

# North West Area Newsletter

## Wilton 1 given a facelift

Welcome to the North West Area News brought to you by volunteers from the area meeting. Once again a lot has seemingly happened since the last North West Area Newsletter – especially in the Wilton quarries. A lot of crag cleaning and other work has happened since the BMC acquired the quarry and therefore it seems pertinent to start this North West Area News with an update on the restoration and progress of this fine quarry, the likes of which have been substantial. I myself was shoulder deep in Rhododendrons (all of which deserve a permanent death) for most of the day in March. As this goes out, we are experiencing the hottest period of the year, hopefully just a taster of what's to come. Will these conditions (which are hardly ideal grit conditions!!) bring people out in their droves to come crag cleaning? I dare say they won't... In this edition, we also have some cautionary stories from the Lancashire quarries reminding us of the dangers inherent in our sport and news that recent bolt belays have been placed at Egerton quarry following an unfortunate incident last year. Many of you may know that the Cheshire and Lancashire guides are due out shortly, and as a tantalising taster you will find an excerpt from the forthcoming Cheshire guide. In addition to the local news, there are three articles: the second part of Karl Lunt's excellent resumé of North West limestone, Martin Kocsis' article on the little known Warland quarry, and finally - from the bizarre to the esoteric - a new series of articles, **My Local Crag** which kicks off with Whitestones by Roger Wilkinson. If you would like to write an article on your local crag, or contribute any other article for the next newsletter, please get in touch on [northwestareanews@googlemail.com](mailto:northwestareanews@googlemail.com).

*Rick Ginns*

*North West Area Newsletter Editor*



*Wilton 1: a rhododendron massacre*

### Dates for the diary

The area meetings for 2009 have been arranged on the following days - as ever, everyone is welcome to come:

7th September 2009 - Venue TBC

30th November 2009 - Venue TBC

Please check details of where these meetings are to be held nearer the time via the BMC website.

## The Wilton revival

*Les Ainsworth*

The aim of this article is to let you all know what is going on at Wilton and to encourage more donations to the Wilton Appeal. At the end of March we held a very successful clean up meet at Wilton One. Over 50 climbers turned up and we got a lot of work done, including:

**Removing litter**

**Cleaning routes**

**Clearing tops**

**Replacing fixed gear**

**Removing rhododendrons**



*Local activists busy cleaning routes at Wilton*

### Route Tops

Since then, there has been some further cleaning on a more ad hoc basis. However, whilst climbers should be encouraged to do all they can to improve Wilton, it is necessary to insert a word of caution. Above one of the routes the top has been cleaned off, but this has exposed a steep bank of soil that is starting to run down over the rock and unfortunately completely ruining the climb by mud run-off. In view of this, could I please ask climbers NOT to clean off any route tops until further notice. Any other work, such as cleaning routes would be welcome, but we are proposing to trial some different approaches to dealing with route tops, so that we can ensure that other tops are cleaned off in ways that do not encourage run off over the rock.



*Stumps following Wilton restoration*

### Other on-going costs

Currently, we are investigating the use of matting, but this will be expensive. Other ongoing work includes the installation of new belay stakes, new fencing, signage, and the replacement of fixed gear. The belay stakes will be excellent, but they are expensive and we need a lot of them to provide sufficient belays for the quarries. It is also likely that we will need to undertake some drainage work.

## Wilton Appeal

All of this work will have to be paid for and so I would like to ask all of you to support the Wilton Appeal fund. With your support we can make the Wilton quarries really great, but currently we really are in danger of running out of cash. To give a donation couldn't be much easier - either send a cheque to the BMC made out to 'BMC Wilton Appeal', or, even easier, phone up the BMC tell them that you want to make a donation and then you can make out a credit card payment over the phone. So don't delay, but act as soon as possible and persuade fellow climbers to do the same. I can assure you that all money raised in this way will be specifically directed towards Wilton and North West climbing.

## The other Wilton quarries

Apart from this, we have negotiated some tree removal at Wilton 4 and treatment for the invasive Japanese knotweed. We are also working on informal arrangements for climbing on the evenings of shooting days providing that there are no shooters in the quarry. I will let you all know how these arrangements develop, but for the time being, please avoid visiting Wilton 2 and 3 on shooting days.

Thanks for your continued support, but if you have not yet made a donation to the Wilton appeal, please think about it. We really do need the money.

# The stakes are high...

The stakes are high, if you don't check what you're belaying to. Just how solid is that old piece of angle iron at the top of your favourite quarry? Sometimes there are no natural belays at the top of a crag; this is particularly true for sea cliffs and quarried crags. For many years climbers have solved this problem by hammering in ground stakes to provide belays. Over time these corrode, sometimes to leave what looks like a solid belay when in fact the part beneath the ground has rotted away. Here's some simple advice to help you use stakes more safely:

- Even if the stake looks solid, give it a hefty boot in the direction of loading. The stake in the photo broke when given the "boot" test by a climber.
- Always use 2 stakes or one stake and some other belays. **Never rely on one piece of in situ gear, no matter how good it looks.** Equalise your belay to evenly spread the load.
- To minimise leverage, always attach your rope or sling to the stake as close to the ground as possible.
- Stakes are only as good as the ground they are placed in. Soft, loose or waterlogged soil may allow the stake to cut through. Check the stake but also check the ground around it.
- Check before you commit to a route, especially on sea cliffs.
- Using ground features as a "belay seat" can help dramatically reduce loads on any stakes or other dubious belays at a pinch.



*A stake recently 'booted' out at the excellent Anglezarke quarry, Lancashire*

# Accident at Egerton quarry



This article, which was copied from the Bolton Mountain Rescue website is included more as a reminder of what good work our mountain rescue services do on a day to day basis than anything else. One day we may need it ourselves and a contribution to the pot would never be a wasted one.

Tuesday 21st April  
Incident 34/2009

At 20:28 our Team Leader was contacted by NWAS (Greater Manchester) Ambulance Control followed by a pager call to the team at 20:30 from NWAS Control, both regarding the report of an accident in a quarry in the Egerton area of Bolton.

In consultation with ambulance control, our Team Leader established the incident location was Egerton (Cox Green) Quarry. A full team pager call was made at 20:36 with our first team member arriving on scene minutes later. This incident involved a 51 year old climber from the Bury area who was apparently lead climbing a rock climb in the quarry known as "The Crack" (graded V.Diff). Apparently a rock hold gave way resulting in the male climber falling a reported 15ft.

With team members assembling at the Cox Green Road (North) entrance to the quarry, with others still responding, and with three team members in the quarry, it quickly became established that with the aid of a large number of rock climbers in the quarry (reported to be 16 in total), the rock climbers were able to assist the responding ambulance crew from Ramsbottom with the carry-out of the male climber who we believe sustained rib injuries in his fall.

The climber was transferred to the ambulance by circa 21:10 and was taken by ambulance to Royal Bolton Hospital. In total, 23 of our team members responded to the incident with a further six team members stood down responding at nearby locations (3 of our Landrover Mountain Rescue ambulances also responded to this incident).



*Bolton MRT: the essential fourth emergency service*

## Bolts placed at Egerton quarry

by Colin Struthers

Ok, so the headline may be slightly inflammatory – but before you start worrying I must say that the bolts that have been placed in Egerton quarry are belay bolts and were needed because access to the tree belays that were formally used has been blocked by a fence erected to protect the edge by the quarry owners. This followed the very unfortunate death of a man who walked over the edge of the quarry last year.

A further justification for the placing of these belay bolts is that there is now a well made path/cycle track immediately behind the cliff edge and running belay ropes across this would have been a nuisance to other quarry users. The installation of the bolts was discussed and agreed at the last NW Area meeting and the bolts have specifically been placed for belaying and are not set with top roping in mind. Anyone setting a top rope will need to extend to the edge with slings.

To access the best rock it was necessary to strip back soil and heather and this may have dirtied some of the holds below. Generally however, the better routes on grooved wall have been cleaned by others and are very climbable at the moment. Most notable of these is Guillotine, a 3\* E3 which now deserves to see a lot of interest.



*Bolts recently placed at Egerton Quarry*



*The result - bolts placed anonymously.*



*Belay bolts*



*More belay bolts...*


# Cheshire guide preview

Cheshire guidebook guru and BMC access rep Mark Hounslea has forwarded a sneak preview of the forthcoming Cheshire climbing guide to get us all salivating. Although still being finished, the guidebook is due out shortly and promises to be an excellent addition to the regions guidebooks.

Definitive coverage will be given to all the bouldering and routes in this strongly-defined area, and also the book will aim to draw together the special character and history that the area boasts.


*The guide will cover Pex Hill, The Breck, Helsby, Frodsham, Frog's Mouth Quarry, Chester Racecourse Walls, and may also give some coverage to the area's sister crags on Shrewsbury.*

If you have any images you would like to contribute, know any historical or local anecdotes, or can offer your knowledge and skills in any way, please get in touch.



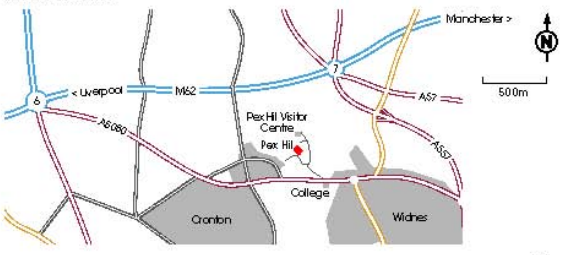
## PEX HILL

**Altitude:** 50m  
**Grid Reference:** SJ 501887  
**Aspect:** Various  
V0 - V10 / D - E5




**Pex Hill** is a disused sandstone quarry on the outskirts of Widnes with great quality rock. It contains over 160 climbs, from boulder problems and micro-routes to walls in excess of 12 metres. Pex tends to polarise the viewpoints of climbers. For aficionados of fine crimping, neat footwork and slinky hips there is no finer venue in the universe, but power hungry wall thugs will find little to attract them here.

**Approach**  
Pex Hill is located 15 km east of Liverpool on the edge of Widnes. Exit the M62 at junction 6 or 7 and turn onto the A5080 which runs between Cronton and Widnes. Follow the small road opposite Widnes Sixth Form College (speed bumps), of some green metal gates, and park at the visitors centre. Follow the railing around the quarry. Alternatively 200 metres towards Liverpool turn into Hall Lane and turn right again onto Mill Lane and park close to the obvious green gates beyond which an obvious track leads into the entrance.



Catlepsy photo: Ray Wood

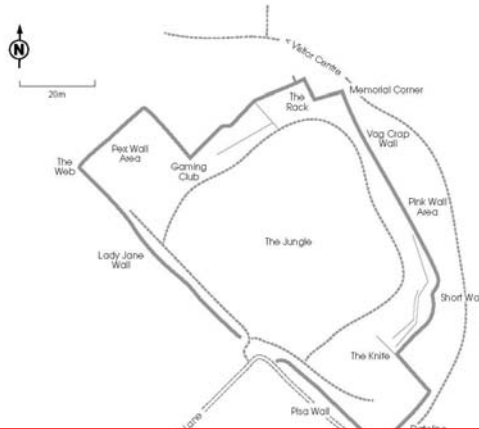


### The Climbing

"Suffering from donkey footwork and zero technique? Well, invest some time at Pex Hill. It has been home to some of the most attractive climbers around (I am talking technique here)..."*Pete Chadwick, 1998 guide*

The quarry has provided a forcing ground for developing technique and fitness for generations of Merseyside climbers. Easy of access and home to the mini-route, that particular hybrid, too high for a boulder problem and too small for a full blown route, the smooth sandstone walls demand good technique and develop awesome finger strength and deft footwork. Many of the higher routes can be soloed by the competent although top roping is also popular. In addition many fine traverses often close to the ground make Pex an ideal training venue or a suitable crag to visit if you are on your own.

Previous guide books have warned against belaying to the railings which fringe the quarry rim for fear of invoking the wrath of the United Utilities which own the quarry so please respect this request.



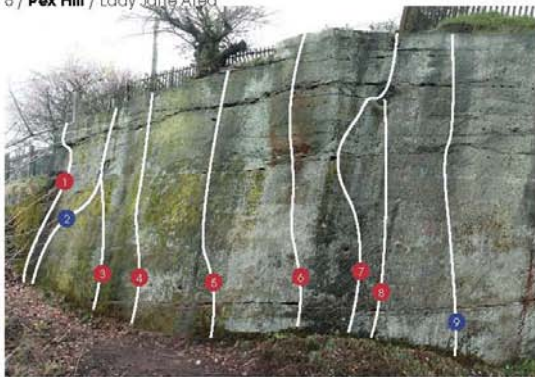
### Conditions and Aspect

The quarry is sheltered and the walls face all directions and so sun or shade can generally be found. Some of the walls appear to be greener than they used to be and Pex and Main wall seep in the winter though Pisa Wall can generally be relied to provide some sport.

### Grades

Traditionally Pex Hill routes have been graded using only British technical grades as the distinction between boulder problems and micro-routes are blurred. Most routes are either top roped or soloed. Many of the climbs involve hard technical moves relatively close to the ground with easier climbing above, but beware, there are exceptions! The local ethic often involved soloing as high as possible before getting pumped or gripped and then down climbing before jumping off. Gradually, as bottle and familiarity increased climbers would then commit and go for the top. The widespread use of cams and the increasing use of head pointing tactics have meant that leading has become more common and the use of bouldering mats has led to a blurring of the distinction between what is solo-able and what should be top-roped. This situation is further confused by the presence of handy horizontal breaks two to three metres up, which often provide a convenient stopping place for those climbers who use the first part of routes as boulder problems. With this in mind routes have been graded in the style that they are commonly ascended.

Relatively short routes/boulder problems have been given the new commonly accepted V grade followed by a technical British grade for the traditionalist amongst us, and the longer routes have been given British traditional grades. Those climbs which have a traditional grade but are often only climbed as a boulder problem are given an additional V grade. For example *Tequila Sunrise* as a boulder problem/micro route gets V2 6a, whereas *Hart's Arête* gets E4 6a for a full ascent and V4 6b for its classic boulder problem to the break.



### Lady Jane Area

The long green wall to the left of the entrance provides many of the best routes at Pex Hill and several classic traverses. Routes at the left hand end can be soloed and many of the higher routes on the right can be led. The middle section has some excellent highball classic problems which require exquisite technique and cunning footwork to utilise the often tiny holds.

- 1 **Too Bold for Steve Boof** 5c (V2)  
4m The wall just right of the fence without using the left edge. Incidentally it isn't.
- 2 **Self Square** VS 5a (V0)  
5m Swing up and right on a deep pocket to the small ledge. Finish direct.
- 3 **Self Square Direct** 5c (V2) \*  
5m Can be very frustrating on a warm evening.
- 4 **Tequila Sunrise** 6a (V2) \*\*\*  
5m Start by the tree. Lovely elegant climbing up the wall with a stiff pull past a small L shaped ledge.

- 5 **Harvey Wallbanger** 5c (V2) \*\*\*  
5m The wall 1 metre right gives a popular route with an unusual finishing hold. A technical and balancy start followed by crimpy moves lead to a good finger slot.
- 6 **Black Russian** 6a (V4)  
5m Start by a slot of knee height. Difficult reachy moves lead up the wall finishing just right of the step at the top of the wall.
- 7 **Lew's Leap** 5c (V1) \*\*  
7m A tricky high step to a pocket leads through the beehive shaped niche to a handy finishing hold.
- 8 **Lew's Leap Direct** 6a (V2)  
7m Fingery moves up the wall to the right without recourse to the original route's pocket.
- 9 **Finger-Ripper** E5 6b (V6)  
7m Hard and bold moves directly up the wall right of the niche.



- 10 **Bermuda Triangle** E3 6a (V4) \*\*\*  
9m A difficult start leads to the infamous tendon popping double pocket. Easier climbing leads through the second niche to flat but good holds before the top. Unmissable.  
There are several traverses in this area: Start as for *Self Square* and finish at *Lew's Leap* 5c (V1). Step up a move and traverse the top break back left to the a8te 4c (V0). Traversing the foot ledge rightwards from *Tequila Sunrise* to *Bermuda Triangle* gives a height dependant V5.
- 11 **Cosine Alternative** E3 6a (V4)  
9m A counter line which crosses *Bermuda Triangle*.  
A fine warm up traverse leads from here to *Urican*.
- 12 **Breakaway** E4 6c (V8) \*  
9m Marginally easier since recent vandalism, this climb still gives cutting edge crimping. More often finished up *Bermuda Triangle*.

The next two routes have attained mythical status amongst local climbers. The acolytes are many but the triumphant are few!

- 13 **Catalepsy** E4 6c (V7) \*\*\*  
8m Reach the third niche by a hard and balancy crux. Thank god for mats!
- 14 **Monoblock** E5 7a (V10) \*\*\*  
8m Climbs the wall to the right of the third niche. This proved to be Joe Healy's 'magnum opus' and can be impossible to find if not called as the holds are so small!
- 15 **Bornie** E4 6b (V6) \*  
8m Climbs the wall past the old bolt and through the fourth niche.
- 16 **Termination** E5 6c (V7)  
8m A desperate move left to the large pocket provides the crux.

8 / Pex Hill / Lady Jane Area

**Do Not Feed the Butterflies**

Carefully I pulled two apparent sturdy branches out of the way with one hand and mantle shelved on the other, so managing to get two sets of toes on the top. At the critical moment the branch broke and I wavered in the breeze for a few seconds. Then a butterfly flew in front of my face. The blast of air from its wing beat sent me groundward, landing awkwardly on a pointed stone which broke my foot in two places. I had to turn to crawling for the rest of the summer.

**17 Philharmonic** E4 6b (V5) \*\*  
8m Easier for those of above average stature.

**18 Algripper** E2 5c (V2) \*\*  
8m This excellent route links the three pockets and the slot. Much harder than it looks and more than one move.

**19 Jurassic Park** E5 6b  
8m Thin climbing up the blank wall to the right.

**20 Crossbow** E1 6a (V3)  
8m Make a hard move left from the good pocket on Lady Jane left to the sixth niche.

It is possible to traverse rightwards after the crux of the following four routes and reverse Twin Scoops.

**21 Lady Jane** E1 5c (V2) \*\*  
8m Climb the right trending ramp till a committing rock-up gains pockets. Step right and climb straight up past the left hand of two niches.

**22 Lady Jane Direct** E1 5c (V3) \*  
8m Direct to the big pocket.

**23 Sidestep** E1 5c (V2)  
8m Climb straight up to the final holds of Lady Jane.

**24 Twin Scoops Direct** E1 6a (V3) \*\*  
8m Straight up to the right hand niche by a high step, crimpy pull and long reach. Very satisfying.

**25 Twin Scoops** HVS 4c (V1) \*  
9m Mantelshelf on to the obvious ledge of three metres and then follow holds leftwards through the two scoops. This can be used as a descent by the confident.

**26 Twin Scoops Right Hand** E3 5c (V3)  
9m Straight up from the ledges using the obvious pocket.

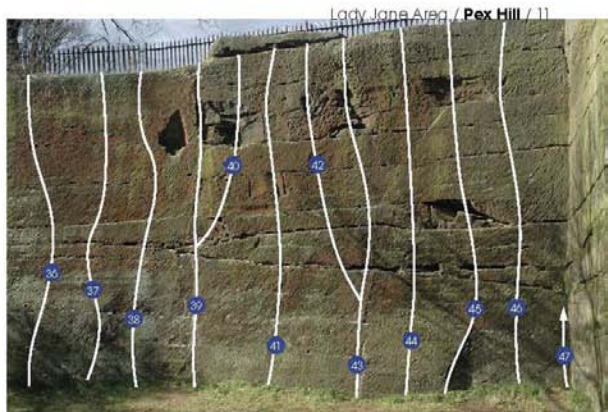
**27 Creeping Jesus** E1 5b (V2) \*\*\*  
9m A very popular climb. From the right side of the Twin Scoops ledge reach the finger slot (good gear), before a committing swing and quick sprint gains the top. This has been the scene of a few soloing epics.

**28 Creeping Jesus Direct** 5c (V2) \*  
9m Use layaways to gain the ledges.

**29 Kill's Wall** E5 6b (V7) \*\*  
9m Technical climbing past a small overlap up the big wall to the right via an obvious pocket.

**30 The Black Pimp** E5 6b (V6)  
from Marseilles  
10m Climb the wall left of the rib of Unicorn. Named after a local youth's entertaining solo hitch hike to the Verdon Gorge!

Ref: Bozhomov? photo? (outis web site)



The V grades for the following climbs relate to problems which finish at the break. Traverse or jump off.

**31 Unicorn** E3 5b (V0) \*\*  
11m Climb to a small ledge before a step left leads to the slim groove with a committing step up to gain and enter the cave, and a usually inelegant move to exit it.

The small ledge mantled direct gives an entertaining and perplexing problem (V3).

**32 Cave Route Right-Hand** E6 6b (V6)  
11m Climb up to the obvious square pocket right of the cave.

**33 Ladyron** E4 5c (V1) \*  
11m Bold climbing between the two ribs starting past obvious finger slot.

**34 Cardiac Arête** E4 6b (V2) \*  
11m Climb to the break and then make a difficult move from the jug above.

There are three excellent traverses on this area: the classic **Hart's Arête Traverse** climbs between Unicorn's ledge and Crack and Up, 6b (V5) \*\*\* with feet just above the floor.

**The Highest** 6a (V3) \*\* starts left of Unicorn and follows the main ledge system before dropping down slightly and finishes at The Web. **The Grand Horizontal** is the ultra low level traverse 6c (V9) \*\* renowned to have been discovered by a well known local activist 'mid cotus'. Needless to say, they can be completed in both directions.

**35 Hart's Arête** E4 6b (V4) \*\*\*  
11m The obvious arête gives both a classic route and boulder problem. Squeaky clean boots are essential for the initial moves. Give yourself a big tick if you on sight this one.

**36 Zinger Zagger** E3 5c (V2) \*  
11m The wall to the right via some pockets low down leads to a gripping sloping exit.

**37 Big Greenie** E3 5c (V3)  
11m The wall just to the right moving up and right from two large pockets.

**38 The Hulk** E2 5c (V2)  
11m Start just left of the crack and climb the wall passing the scoop on the left.

**39 Crack and Up** E1 5b (V1) \*\*\*  
11m A difficult polished start leads to the break and good holds. Climb direct to finish up the obvious crack.

**40 Corner and Overhang** E2 5b \*  
11m Start up Crack and Up to the first break. Step right and climb the wall on good holds. Take care with the crackling flake above the ledge. Finish to the right of the crack.

**41 McArthur Park** E3 6a (V3) \*  
11m Climb the pocketed wall between the two runnels. The start provides the technical climbing.

**42 Eliminate One** E2 6b (V2)  
11m An eliminate line squeezed in to the right of the runnels.

**43 The Abort** E1 5b (V0) \*\*\*  
11m Straight forward climbing up the faint rib to a tricky long move for a good slot above the shallow niche.

**44 Eliminate Two** E2 5b (V2)  
11m An eliminate.

**45 One Step** E1 5b (V1) \*  
11m A tricky starting move to good holds lead through the blacky niche.

**46 Eliminate Three** E3 5c (V2)  
11m The wall just left of the corner. No touching the corner.

**47 The Web** E1 5b \*  
11m A good pitch up the corner with good protection and only one tricky move. The start is always a little damp but don't let that put you off



## Is it That Grim up North?

*A very personal appreciation of North Lancashire limestone by Karl Lunt... continued.*

### Warton Small Quarry

The car park that wants to be a crag? This could be such a good place not for nothing was it Charlie Vigano's favourite spot. Nowadays it looks a little down at heel (and you'd better watch your heels for the doggy do that lurks in amongst the broken glass and other various detritus). Some of the routes at the top end are in need of a manicure, nay a total and full-on biological war against the cotoneaster that is enveloping the place like a science fiction experiment. Some of the routes are polished to hell – because they are good and deserve to be rescued. Major forestry could help. **(newsflash! the BMC now has authorisation to clear the Cotoneaster and to remove selected trees by kind permission of the Parish Council – ed.)** I fear though that any attempt to climb in the car park will only lead to tears and tantrums not least from the enraged car owner whose pride and joy you've just landed on? When foot-and-mouth closed everything else off which crag came to the rescue? Use it or lose it for good.

### Crag Foot

What a crying shame. On paper this crag has it all: southerly aspect, the easiest of approaches and some nice climbs at a grade that won't kill you. So where did it all go wrong? Why is that when I took on the classic *Crag Foot Eliminate* again last year I thought I was going to contract histoplasmosis from all the dust and powdered guano I was brushing off the holds? The answer eludes me (as did the subtle jamming sequence that would have seen me cruise to the top instead of the usual flounder). The big trees that once screened the crag from the road have gone and made life much more pleasant than before. Maybe the former dankness put people off and once the nettles sprouted that was the death knell? Whatever, this has to stop. Just because a weed grows out of a crack doesn't mean you are going to die – pull it out and put that gear in. Now stop being so soft and get to it. Your Crag Foot needs you! For the sport climbing desperado (and you will need to be desperate) move a little further up the hill for **Barrow Scout Cove**. Before I am accused by its aficionados of not knowing what I am talking about I must confess that you are all perfectly correct. I am talking total bolleaux as I have not climbed a route here, but have gone up "for a look" several times – it just doesn't seem to get any better though.

### Farleton Crag

Harsh gradings like a kick in the plums, stone-ground smoothness, rounded everywhere you look and usually dripping until the middle of June. Chuck in a big (for Lancashire) walk in and in fact you have everything you could want in a limestone crag. I love the place and would never swap it for some grit pile of rubbish like Stanage but you've probably gathered by now that I'm a little odd. Incredibly there are a few soft touches around here if you know where to look: try *Agrippa* for a head-swelling E2, but don't leave it too long as rumour has it there will be downgrading ..... Everyone buffs up *The Shriek* (so why be any different?), but is the direct over the roof really 5c?! And is *G Squared* HVS and is ..... I'd better stop there before I burst a blood vessel with the indignity of it all. Just understand that I've had a few whippings at Farleton over the years and ego is such a delicate thing. Go on a nice warm evening in the summer and zone out the motorway buzz, but forget it as a winter venue, unless you are Eiger Nordwand training.

**Hutton Roof**

The friendly crag! Which probably means you'll meet someone there. I'd never even heard of the place until Stew Wilson introduced me. It was all part of his plan to subvert the climbing edifice by pinching crags from other empires for the North of England guide. He used to be a very bitter and twisted character, but after counselling and a long course on mind-altering drugs is now fairly approachable. Back in those days Hutton Roof was known only to Stew and a secret clan of Kendal-based dwarves. There was no polish or grass growing at the foot of *Cyclops*. This route/problem/highball/"whatever" is a kind of test for me – if I can get it within a go or three then I feel that things aren't so bad after all, there is life in the old dog. Then I stroll over to the South America Wall, solo one of the "San" routes and



*The editor climbing at Hutton Roof*

and get all scared and feel like a whipped dog. I never learn. The starts are technical and while you are thinking it through you suddenly find yourself high up enough to hurt yourself and too committed to retreat. The tops bulge out, but take heart, there really are some great jugs if you stay calm and reach up (that's what I keep telling myself). As a non-boulderer this is about as close to bouldering as I usually get – even I can see the benefit of the traverses and some of those roof problems pack a punch too come to think of it.

**Jack Scout Crag**

Lancashire's only sea cliff? Not quite true as there one or two other contenders along the Silverdale shore, but none of them remotely approach "the Cow's Mouth" for scale and interest. No big numbers here, just lots of mid-grade magic and interesting crustacean-type things diving out of every orifice (and into yours if you don't keep your gob shut). Only one route breaks the E-grade barrier and this has probably not been led since a major rockfall totally altered its character. If you fancy your chances don't bother racking up as you'll be lucky to find a meaningful runner. If you are operating in the HS to HVS bracket then you need to come here and if you like the look of *Brant's Little Brother* just make sure you've boned up on your jamming and bridging (plus several other) techniques and can swivel your head round like an owl. And if lowering off the in-situ bolts seems like a soft option why not try going the full height of the crag and having a real adventure? Years ago there used to be a carpet of green grass around the foot of the routes which added a certain charm, but it was all lost practically overnight when a bad storm and a high tide coincided. Now it is all mud and pebbles which may not be as aesthetically pleasing, but does make it feel more like a real sea cliff. Is it my imagination or does the tide come in higher nowadays – maybe this global warming thing is true?

**Fairy Steps**

Is it a crag or is it a boulder? I suppose it's both according to who you are. My own view is that the Upper Crag is more of a bouldering spot whereas the Lower Crag has some routes

which warrant a rope and runners (and some of the hardest boulder problems in the known universe just to confuse things). There are similarities, but the differing layers of limestone within the sequence have produced different types of climbs – hard to pin down, just go and take a look for yourself. Both crags are cloaked by trees, but recent felling (particularly on the Lower Crag) has really opened things up and let the light in. Some people may be offended by the removal of some mature trees, but just bear in mind that in Edwardian times (and this is also true of Warton Crag) there were very few trees at all round here. Old photos of people picnicking on the Steps escarpments show this. A really good time to be here is in the Spring before the trees come into leaf, sunshine is maximised and you often catch a glimpse of the Lakes fells, possibly snow-streaked still. It's about as far removed from the stereotypical Lancashire grim grit quarry as it's possible to get. Let us forget the fact that it has never actually been in Lancashire (pre or post 1974), it's ours now and we ain't giving it up!

### **Woodwell**

Not sure about this one. It seems to be Bouldering Central judging by the chalk on the lower holds. I hardly ever see anyone there so maybe it's just one very keen person. I've always had problems with Woodwell – it scares me in the way that swimming in water where you know sharks might lurk would be scary. You see I always want to go to the top of the route and that is where I am going wrong. Instead of plopping off at the lip of the roof onto a strategically placed mat I think "no, this is a route" (the brick tells me it is so) and to get the tick I have to get to the top. Now Woodwell is just high enough to start that old inner dialogue off. You know the one "you have just enough left to do that move and top out" versus "you've really blown it, that's a 5c move to finish and even if you do it that branch will get you, now die!" Even back in the eighties the place was scarily polished – am I selling it to you yet? To be fair, the left hand sectors are more friendly – if you think that a slap in the face is better than a head butt – and you may even see a haw finch (I haven't yet). The pool below the well itself is a great place to watch dragonflies and for reflecting on the zen of smooth movement overcoming all. Or perhaps like me you will gaze into the still water and just think what a crap climber you really are? **Boulderers are reminded that the rock to the South of the Wolfhouse road is out of bounds (ed.)**

### **New Crags and more!**

Yes, there are some new venues to be touted even up here in the land that climbing passed by. Nothing to compete with Trowbarrow – did you really think that there would be another one of those lurking in the deepest parts of the forest? Think more along the lines of Fairy Steps and you won't be disappointed (or possibly you will anyway, but who said that size matters?). All will be revealed when Return of the Brick III hits the shops some time this year and if you think I'm going to spill the beans and tell you where all the unclimbed lines are then you really don't know me at all. And finally, the answer to that age-old problem ..... it's Sunday, it's weeing down, everything is wet and the tide is in? No you dolt – don't go to Awful Walls! Get yer mac on, go down to the Silverdale shore and dodge those waves – take care and keep it real!

### **Hoghton update** *by Les Ainsworth*

The peregrines have been successful at Hoghton Qy and have now left, so we can now climb there up to and including Sunday July 26th. Climbers are reminded to check the RAD on the BMC website. Excellent news for wildlife and climbers alike.

# Bizarre Lancashire

## Crags

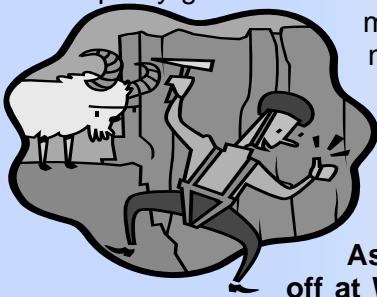
*By Martin Kocsis*

A regular feature in which I'll demonstrate just how good climbing in Lancashire really is. Don't let the 'bizarre' bit outwit you...some of these places are solid gold, "you have my word for that, and you can put my word in the bank." (c Den Perry)

### **Number 2: Warland Quarry, Todmorden**

The summer was barely upon us, yet it was clear that the weather was going to be somewhat challenging. Penny and I had a few days of free time and, somehow, I'd managed to sell the delights of a day of new routing at Yellowslacks followed by a day's 'magical mystery tour' around Summit Quarry, Reddishore Scout and Warland Quarry to my sceptical, but tolerant, friend. Either we'd have the best days out ever, or Penny would be making a mental note to never again succumb to any climbing suggestions put by 'that young man'.

The new routes at Yellowslacks provided encouragement and, buoyed by this, we headed off into the wilds of the northern moors. Warland was as far as we ever got. Perhaps, had we not insisted on consuming sausage and egg butties plus brews at the caff in Todmorden, and perhaps if the weather had been kinder then this would be featuring in "Brilliant Days Out"...you do what you can. We caught a glimpse of what surely wasn't the quarry, and then wound our way ever closer. The thing we'd seen **was** the quarry and I doubt either of us had ever seen the like. A curious wedge of quarried grit sticking out of the hill. There were a few lines on either side of the central arête, and an amazing plank of six foot long grit, four inches thick and a couple of feet wide sticking out above the route. In a fit of optimism and burning curiosity the rope came out, the boots went on and the minor crag classic of "Grinning Arete" was appreciated by all. Hanging off the stake in the top of the crag I realised that it was a pretty good route -even Penny thought so- so it must have been! Local contacts have since informed me that an impromptu body swerve is now no longer necessary for successful negotiation of the hound who guards the nearby huts.



**OS ref 948 201**

**As you drive between Littleborough and Todmorden on the A6033, you turn off at Warland Gate End, opposite the Bird l'Th Hand pub. Go across the canal and up the lane. The road is steep in places. Eventually a parking place on the left is reached. A gate on the other side of the road leads to a path which contours round past sheds to the quarry.**

# My Local Crag *By Roger Wilkinson*

I suppose my nearest serious crag is Trowbarrow, but since it is already well-known, I'd like to tell readers something about the next nearest, as it's a lot less familiar to most climbers. Although it appears in the famous Brick guide to Lancashire crags, in future it will take up its more logical place in a FR&CC Lakes guide, as it lies outwith (as the Scots never tire of saying) Lancashire. Many climbers will have glanced up at this little outcrop as they speed along the A590 en route for Coniston, Duddon and all points west. It is known as Whitestones, though the correct name should be singular, and is reached from a convenient parking spot (turn right off the A590 just beyond the NW end of the new Newton By-Pass, signed Staveley) in about 15 mins (OAP speed). While the road noise is a feature, it is a pleasant sunny spot to climb. It doesn't run to E-grades but has good routes from V Diff to HVS up to 30m in length. The rock is rather unusual, not, we are told, being a Lakes volcanic or slate though having some of the climbing characteristics of both. Polish isn't a problem and holds and protection are plentiful on most routes. A feature of many routes is the number of good pocket holds which often take a niftily placed cam.

One route stands out from the rest and I'd say it's probably worth 2.5 stars. This is Moose, which has traditionally been graded rather competitively at Hard Severe 4b. Towards the right hand side of the crag is a splendid pillar, which is undercut, and only comes half way down the crag. Below it slabs, grooves and ribs lead with interest to a sort of niche below the overhang, which is avoided by some nice steep moves on the left. It's now time to get in as much gear as you can as the crux beckons. Level with your head to the right, just above the overhang, the foot of the pillar forms a small low angle slab – older readers will recognise this as a glacis,



*Graham Phillips on Cracked Wall, Whitestones*

a sadly unfashionable term probably not found in any Rockfax guide – and it is only too obvious that your next aim is to get into a standing position on said glacis. The only problem with this idea, apart from frightening exposure, is a distinct shortage of handholds, and no sign of any future gear placements. Not only is this the technical crux, but the psychological one at the same time which is why I've always felt Hard Severe doesn't really do it justice. Anyroadup, with little wings flapping in your chest (see Rockfax symbols) you somehow find yourself on that little glacis, forcing yourself to stand upright to maximise the friction while wanting to bury your head in a nice wide chimney (there isn't one) where you can't see the void below, and the distance above your last runner. What there also isn't at this point, which you suspected before making the move, is any more gear, so there's nothing for it but to launch up the steep wall of the pillar on rather smaller holds than you'd ideally wish for. Soon, if not soon enough, a nice diagonal crack is reached. I daresay you could fiddle about with wires, but personally I've always felt "bung in a small cam" is quickest and the best advice. Three or four more moves of about 4a find you suddenly breasting the tape at the end of this exciting route.

The neighbouring route (same grade) is also good. From the niche under the overhang of Moose you can step right and climb the tricky cracks which give Cracked Wall its name. Another name for this route could have been Suspect Block, so pull gently.

There are a number of routes at Whitestone in the V Diff/Severe range, several of which merit a star, but in some ways the best of these is the rather unattractively named Chimney Route (though it gets no star in the Brick). I cannot think of a V Diff which requires such a range of different (some barely remembered) techniques. An old climbing acquaintance of mine was wont to advise the tyro leader not to work up through the grades, as traditionally recommended, but to go straight on to the easier VSs which he reckoned were generally less baffling, better protected and generally safer than the alleged easier routes. If you have a go at Chimney Climb you may get an inkling of what my friend was on about. It really requires an E1 leader to do this route in impeccable style; the less talented will undoubtedly do a greater or lesser amount of grovelling, though the route is not what is traditionally described as a thrutch. Highly recommended to all!

A visit to this little crag can be a great pleasure. The outlook is grand, if you ignore the road 300 feet below, and the climbing stimulating. It can often be dry when climbing conditions in the Lakes are sub-optimal (ie most of the time). If you're climbing at these modest grades, do give it a go.

## Lancashire Caving & Climbing Club *By Roger Wilkinson*

LCCC Group Email  
"Hi All,  
Can't make the meet on Sunday, but  
just wondering if anyone wants to meet  
up on Saturday for some cragging?  
Regards,  
Chris"

The LC&CC dating agency crackles into life again across the internet. What a boon is the new technology to last-minute planning when we are spread over a larger area than the name suggests, with active members from the Lakes to Herefordshire as well as in the Bolton-Preston heartland.

LC&CC is one of the country's older clubs being founded in 1936, but that doesn't mean we're all living in the past and carrying big aluminium-framed rucksacks around dressed in moleskin breeches and long scarlet socks. Oh, no! We move with the times, or at least only slightly behind them. Why, some of us even use those new-fangled camming devices, and we have a website ([www.lccc.org.uk](http://www.lccc.org.uk))! We were ahead of the game even in the '30s, when most clubs only accepted Gentleman members, but we were a mixed club from the start. Today we have a good number of active women climbers, and we are a non-sexist, non-elitist and above all, non-cliquey club. Even the newest rookie member has as much right as anyone else to be insulted and ridiculed by his clubmates (who will always be smiling broadly while they pull his leg).

As with many clubs, the initial impetus came from the city workers with limited means who were desperate to get on (or under) the hills despite having access to no more than a pedal cycle. It was common then for members to travel to meets on hired carts and even motorised coaches! The club Journal began life after the Second World War as a series of typewritten, Gestetner-duplicated pages (you need to be at least fifty to know what a Gestetner was!) illustrated with individually-printed monochrome photographs glued on to the pages. Despite the much greater efforts involved in foreign travel in those days, these



*The LCCC hut, Tranearth near Coniston*

historical documents relate tales of exciting and adventurous trips to the Alps where a lot of quite difficult routes were climbed with minimal equipment and basic clothing. Details can also be found of members pioneering new routes of considerable difficulty in Norway. Today, car-sharing is a growing aspect of club life, encouraged by the rising cost of fuel, environmental considerations and the desire to see miles put on someone else's car rather than your own.

Despite its primary position in the Club's name, caving is today a minority activity pursued by a small band of stooping, pasty-faced individuals who rarely see daylight. Don't show the slightest interest in their activities or they'll have you dressed in a boiler suit and wellies and down a cave before you can say Gaping Gill. Seriously, though, the club has an illustrious history in the annals of speleology and today's active cavers are very happy to initiate any novices.

Have you ever climbed at Wallowbarrow in the Duddon Valley? It is such a popular and well-known venue that it is sometimes forgotten that it has a shorter history than many Lakes crags. Many of the routes were done in the 1950s and '60s by members of the LC&CC, who, by the time they got to the crag had already walked over the Walna Scar road from near Coniston where the club had recently acquired the freehold on their bunkhouse, Tranearth. I have to admit that my initial reason for joining the club (I lived in Derbyshire at the time, and had visited Tranearth as a guest of a friend who had been a member since his student days) was to gain a key to this gem of a climbers' hut. Situated about 10 minutes walk from tarmac, the hut can only be approached on foot, which makes for an idyllic stay in a converted barn and cottage overlooking Tranearth Beck and overshadowed by Coniston Old Man and Dow Crag. The hut is large, sleeping about 40 people and well-equipped. While it is often used by commercial groups such as Brathay during the week and is let to other clubs at weekends, there is always a private room available for up to six members, and the hut is reserved for club use over bank holiday weekends. There are also traditional annual meets such as the Bonfire Meet and Families Meet, stories of which will no doubt be related with affection to their children by today's young members when they themselves become parents.

We also have a hut below the Moelwyn crags in Snowdonia. A few years ago the Liverpool M.C., who had acquired and developed the little terraced house on the edge of Tan-y-Grisiau, had reached such a low ebb that I believe committee meetings weren't quorate when the entire club membership was there. They suggested merging with LC&CC. Since then the hut has had a bit of a makeover, with a new extension at the rear making for better personal hygiene on the part of visitors. The hut, named Dan-y-Mynydd (meaning Mountain Foot, I believe) is much more intimate (cramped?) than Tranearth, but will sleep a dozen. All the joys of the Moelwyn Crags are on the doorstep, with the major crags being about a 20 minute walk from the front door.

What about club activities? Every weekend there is something going on with a caving trip every 2 or 3 weeks as well. Sometimes there are even two climbing meets on the same day. There are weekend meets in the Lakes and Wales, holiday weekend trips to Scotland, Pembroke, Cornwall, etc. As well as trad rock climbing there are visits to warm bolted rock in Kalymnos, Mallorca and Sardinia, and if you don't like it hot there are winter visits to Norway, The Alps and Scotland to play around on solid water. In addition, the summer months see evening meets (mainly in Lancashire quarries) which are ideal for potential members to come along and see if they like us.

All grades of climber are catered for, though we have a few hot-shots putting up new routes with lots of E-points, most members climb in the Severe to E2 range most of the time. We welcome new members very warmly whatever their age or experience, and anyone over 18 is invited to come on a meet or two to see if they'd fancy joining. To become a full member you must be a functioning climber or caver (rather than just the eternal passenger) but we admit graduate (provisional) members who are just feeling their way into climbing and such people should not feel overawed or nervous about joining. You will find you get a lot of help and encouragement from established members who are all keen to see "new blood" entering the club. If you are interested to find out more about the club and what we get up to visit [www.lcccc.org.uk](http://www.lcccc.org.uk) (I never cease to wonder that we beat Lancashire County Cricket Club to that name!) where there is link to the club Newsletter which appears every two months. There you'll find details of future meets and reports of recent meets to whet your appetite. Hope to see you on the crag, and remember - a stranger is just a friend you haven't met yet.



Ken Tebay climbing *The Devils Appendix*

***Photos required  
urgently!***

This is for all you budding photographers out there – the production for the new Lancashire Rock guidebook is well underway, however Images will be crucial to this guide, so if you climb in the area, please do your best to take good action photos and crags shots – both types are needed - to help the cause along. These photos need to be 7 megapixels due to the print resolution. Please contact the following address if you can help - this is the only issue holding up publication of the guide: [Les.Ainsworth@Synergy-ergs.com](mailto:Les.Ainsworth@Synergy-ergs.com)