delays were not from our side. Nevertheless, we are all grateful that the patience and persistence of Bill Renshaw, Guy Keating and Martin Wragg has eventually paid off.

So, if you feel that you want some pump training, get over to Craig Y, but please check the access conditions first. In particular, please note that there are no dogs permitted.



© Peter Chattle

Winter Secrets by Chris Tan

In no particular order,

1. Waterfall ice @ Shaw Quarry
2. Frozen Shale @ Besom Hill *** YouWillBrickIT Value climb
3. Single pitch mixed/frozen turf @ Running Hill Pits
4. Big mixed/frozen turf @ Dovestones Main Quarry
5. Big Mixed/No turf @ above
6. Easy snow gully @ above
7. Easy snow gully with some ice bouldering @ Widerness Gully
8. Slabby ice @ Ashway water chute
- 9... Ohh! So close

For up-to-date access information go to:

www.thebmc.co.uk/bmccrag



Wilton withdrawn from Auction

Towards the end of September climbers were concerned to learn that United Utilities (UU) intended to sell the Wilton quarries in two lots by public auction. This was a very worrying development, because it opened up the real possibility that the new owners might be less climber-friendly than UU and that some, or all of the climbing might be lost, despite the fact that all of the land in the quarries is CroW Access Land. For instance, the BMC learned that one of the potential bidders was thinking of installing an adventure park, with climbing frames and rope bridges in Wilton 3. Although such a development was unlikely to get planning permission because of the CroW status of the quarries, the possibilities of such a development would certainly appal climbers.

The BMC received a barrage of e-mails and phone calls from concerned climbers alerting us about the problem and urgently set up a meeting with UU Property Solutions attended by Guy Keating (National Access Officer), Bill Renshaw (Chair of Access, Conservation and Environment Group) and Les Ainsworth (Area Access Rep). At this meeting the BMC explained that UU and its predecessor companies had had excellent relations with UU with respect to the Lancashire quarries since the late sixties, and outlined our deep concerns about the proposed auction. The UU Property Solutions representative (David Tyson) was highly receptive to these arguments, as a result of which the quarries were withdrawn from auction. It was then agreed that UU Property Solutions and the BMC would work together and would develop plans for the future of the quarries that would be mutually beneficial to both climbers and UU. UU Property Solutions is part of UU and the BMC is discussing matters with the main company and so this story is not yet over. However, the outlook for climbing at Wilton certainly looks much more promising, at least in the short term.



New Climbing at Warton Main



Dave Cronshaw on the first ascent of Red Bush at Warton Main

Most climbers who have been to the Main Quarry at Warton fall into one of two camps and either love it or hate it - certainly it has a well deserved reputation for serious routes. However, recent developments on the Terrace Wall should broaden its appeal.

Up to last summer there were just eight routes on the Terrace Wall and these were seldom repeated because there was virtually no natural protection, much loose rock and some suicidal finishes. However, the rock appeared to have potential and so after discussion at the Area Committee the owners (Lancashire County Council) were approached and they agreed to permit this area to be cleaned and bolted.

Since then, there has been some extensive cleaning of the walls above The Terrace,

mainly by Dave Cronshaw and Les Ainsworth. This has removed dangerous rock from the original climbs and created several new routes, so that there are now two dozen climbs on the Terrace Wall. These are all well protected by bolts and, somewhat surprisingly, they cluster between VS (4c) and HVS (5b).

Climbers wishing to do these climbs should find descriptions on laminated sheets that have been left on The Terrace itself (please leave them there for other climbers). However, two things should be noted by visitors. Firstly, LCC do not wish any further cleaning, or any more bolts on the Terrace Wall or elsewhere in the quarry. Secondly, climbers wishing to use a rope to safeguard access down to The Terrace, should remove this before they leave.

Climbers should also note that there has recently been a rockfall on Rock Folly and so this route should be treated with caution. A better route to The Terrace from the quarry floor is Black Streak. A route description is given below.

25a. Black Streak VS 4c,-, - « 2007

A pleasant way to reach The Terrace that starts as for Rock Folly. The start can currently also be identified by a prominent memorial cross at its foot.

1. 42m Climb a deep flake crack to reach a bolt, then the short slab above to reach another bolt. Cross the rock on the right (sometimes black and damp), moving up slightly past another two bolts to reach a small ledge. Climb up past another bolt until it is possible to step right to a large grassy ledge, then continue over easier ground on to a large sloping ledge. The belay is at a small tree at the top of a broken corner about 3 metres above this.

2. 10m Walk left to a chain belay (shared with Rock Folly).

3. 26m Step down and traverse to a broken corner, then ascend this to a belay on Bouquet of Barbed Wire (it is possible to traverse without stepping down, but this is sometimes wet). Continue easily past bolts to the right-hand side of The Terrace.

Progress with Guidebook



© Chris Sims

Work on the next definitive guidebook to replace Lancashire Rock is proceeding well. Although some route checking is still needed, the first draft of the script is very much up to date. The big problem remains the photo diagrams. We are steadily building up a set of usable photographs, but are still on the look out for more. We still do not have any photos for many of the crags and even where we do have photos, there are gaps. The next few months provide an excellent opportunity to obtain crag photos, because the trees have lost their leaves. So, if it is a nice sunny day, have a walk round a couple of our crags with a camera and then let us have the results on a CD or film.

Please send your photos to Les Ainsworth on les.ainsworth@synergy-ergs.com

Photos of any crags are welcome, but the following is probably the most wanted list:

Rochdale

- Castle Quarry
- Lumbutts
- Reddyshore
- Warland

Rossendale

- Pinfold
- Troy

Bolton

- Lester Mill (needs some saplings removing from base of crag first)
- Wilton Two (probably needs a morning visit)

Blackburn

- Denham (without the graffiti)
- Round Barn

Pendle and Bowland

- All crags

Quarry Cleanups



In the past two years much cleaning activity has happened in several of the quarries around Bolton. Last year, an exceedingly successful meet at Egerton saw it being brought back into action with most of the main sections around Wood Butress being completely over-hauled. This meet inspired a number of the local enthusiasts to continue the work and as a result, over 60 new routes have been put up in the quarry. Permission has been granted to remove a significant number of trees in the quarry and as a result, Les Ainsworth has led a sustained effort to chop down many of the trees that shrouded the crag and kept it damp.



There is still work to be done but Egerton is slowly starting to resemble a formidable climbing venue. There are certainly lots of

quality routes to climb, especially in the HVS - E2 range, but I am assured by Mr Egerton himself - Geoff Hibbert, that there are still a few routes of all grades to be had. You just have to dig them out first! Many thanks to all the people who have helped and who continue to make Egerton into what is a fantastic climbing arena.

On the other side of the valley, Wilton 2 also saw a complete overhaul in April. Over 25 people turned up to help clean more or less every route in the quarry. All the ledges at the back of the quarry were swept clean of glass, grass was removed from many of the cracks and the exits to the climbs were cut back from the top of the climbs. Many of the cleaned routes were re-climbed that day and in the months since, climbing has resumed as Wilton 2 has become somewhere to go if Wilton 3 gets a bit too busy.



Wilton 1 has also seen some attention this year with trees at the allotment being removed. A cleanup was also organised for Wilton 1 at the Allotment and several routes were cleaned and climbed. Local climbers seem to have been busy at the head of the quarry as well. Thank you to all who have made these places worth a visit again.

At Silverdale there has also been significant tree clearing at Fairy Steps and Warton Pinnacle. Thanks to Forest Enterprises and the RSPB respectively.

North West Limestone – a visit to Hutton Roof Crags

By Rick Ginns



This year I have embarked on the challenge of leading a climb in every crag in ‘the brick’ (aka Lancashire Rock for the uninitiated) which has taken me (and anyone I can convince!) to many different crags in Lancashire in the past 8 months - some, it must be said, better than others! In late September, this led to a visit to Hutton Roof Crags: Hutton Roof is situated just north of the Lancashire border, although covered in the Lancashire Rock guidebook. It belongs to a set of rather diminutive limestone crags, making up the top crust of a 300m thick plate of limestone laid down some 350 million years ago when Lancashire was a warm shallow sea. It is on the side of a valley with a very pleasant outlook, offering routes up to 10 metres, and characterised by shallow ripples and punctuated by deep breaks. Perfect it seems, for the soloist. It’s only a ten minute stroll from the road and set in a Site of

Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) - the rare rigid buckler fern can be found on the limestone pavements that surround the area and is worth a visit for that alone. On arrival, the crag doesn’t impress with stature, but the quality of the rock is superb and more than makes up for this. Even the more popular climbs seem to be weathering fairly well, showing little of the polish to be found on other crags in the area.

“...Well why don’t we do a couple of solos and then we can break out the ropes in a while?” This was John’s suggestion as we unburdened ourselves at the bottom of the crag and the familiar sensation of anxiety started to churn in my stomach. “Ok then” was the reply. I was keen not to show the feeling of apprehension that, I guess, affects most climbers at some time or other when climbing at an unfamiliar crag. It was the first time I’d climbed on limestone this year and hadn’t really prepared myself for this. It didn’t help that I’d been out on the beers the previous night either... However, time was limited and this was another crag in the Lancashire Rock tick list that needed exploring.

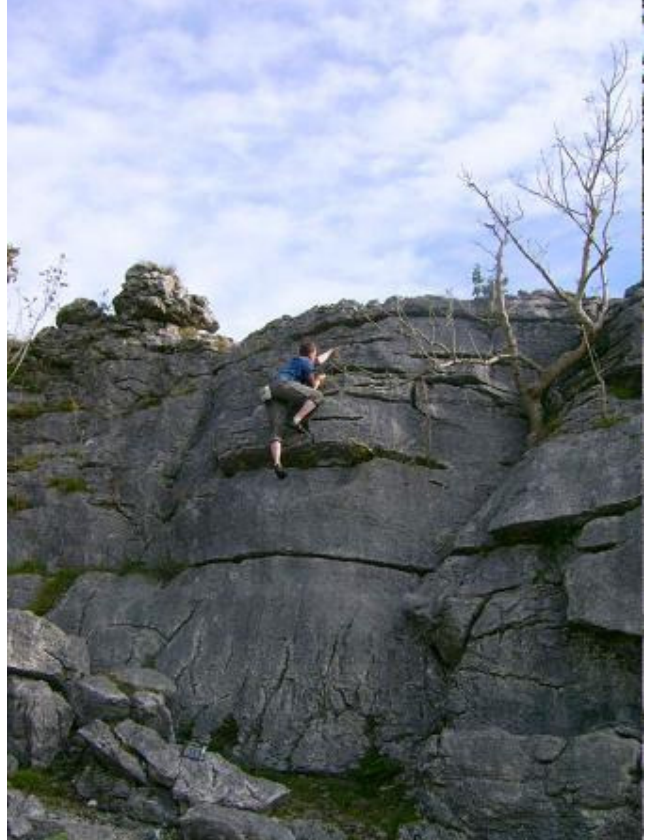
As I moved onto the first climb of the day and pulled up the first couple of moves, I realised how stiff I still was, although there’s nothing like soloing to loosen up and focus the mind! Still, the holds were positive and soon enough I was at the top. We started on the first wall to be reached from the eastern approach, the imaginatively named South American wall. The routes hereabouts are varied and start steeply. The climbing usually gets easier with height though, with many pockets and sharp jugs to be discovered en route. Belize and Sandinista are both excellent and offer good value at VS 5a. West Coast (Diff*) is the best easy climb in this area, although all are worthwhile. This is a good introduction to the climbing at Hutton which generally consists of a tough first couple of moves before the climbing relents.

The climbs at Hutton Roof tend to be on the friendly side of vertical and the routes are

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mainly towards the lower end of the grade spectrum with a few harder climbs and a solitary extreme. It is very convenient in the event of bad weather in the lakes, as it does tend to be dry when areas further north are wet. To the right of the South American Wall is the Cave area, a longer smooth wall bounded on its left hand side by a cave with an overhang at 2 metres. The best route in this area is Wrinkled Slab* (V Diff) which involves steep yet steady climbing before traversing right across the undercut slab. It has just the right amount of exposure above an interesting landing to make the solo an exciting proposition. Pot Belly (S 4b) and The Barrier Roof (S 4a) are also decent routes for those operating in the severe grade. The crag is then surrounded by tree cover allowing relief from the sun in hot weather, before opening up again to flat grassy landings and a pleasant aspect. The Ronson Kirby area holds the pick of the routes, of which Serpent* (S 4a), Wings* (V Diff) and The Rib* (HS 4b) are the best of the easier climbs. For those wanting more of a challenge, Cyclops** (HVS 6a) consists of a boulder start and is more often soloed (by those who can get off the ground) than led, although it is now starting to show its age, and Pegasus* (VS 5a) is another satisfying roof climb. The crag continues further to the right with another collection of excellent climbs - the not to be missed Gorilla, Gorilla** (VS 4c) and Pithecanthropus indirectus* (VS 4c) being slightly longer routes. It must be mentioned that the crag also holds some shorter hidden gems - those with an aversion to height may be interested in the excellent bouldering opportunities to be had here, which would offer a change from nearby Woodwell and Trowbarrow. Nick's Traverse** (V7 / 6c) and The Cause* (V7 6c) are tough, but worthwhile problems. In spite of the shaky start, in just a couple of hours we had climbed around 20 routes, a great confidence booster and all of the routes I would say are worthwhile - there's more than enough to go at on a second visit. It reminded me again of the diversity of climbing in the North West and whilst not the biggest crag, Hutton Roof still

has offers plenty of interest for the climber in a fantastic setting.



My ten of the best climbs at Hutton Roof Crag:

1. Wings* V diff - simply excellent 'interesting move' at half height - great stuff.
2. Wrinkled Slab* V Diff
3. Serpent*, S 4a - a meandering line, but with interest all the way.
4. Speedy Recovery* S 4a - A thought provoking start leads directly up the wall.
5. Pot Belly S 4b - A tough start,
6. Nicks Traverse** 6c - Nails! (but one of the best climbs on the crag.)
7. West Coast* Diff - good length
8. Gorilla, Gorilla* VS 4c
9. Sandinista* VS 5a
10. Gorilla Berengii** VS 4c