A large, reddish-brown rock face with yellow-green lichen, featuring three rock climbers. The rock is textured and has several horizontal cracks. The climbers are wearing blue shirts and white helmets. The background shows a valley with green vegetation and a blue sky.

BLOUBERG

A CLIMBER'S GUIDE TO LIMPOPO BIG WALLING, SOUTH AFRICA

By Hector Pringle
SIXTH EDITION
2011

Cover Photo: Hector Pringle on the 7th pitch of Teddy Bears' Picnic. Photo by Chris Ziranek

DISCLAIMER

Climbing is a potentially dangerous sport with significant risk of personal injury or even death. Do not partake in climbing unless you have had proper and professional instruction. Before any climbing trip, and particularly to Blouberg, you should become familiar with the risks and take responsibility for your own safety and that of those climbing with you.

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In the early 1990's, a Blouberg route guide was published for the first time by Southern Rock, with Mike Cartwright as the driving force. The Southern Rock guide was, for the most part, a compilation of route descriptions (RD's) which had appeared in Mountain Club of South Africa (MCSA) Journals since the 1960's. The accuracy of much of the information contained in the Southern Rock guide has been proven through use, and so most of the RD's from that guide have been re-published here, with little or no editing. Mike Cartwright has given his express permission for these RD's to be used and published free on the internet. Wherever possible, the Southern Rock RD's have been checked against the original RD's from the MCSA Journals. These Journals have provided a wealth of information over the years, and reference has been made in the guide to the relevant Journals when applicable. Again, any information used from MCSA Journals, has been reproduced here with the express permission of the MCSA. Many of the photographs in this guide are being published for the first time, and in each case the photographer is acknowledged. Some photos were first published in MCSA Journals, and in these cases, the relevant Journal, as well as the photographer is acknowledged. Again, all photos are included with the express permission of the photographers and / or publishers. **It is the intention of the authors and editors of this guide that it is published free on the internet for the benefit of climbers. All contributions have been made free of charge. This guide may be printed, copied and distributed free, but under no circumstances may the guide or any part thereof, be sold or distributed for financial gain, except to recoup printing and binding costs.**

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INTRODUCTION

“To Climb at Blouberg is to touch the soul of rock climbing.” (Charles Edelstein, 1997 MCSA Journal). Blouberg has a mythical feel to it, with its history engraved into its ridges, plateaus and valleys, and more recently into its cliff faces. For some people, the mountain is huge and ominous, shaking off all attempts, even on the walk up. It has always had that aura of a place only the brave or stupid go. Given a bit of time, however, and it starts to relinquish its secrets. The obscure paths and tortured boulders gradually become familiar and distinct. The cozy bivouac spots, and comfy ledges start to form a pattern, and the links between the different routes become obvious.

I have been coming to Blouberg now for more than a decade. I've had my fair share of epics and adventures, good times and really bad times, but it truly is starting to feel like home. I always seem to climb my best 200m off the deck with arms starting to tire, and mind starting to expand, lulled by the gentle cow bells and baboon cries far below. I have found, and continue to find, the soul of rock climbing on the Big Blue Mountain. I hope that this guide will inspire and motivate others to step off the beaten path a little bit and find out what African climbing is all about.

The route descriptions in this guide are based for the most part on the RD's in the old, out-of-print, Southern Rock route guide. Huge thanks to Mike Cartwright for making these available for this guide.



ACCESS CONDITIONS

Blouberg is owned as a tribal trust by the Tswana-speaking Hananwa tribe. Thus any climbing or other activities are by the good grace of the tribe. As things now stand, access onto the mountain itself is free, with payment usually being made for parking. Please treat the locals with respect. The tribe has been living on the mountain for at least 200 years so they call the shots! There are numerous kraals up the sides of the mountain and I have even, after staggering up the three hour slog sweating and cursing, seen big mamas calmly starting the descent from the middle plateau with huge bundles of thatch on their heads. None of these people have ever given problems, so be courteous.

GETTING THERE

There are two main walk-ins to the Big Blue Mountain. The Frans' Kraal route is the older of the two and is the only route described in this guide. The African Ivory route is the alternative. For either walk, it is highly recommended to take someone who's done it before to avoid a big adventure. The drive is more or less the same for both walk-ins, apart from the last section on dirt. The Frans' Kraal route tackles the mountain from the East, while African Ivory comes in from the South.



Men's Health – trying to shelter on a particularly memorable walk-in

Photo by Graham Terrell

GENERAL MOUNTAIN LAYOUT

The mountain of Blouberg forms an alpine oasis in a fairly densely populated rural plain. The mountain is one of the last remaining sources of commodities such as firewood and decent grazing in the area. There are therefore hundreds of footpaths, used by the locals, criss-crossing the slopes of the mountain. Many of the smaller paths are liable to change from year to year as the locals shift their operations and since both walk-ins use a combination of these footpaths, changed paths is one of the reasons so many people get lost. Another reason is that the lower slopes are covered by a dense indigenous forest. It can be difficult to find a viewpoint through the trees to get your bearings. The best way to avoid getting lost is to get a sense of the structure of the mountain, and to follow mountain features rather than paths.

Basically Blouberg consists of the main bulk of the mountain, including the summit and the North wall, surrounded to the east by three prominent subsidiary peaks known as the Donjons. All four peaks rise out of an extensive plateau, known as the lower plateau, about 400 m above the level of the surrounding plain. This plateau is protected to the east and south by a band of 50 to 100 m cliffs. A few valleys and ridges breach these cliffs, and allow access to the lower plateau. To the southwest of the main peak of Blouberg, the lower plateau forms a hanging valley with another prominent peak.

The centre of operations for most Blouberg trips is the valley formed between the South Donjon and the main peak. The East and North Donjons are more substantially separated from the main peak, and some exploring and bundu bashing is required to get to their summits.

FRANS' KRAAL

DRIVING

Head to Polokwane (formerly Pietersburg). When coming in from the south on the N1:

- At the massive, ugly traffic circle with strange slogans turn left to Mogwadi (formerly Dendron) on the R521 (this road ultimately goes to Zimbabwe).
- After 3.7 km turn right, again to Mogwadi (Dendron) and the R521.
- After 1.9 km turn left to Mogwadi (Dendron) onto the R521.
- Head north on the R521. After 60 km you'll pass Mogwadi (Dendron) (blink and its gone).
- Continue straight on the R521, heading North. Look out for signs such as "Meanderthal" and "Tropic of Capricorn".
- 22 km after Mogwadi you'll pass the sign for "Mara Research Station".
- 24 km after Mogwadi is the turn-off to the left (west) onto a dirt road, labelled "Blouberg". There used to be two signs, but the second one now resides proudly in the WITS Mountain Club clubroom.

- Travel along the good dirt road between game fences for 15.2 km to an intersection with a big dirt road.
- Cross the big road, and make a small dog-leg to continue west as before. You will see the mountain directly ahead now.
- After 5.6 km the road makes a sharp curve right, then another sharp curve left, just after a big lonely tree standing in a dust patch just to the left of the road. There is a church on the right half way through the S-bend.
- Carry on another 4 km, over a bridge to a T-junction at a school.
- Follow the sign right to “The Glade”. Almost immediately you’ll go through a concrete-based dip through a river bed.
- Follow the deteriorating dirt road for a further 6.2 km (measured from the T-junction), as it curves gradually left (west) around the mountain to arrive at Isaac’s house (Frans’ Kraal).

GPS: Datum WGS84

S23 04 57.2

E 29 02 18.5



Where to dude? Somewhere near Bochum

Photo by Hector Pringle

Isaac is the trusty car guard and has taken over the car watching business from his uncle, Frans. Isaac’s property contains a house, a rondawel, a small mielie patch and a white wrought iron gate. When arriving, stop your car outside the property first, and ask Isaac or his wife if you can park. Isaac speaks passable English and Afrikaans. Let him show you where you can park, and agree on a fee. The usual is R20 per night, but if he asks for more that’s his prerogative. If you arrive late at night, its best not to wake him up. Try be quiet, and drive your car through the gate and around the house to park intelligently and out of the way near the mielie patch.



Africa parking

Photo by Hector Pringle

There are often industrious entrepreneurs who try their luck on you at the parking. The only person you should pay for parking is Isaac himself. It is inadvisable to pay someone to act as a porter, as they usually lose interest pretty quickly. If you want, you can usually negotiate for a guide, but make it clear where you want to go and that payment will only be made when you get there.

WALKING

The general idea:

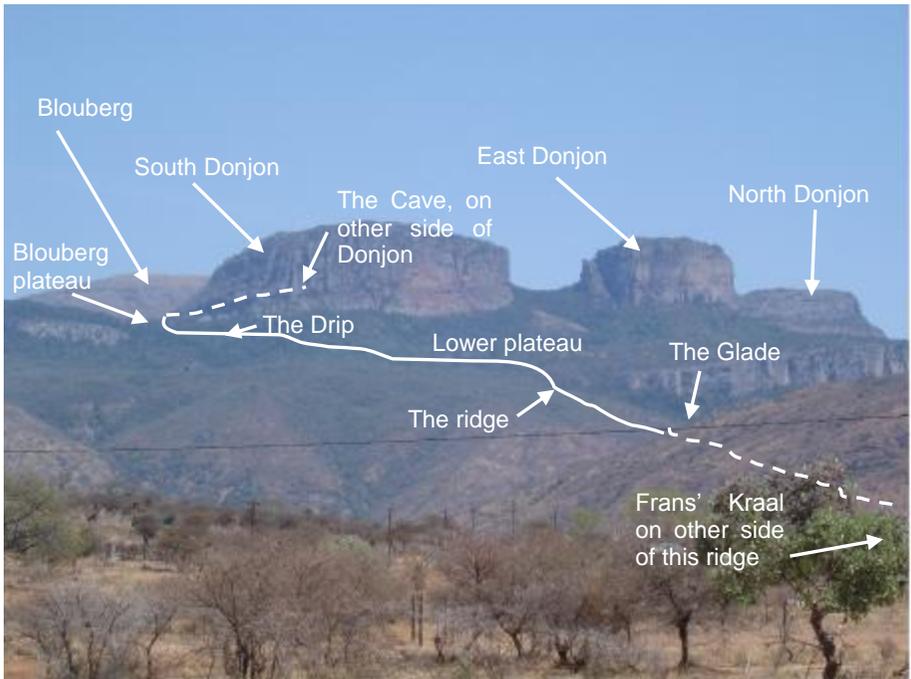
Head up the prominent valley (The Glade) directly above Frans' Kraal. About halfway up the valley towards the lower band of cliffs, the valley steepens sharply. At this point the route leaves the valley and goes up onto the ridge forming the true right side of the valley. The ridge is followed to where it breaks through to the south (left, looking up) of the cliffs. This puts one on the lower plateau. Directly above is the East Donjon, with the South Donjon to the left of it. The South Donjon is easily recognised by its large, blank, orange east-facing wall. The route follows the plateau under this wall for a short way, and then cuts diagonally up leftwards through the forest to the southern shoulder of the Donjon. Above the shoulder one crosses the Blouberg plateau to get to the kloof leading to the cave.

In detail:

The approximate times given are from the start of the walk.

From Isaac's house walk west down the road towards the mountain. Cross the small river at big smooth boulders. Carry on along the stonking path until, just after entering the thorn tree forest, turn right onto the massive path that goes up the hill. Follow the path to a kraal on your RHS. Take the path that veers left (make sure you

don't take the lower path left as this leads into thorn thickets). Follow a contour, until it veers right up the hill, next to the main river (usually running). The path becomes steep, staying on the true left of the river, until it levels off slightly and crosses the river. It usually takes 15-30 mins to get to this point.



Frans' Kraal walk up, taken from the road to Frans' Kraal, just before the concrete dip
 Photo by Hector Pringle

There is a very well worn path on the other side of the river, heading south (i.e. away from the river). This is the landmark that you've crossed the river in the correct place. If you cross too high or too low you will end up thrashing around in thorn trees.

Head slightly left through the trees to find a good path that gradually takes you onto a ridge. A bit up this path it suddenly opens up and you get a good view of the plain below. Stick to the right (there are many paths splitting and joining - they all go more or less the same way, except for the left most one which goes the wrong way). You're now heading due west again, up a steady ridge. This path is eroded at times. Eventually, it levels off, goes through a small dip past a little stream, and then up a short steep, boulder hopping section through trees to a contour path running north-south. Turn left (south) onto the contour. It usually takes an hour to get here.

Walk along the contour path to a clearing. Follow the path through the next thicket into another clearing. Pay attention now. Somewhere in the forest off to your right is a devious path. You will need to walk to the edge of the clearing about 50m from the

contour path to find this. It is not obvious and is often quite overgrown. Look out for some yellow reflective tape around a small tree on the edge of the clearing.

Follow the path as it winds through the forest, consistently heading up and left. At a stage you pop out of the forest with an embankment on your right and a thorn-tree fence on your left. **DO NOT FOLLOW THE MAIN PATH THAT VEERS RIGHT HERE.** Instead, follow the less distinct path that veers left next to the thorn fence. After about 50m look out for a path off to the right into the forest. **MAKE SURE YOU FIND THIS PATH.** Once you're on it you follow it up and left for quite a way to get to the Drip in a beautiful yellowwood forest.

The biggest tree around marks the start of the next section of the walk. It usually takes about 1hr30 to get to the Drip.

From behind the big tree, find the path over the boulders and over a big fallen yellowwood trunk. The path starts off heading south, then turns sharp right (west) and goes very steeply up the boulders. In summer this path can be overgrown. At the top of the steep stuff is a big boulder cave. Follow the path into the thorn tree forest. You can't really go wrong here. After about fifteen minutes you should pop out the trees onto the beautiful Blouberg plateau. It usually takes about 2 hours to get to the plateau.

Choose your own way across the plateau. There is one path that goes at a low level (left) and another easier one, if you can find it, at a high level (right). Just head in the general direction of the crags due west. You'll find the river immediately below the crags. Turn upstream (right) and follow the river up the little kloof. Climb out on the true right of the kloof. Follow the path up the little valley, veer rightwards over a small ridge into a second small valley, and climb onto the ridge on the other side. Follow this ridge up to a big boulder. Climb the boulder and contour right to The Cave.

The whole walk usually takes between 2hr30 and 4hrs. Apart from on the final plateau the paths are solid the whole way. The many splits and joins, however, mean that the route is not obvious.



The Blouberg plateau looking East. The walk up from the drip pops out of the forest on the extreme left and meanders through the boulders towards the camera
Photo by Hector Pringle

AFRICAN IVORY

I've only done this walk once, and we took the path less travelled, so find someone who knows the way to guide you. By all accounts, Frans' Kraal is the way to go!

LIMPOPO AIR

For the adventurous there is an exciting and quicker access – just an hour and a half from Johannesburg to the **Cave!** In June 2006, James Pitman and Mariaan Pretorius cleared an airstrip on the plateau near the top pools. A few weeks later they were back, in a light aircraft and a microlight! The approach is spectacular to say the least: fly straight at the 300m wall to the left of the ramp, clearing it by a few meters, then touch down and try stop before smashing into the boulders at the end of the strip. Only for experienced pilots! They documented their flight in the movie *No Need for Parking*.



Blouberg International – looking north along the airstrip. The top of the North Donjon is just visible to the right

Photo by Hector Pringle

CAMPING

You camp where you please but the following will probably be the most comfortable:

The Cave: For climbers, this is the easiest and best spot. It is a short walk from the **Top Pools** and the top of **The Ramp**. See walking directions to get here. The cave is completely sheltered from wind and rain and is a very friendly place to hang out. It can sleep 4 to 6 comfortably, but more could cram in if necessary.

The Grotto: This is a nifty hidden cave between the **The Cave** and the lower pools. Just before entering the little kloof from the bottom, contour around to the left (west) for some 50 metres. **The Grotto** is hidden behind a big tree, sleeps 8-10 at a squeeze and is guaranteed to be dry, even when **The Cave** isn't. It is a bit claustrophobic though.

Lower Campsite: A river winds across the western extremity of the Blouberg plateau, forming some nice swimming potholes and pools. There are many places to camp on the grass near these pools. This spot is directly below the BAPM buttress.

The Top Plateau: Just before the top of **The Ramp** there is a little grassy plateau with some great campsites. It can be a bit exposed to wind and mist though. See directions for the NORTH WALL to get here. The **Top Pools** are found here.

Hey Jude Pools: This spot is near the summit, at the top of the NORTH WALL. This is a stunning camp spot and the **Rap Route** provides a convenient access to the base of the wall. See notes below on water at this spot.

There are a few other secret spots – find them yourself!



Beware of the Beast in the cave!

Photo by Hector Pringle

WATER

NEAR THE CAVE

Water is available year round on Blouberg. Some winters the river can be a bit stagnant and nasty so chlorine pills might be a good idea, but generally water is no problem. If the river looks dodgy, the best place to fill up is the big pool directly below the BAPM buttress. To get there from **The Cave**, head down the little kloof, and stick in the river bed, until some slabs lead down to the pool and shady tree.

During most summers, the **Top Pools** have potable water. In really good summers one can get water from **The Slot**, which is about 75m south of the cave, at the same contour level.



Too much water – contemplating perfect Irish climbing weather

Photo by Hector Pringle

ON THE SUMMIT

During most summers, and even some winters, water can be found in the pools at the top of HEY JUDE. This is great after a baking day on the wall. Any of the routes heading up the NORTH WALL to the right (west) of GREAT GULLEY will top out near these pools. If you don't have a recent report on the state of these pools, then don't count on there being water here!

RESCUE AND SAFETY

The Magaliesberg and Johannesburg Sections of the MCSA have an excellent Search and Rescue team who service the old Transvaal area of SA. Always take a cell phone loaded with the following numbers:

1st Call Rescue Organiser 074 125 1385

2nd Call Rescue Organiser 074 163 3952

If the above fails try the following:

Rob Thomas 082-652-1490

Sean Buchanan 082-378-2032

Dr Vernon Wessels 082-807-6872

If the above fails try the following:

011 315 0203 and State that you have a MOUNTAIN RESCUE EMERGENCY

If the operator does not understand ask them to call for the Medical Officer on duty.

There is good reception for all three major networks from many spots on the mountain, including from all routes on the NORTH WALL. There have been a number of epic helicopter rescues from both the base of the wall and off routes. The success of such rescues is very dependant on early call-out, which can only be done with a cell phone.

GIVE THE FOLLOWING INFORMATION:

1. YOUR NAME
2. THE PHONE NUMBER YOU ARE PHONING FROM
3. WHAT HAPPENED AND WHEN
4. NUMBER OF VICTIM(S), NAMES AND THEIR INJURIES
5. CONDITION OF PERSON(S)
6. EXACT LOCATION (AREA, ROUTE NAME, PITCH NUMBER)
7. LOCAL WEATHER
8. FIRST AID GIVEN

STAY AT THE PHONE. IF NECESSARY SEND SOMEONE BACK.

FIRST AID DUMP

There is a first aid dump on the mountain which usually contains bandages, fluids and other emergency equipment.

WHEN STANDING AT THE TOP OF THE RAMP LOOKING AT THE NORTH WALL, YOU WILL SEE A GULLEY ON THE LEFT. THE DUMP IS IN THIS GULLEY.

A good medical aid is also a must. The bill for helicopter rescue is footed by the person being rescued, and you really don't want to end up paying a few hundred thousand rand for the direct route home.

Read BROKEN ON BLOUBERG in the STORIES section to find out what happens when things go wrong.



View from the cave after torrential flooding

Photo by Hector Pringle



Playing chess in the cave

Photo by Graham Terrell

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

GRADES

The modern South African grading system is used in this guide. Aid grades are based on the Yosemite aid scale (A1 to A5). Where a route has been opened with aid and subsequently freed, the free grade is given first, with the aid grade in brackets. The same applies to individual pitches on the climb.

South Africa has a rich and colourful trad climbing history, and the old SA grading system was an integral part of this. These grades often give a valuable insight into the “severity” of a pitch. The system is alpha-numeric with three numbers for every letter (i.e. F1, F2, F3, G1, ...) and is quite coarse. One grade difference on this system is roughly equal to two on the modern SA system. For many years the “G” grade was considered to be the upper limit of the system, and consequently many routes graded G1, G2 or G3 can be brutal. Often the G grade was assigned to a particularly strenuous or “thrutchy” pitch. When the conversion to the modern system occurred in the mid 1980’s, the grades for many of these routes were “translated” directly. This doesn’t necessarily mean that the modern technical grade of the pitch is inaccurate. The old grade does, however, indicate the effort required to get up it!

To add a bit of colour to some of the older routes in this guide, the original SA grades have been included in brackets after each pitch. Routes such as YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE have high adventure factor, and the old grades are thus appropriate.

As with any route description, all grades here are subjective. Most of the grades have been reached by consensus over a few years. There is a perception that grading at Blouberg tends to be harsh. This is not the Magaliesberg and often the exposure and isolation add to the psychological grade of a particular pitch, even though the technical grade is within your limits. The grading of some of the easier pitches (in the 14 to 17 range) might be a bit off. Take for instance the notorious first pitch of HEY JUDE (16) (its easy if you do it right!). Many of these routes were opened by guys climbing solid 24, so some discrepancies on the easier stuff are inevitable. Like any place, Blouberg has a particular “feel” and the grades seem a bit easier after a couple of routes. In a few cases, I’ve changed the grades on the easier pitches from the consensus grades given by the Blouberg pioneers. These changes are small and have not affected the overall route grades.

The grade conversion chart on the next page is reproduced here courtesy of the SA Climbing Info Network (SACIN – www.saclimb.co.za). The grade conversions have been reached by consensus, but are obviously still subjective.

South Africa	OLD SA	France	Germany/USA	Ukraine	England	Australia	Sweden	Poland	Denmark	Ukraine	Finland	Brazil	Kyrgyzstan		
5	C	1		I	HVD		6	1	I	1B			1A		
10	E2	2		II			9	2	II	2A					
11	E3	3	5.6	III	MS	4c	11	3	III	2B			1B		
12	F1	4	5.7	IV	S		12	4-/+	IV	3A					
13	F1	4	5.7	IV	S		12	4-/+	IV	3B					
14	F2	5a	5.8	V-	VS	5a	13	5-	V-	4	3	4	2A		
15	F2	5a	5.8	V			14	5	V	4+	4B	4			
16	F2	5a	5.8	V			14	5	V	4+	4B	4			
17	F3	5b	5.9	V+	HVS		15	5+	V+	V-	5A	4+	5	2B	
18	G1	5c	5.10a	VI-		5b	16	6-	VI	V+	5A	5-	6a	2B	
19	G1	6a	5.10b	VI	E1		17	6-	VI	VI-	5B	5	6b	3A	
20	G2	6a+	5.10c	VI+	E2		18	6	VI+	VI	5B	5+	6c	3B	
21	G2	6a+	5.10c	VI+	E2		19	6	VI+	VI	5B	6-	6c	3B	
22	G3	6b	5.10d	VII-		5c	20	6+	VI.1	VI+		6	7a	3B	
22	G3	6b+	5.11a	VII	E3		21	7-	VI.1+	VII-	6A	6	7a	4A	
23	H1	6c	5.11b	VII+			22	7-	VI.2	VII		6+	7b	4A	
24	H1	6c+	5.11c	VII+		6a	22	7-	VI.2	VII		6+	7b	4A	
25	H2	7a	5.11d	VIII-	E4		23	7	VI.2+	VII+		7-	7c	4B	
26	H3	7a+	5.12a	VIII	E5		24	7+	VI.3	VII-		7	8a	4B	
27	H3	7b	5.12b	VIII	E5		24	7+	VI.3	VII-		7	8a	4B	
28	I1	7b+	5.12c	VIII+		6b	25	8-	VI.3+	VIII		7+	8b	5A	
28	I1	7c	5.12d	IX-	E6		26	8-	VI.4	VIII+		8-	8c	5A	
29	I2	7c+	5.13a	IX			27	8	VI.4+		6B	8	9a	5B	
30	I3	8a	5.13b	IX+	E7	6c	28	8+	VI.5			8+	9b	5B	
31	I3	8a+	5.13c	X-			29	9-	VI.5+			9-	9c	6A	
32	J	8b	5.13d	X	E8		30	9	VI.6				10a	6A	
33	J	8b+	5.14a	X	E8		31	9	VI.6				10b	6A	
34	J	8c	5.14b	X+	E9	7a	32	9+					10c	6B	
35	J	8c+	5.14c	XI-			33								6B
36	J	9a	5.14d	XI	E10	7b									
37	J	9a+		XI+											
38	J	9b													

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Grade conversion chart

Courtesy of SA Climbing Info Network (www.saclimb.co.za)

STAR RATING

The quality of a route is indicated by a star rating out of five as follows:

- * Don't bother. Seriously grotty, chossy stuff with loads of bats
- ** Poor route. Fair amounts of choss and bush. Perhaps contrived
- *** Good route
- **** Very good route. Perhaps a classic
- ***** Brilliant. Absolute classic.

Like grades, the quality of a route is very subjective. For some of the routes, the ratings given here differ from the ratings of the previous generation. A good example is TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC which I rate as one of the best routes at Blouberg, but which previously only picked up three stars. Over time some routes have attained classic status, due to their continued popularity and / or unique feel. A route such as LAST MOON used to be rated *** but I think an extra star is justified.

Even routes with low star ratings can be enjoyed, if climbed with the right frame of mind. GULLEY CORNER and GREAT GULLEY might be grovelly, but they are never boring!

LAYOUT

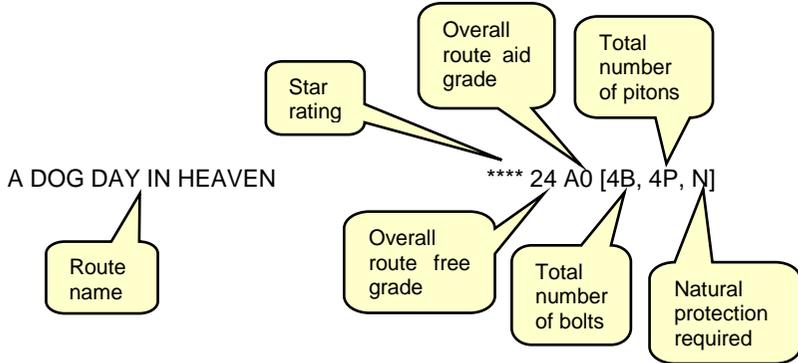
There are many different crags at Blouberg. The main attraction is obviously the NORTH WALL, but the smaller crags closer to the cave can be a lot of fun on a "rest" day. The crags follow on sequentially in (hopefully) a logical way, starting from those lower down the river (i.e. BAPM Butress) and then working up past the cave. The Donjons are then listed, and finally the NORTH WALL.

For each crag the height, aspect and access vital statistics are given. Descent descriptions are usually given under access. For most crags, the routes are listed left to right. Photo topo's are also included for many of the smaller crags. Due to the number of routes on the NORTH WALL, this crag has been split into seven distinct areas. A description of the area precedes the RD's for each of these.

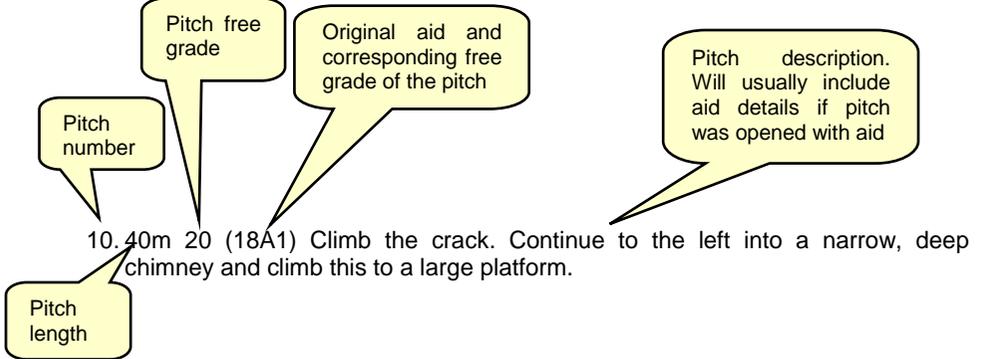
As outlined in the previous section, a wealth of information is often wrapped up in the grading of the route. For this reason, and in the interests of tradition, as much grading information has been retained as possible. Often, the original RD's as first published in MCSA Journals vary drastically from the "modern" descriptions. A classic example is MOONLIGHT, where the original 21 pitch route description first published in 1966 has been condensed into 6 concise pitches. An RD author is sandwiched between two forces: providing enough detail for the route of first ascent to be consistently found and followed; and avoiding unwieldy descriptions bogged down in detail that ultimately become cryptic. Hopefully the balance has been struck here.

If a route was opened with aid and subsequently freed, the aiding description is usually retained. The original aid and corresponding free grade will then be given in brackets.

The typical layout for a route name is given below.



A typical pitch description would be:



Many of the RD's are followed by notes which include information about gear requirements, style of first ascent, history of the route and other useful or interesting information. Where accounts of the first ascent, or of subsequent interesting ascents are available, these have been referenced. All the stories and accounts can be found in the last section of the guide. The opening party and date of first ascent are included at the end of each RD.

Wherever possible, RD's are limited to one page so that they can be printed and easily referred to on a route (watching your four bits of precious paper being blown in different directions halfway up the wall is no fun!). As many pictures as possible have been included to help with getting psyched!

ABBREVIATIONS

- 2B – This shows the number of bolts on a mixed route. Some of the bolts on Blouberg were placed a long time ago and can't be trusted. A note will usually indicate how good a particular bolt is.
- BB: – Bolted by
- F – Fixed gear. Again, fixed gear is often dubious.
- FA: – First ascent by
- FFA: – First free ascent by
- N – Natural protection required. This applies to almost every route.
- 1P – The number of pitons or pegs. As with bolts, these can be dubious.
- R – Runout, risky falls



Looking East between the East and South Donjons

Photo by Hector Pringle

ETHICS

BOLTING

Blouberg is primarily a trad climbing area. The logistics of the place (fortunately) mean that it can never really become a crowded sport venue. Bolts have been placed on some of the routes, and there are even a few fully bolted short routes around, but any new bolt placements should be made with discretion. Please keep in mind the character of the climbing before placing any new bolts. Routes here tend to be big and wild, and bolts should not detract from this. The general consensus amongst many of the regular Blouberg first ascensionists is that a plumb 400m route should not be stopped by a 10m section with no protection. Just make sure that the bolted pitch is of excellent quality, and that any bolts placed are absolutely essential to stop a death fall. Try steer clear of fully bolted pitches. They are generally unnecessary, as are bolted stances.

People have different opinions about bolting single pitch routes on Blouberg. Personally I don't think its necessary or called for because of the limited number of ascents such routes will get. There is much more scope for mixed routes that have one or two bolts to protect a blank section. If in doubt, however, don't bolt!

Many of the existing bolts on Blouberg are very old and suspect. If anyone has the time and inclination it would be great if these could be replaced. The high, dry air on the mountain means that stainless steel is ideal. When replacing bolts, keep the new ones close to the old, and don't add any extra bolts. Also, try remove as much of the old bolt as possible.

On no account must any of the existing routes be tampered with by retro-bolting. Respect the style of first ascent, and if you're too scared to do a particular pitch, then go away and get stronger. Don't bring the route down to your level.



Old and new – scary 5mm nut and hanger replaced on Teddy Bears' Picnic

Photo by Hector Pringle

STYLE OF ASCENT

Wherever possible the style of first ascent of various routes has been included in the RD's. Obviously, the goal of any subsequent ascensionist is to climb the route in at least as good a style as the opening party. Most of the earlier routes were opened ground up in either a single push or over a few trips. LAST MOON and SOMETHING OF VALUE are prime examples of good route finding and tenacity resulting in high quality lines. As the route density increased, it became harder and harder to force the routes ground up. The use of fixed lines and traverses onto the climb from other routes resulted in some of the harder quality routes such as EIGHT MILES HIGH and RAZOR'S EDGE being opened. Some real gems, like PSYCHO REPTILE, were literally "unearthed" after repeated abseil forays by many people.

There is still a lot of room for style improvement on many routes. Many of the current aid pitches can go free, and some of the harder routes on the Wall of White Light still need single day ascents.



Barent "B-man" Engelbrecht styling on the Grassy Ledge

Photo by Hector Pringle

BOULDERING

There is plenty of bouldering to be found on the lower plateau, in the Avalon valley and especially in the Maze. Take your shoes, a chalk bag and a thermos of tea on a rest day and go explore.



Dominique Dix-Peek bouldering in the maze while Kaja shouts the odds

Photo by Hector Pringle



Benito resting after a heavy bouldering session!

ROUTES

NEAR THE CAVE

BAPM AREA

These routes go up the striking buttress above the pools of the lower campsite. When looking south from the cave, this buttress is seen in profile. The routes are about 3 to 4 pitches. Some mossy lichen towards the top of some of the routes is character building. The major feature of this buttress is the “candleflame” – two curving cracks merging into one about a third of the way up. BAPM climbs the left hand side of the candleflame. Routes are listed left to right.

HEIGHT

15-80 Metres

ACCESS

From the cave head down the river and small kloof. Just before the big, shady pool, break right and head up to the base of the crag. Descent is either by rapping off 2 bolts at the top of BAPM (no chains here, so bring some ab-cord or leaver-biners), or by scrambling down the northern side of the buttress to gain a very wide, flat ledge. It is possible to walk/scramble all the way along this contour to reach the cave. Expect a bit of bush whacking.

ASPECT

The crag faces east and therefore picks up morning sun. Good shade in the afternoon.

VROOM

16 ** [N]

About 50m to the left of the start of BAPM are a series of big red overhangs. The route takes a line through these, finally traversing out to the right. Scramble to a big ledge beneath the overhangs. Start to the right, beneath a steep, broken recess.

1. Pull up into recess then move out immediately right onto ledge. Continue up to another recess & up this to a roof. Rail left under the roof to a ledge. From right-hand side of the ledge, pull up into a short off-width crack and climb this to the roof. Traverse to the right under the roof to a grassy ledge. Scramble to the top.

FA: S. Mallory, M. Giddy, 1983.

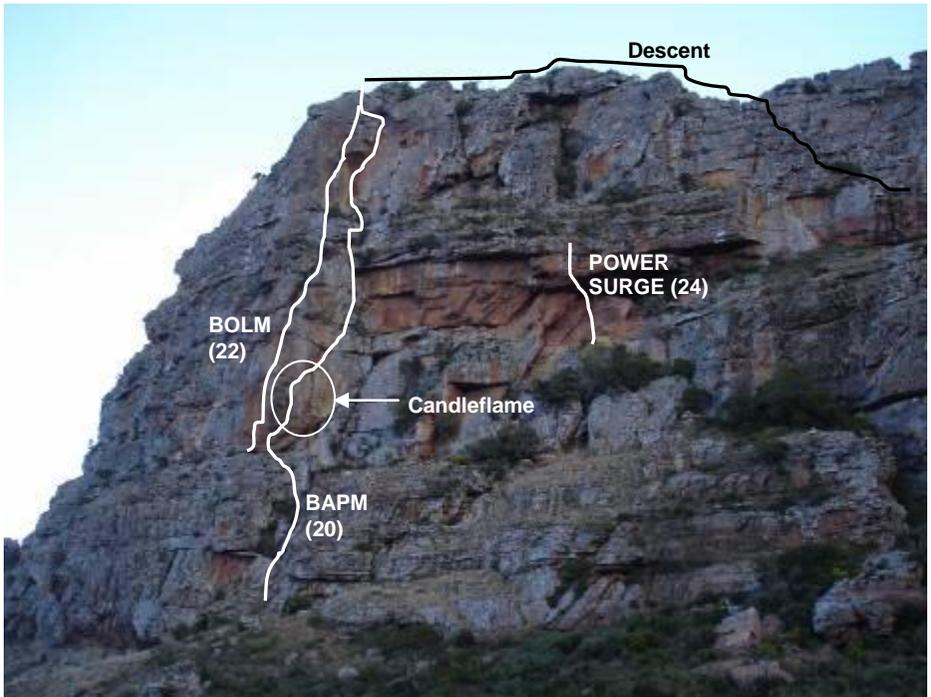
ARTHUR

15 ** [N]

This route climbs the easy rock to the left of BAPM.

1. 30m 10 Diagonally left then up to blocks on ledge.
2. 30m 13 Left along ledge then up grey face to tree on ledge.
3. 30m 12 Traverse right along ledge, then diagonally right to tree on next ledge.
4. 30m 15 Move 7m right along ledge then up to beneath overhang. Traverse some distance left, then up (crux) to the top.

FA: Pete van Miarop, Dave Cretchley, Maevo Makfer, 1965-05-30.



BAPM Buttress from the Blouberg Plateau

Photo by Hector Pringle

BOLTM

22 *** [3B, N, A]

Scramble up to the start of BAPM. On the orange face up and to the left of the candleflame is a bolt. Start 5m to the left of BAPM, below the obvious corner.

1. 35m 22: Climb the corner to a small ledge. Traverse the orange face past the bolt (tricky), to the right arête. Climb straight up past another bolt to an overhang. Pull strenuously through the overhang on the right and diagonally up the ramp to the right in the groove above. Climb easily to a tree belay. Scramble to the base of BAPM's second pitch.
2. 22m 21 Climb the crack just to the left of BAPM until it peters out. Continue to the right and up past a bolt. Take care over the huge blocks and lichen and finish as for BAPM.

Notes:

1. Check out BLOUBERG: MY BACKYARD in the STORIES section for an account of the FA.

FA:

Pitch 1: Charles Edelstein and D. van Zyl, circa 1990.

Pitch 2: Charles Edelstein and George Mallory, 28 December 1997.

BAPM

21 *** [N, A]

BAPM takes a fairly direct line up the buttress opposite the deep 'pothole pool'. Scramble up to small flat overhangs on the lower grey section of the buttress.

1. 15m 10 Climb past the overhangs on the left, step to the right and continue straight up to a large ledge below steep red and black rock.
2. 25m 19 Climb up 2m then underclimbing to the right to the left hand side of two cracks which form the candleflame shape as seen from below. Move up to the top of the 'flame' and continue up to the right to belay on a small ledge next to a tree.
3. 25m 7 Move around to the right into the main corner, which is followed to large ledges (this portion is common with MARTHA). Climb to the right to the ledge at the foot of the appealing final crack, which runs up a zone of red rock right of an overhang.
4. 25m 21 Follow the crack as it curves up to the right. When it fades, move up and to the left beneath the grey overhang. Traverse to the left past a dubious block until the top can be reached by climbing steep grey, lichen-covered rock (18A1).

Notes:

1. It makes sense to do this route in two pitches – scramble past the 1st pitch on the right, and link pitches 2 and 3.
2. Check out BLOUBERG: MY BACKYARD in the STORIES section for an account of the FA.

FA: Charles Edelstein, Kevin Smith, Ronnie van Dijk, 1980.



Foul weather view of BAPM buttress

Photo by Hector Pringle



Paul Fatti leading past the candleflame on the second pitch of BAPM (19)

Photo by Hector Pringle

MARTHA

12 ** [N]

This route climbs the easy rock to the right of BAPM, then crosses BAPM and ARTHUR and tops out far to the left.

1. 15m 10 Diagonally up right then back left to ledge beneath BAPM's 2nd pitch.
2. 30m 12 Climb the main diagonal corner to the right of the candleflame then straight up short steep face to a small stance.
3. 20m 12 Move up and left to the big ledge below BAPM's top pitch.
4. 40m 11 Traverse about 30m left (crossing BAPM and ARTHUR) and pick the easiest line to the top.

FA: Paul Venter, Dave Wildman, Tim Ferguson, 1965-05-30.

POWER SURGE

24 *** [N, P, F]

Takes the rail through the monster roof about 50m to the right of BAPM. Scramble right up to the roof to belay.

1. 15m 24 Rail out past fixed hex, pegs and wire and pull through to a good flake above the lip. Down climb to the fixed wire and lower off.

Note: Gear required: 4 draws for the route. Friend 1, Friend 1.5, and large wires for the belay. The fixed gear might be dubious by now. Handle with care.

FA: Roger Natrass, Mike Cartwright, 1990.

KLOOF AREA

This stunning mini-kloof has some very striking and powerful lines. The climbing is very steep. Routes are listed left to right.

HEIGHT

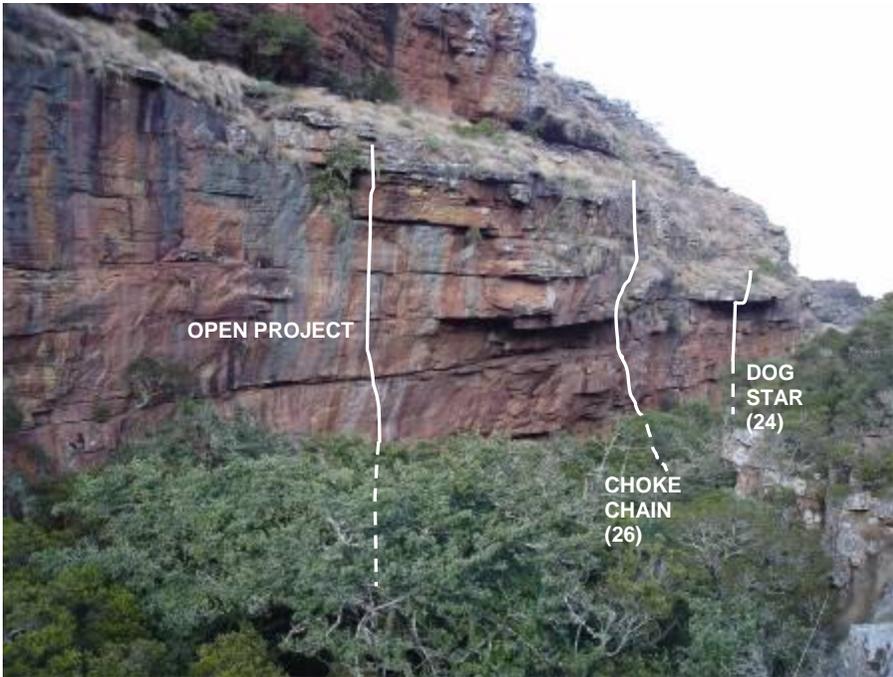
20-30 Metres

ACCESS

This is the small kloof on the way up to **The Cave**. Descent from these routes is by walking down rightwards (looking up), back to the river.

ASPECT

The kloof runs from north to south with the climbing on the true left. Thus most shade is in the morning, but the overhanging nature of the wall and the surrounding trees mean that there is usually shade here.



The kloof viewed from upstream

Photo by Hector Pringle

OPEN PROJECT

Grade unknown [4B, N]

Upstream of DOG STAR is a very steep wall heading up to a large tree. The bolts are visible below and to the right of the tree.

1. 25m Grade unknown. Climb up to below the bolts. Straight up to finish just right of the tree.

Notes:

1. Check the condition of the bolts before climbing – they could be dodge.

BB: Mike Cartwright, sometime in the early '90's

FA: Still to be climbed. Give it a bash!

CHOKER CHAIN

26 *** [2B, N]

Just upstream of the roof crack of DOG STAR is an overhanging, left trending, groove with two bolts.

1. 25m 26 Pull up on jugs to the first bolt. Up to a rail at the base of the corner, then power up the corner past the second bolt. Carry on up the groove and finish up right.

FA: Kevin Smith, Charles Edelstein.

DOG STAR

24 **** [N]

This excellent route (dry when raining) takes the striking roof crack on the true left of the kloof, just upstream of where the kloof opens up into a valley.

1. 20m 20 Takes the most obvious crack on the wall. Belay from a large, flat ledge just above the stream. Climb the crack to a good ledge below the overhangs (there is a bolt on this ledge, to the left of the roof crack).
2. 5m 24 Think horizontally and climb the crack (which opens, closes and then flares) through the 3,5m roof on immaculate jams.

Notes:

1. This is an ideal route for a rainy day or when time is limited. The roof pitch is easily avoided by traversing left.
2. The two pitches can easily be linked.
3. This route might still require a second ascent. Go wild!

FA: Charles Edelstein, 1986.

VALLEY AREA

This area has some short, fun routes, close to the cave, as well as some bouldering.

HEIGHT

10-15 Metres

ACCESS

This is the wide river valley below the cave, starting from just below the top pools.

ASPECT

The valley runs from north to south, with the climbing on the true left (i.e. facing west). Thus these routes mostly get shade in the morning. The valley is sheltered, however, and acts as a bit of a sun trap, so it can get very hot.



The Missing Link Boulder as viewed from the valley

Photo by Mark Millar

THE MISSING LINK

20 *** [N]

This short route is on the west face of a large boulder on the true left of the valley directly below the **cave**. Standing in the **cave**, the boulder is below (south) of the striking, bulgy wall, directly across the valley. The route climbs the A-shaped corner.

- 1. 15m 20 After Tricky take-off, climb corner to rail. Finish up left on jugs.

Descent: Scramble down the back of the boulder.

FA: Hector Pringle, Mark Millar, December 2005

ALL THE SMALL THINGS

18 ** [N]

Another short route, on the west face of the boulder just behind (east) of The Missing Link boulder.

1. 10m 18 Climb crack about 2m right of arête until it dies at 4m. Make a move up and right (crux), and continue up on good grips to the top.

Notes:

1. A camalot #3 and a good small cam protect the crux. The easier climbing above is unprotected.

Variation: Instead of moving right at the crux, step left to the arête and climb this until able to move easily back onto the face. This variation is contrived.

Descent: Scramble down the back of the boulder.

FA: Mark Millar, Hector Pringle, December 2005



Looking North over the North Donjon from above the top pools

Photo by Graham Terrell

AVALON AREA

This area has some great short crack climbs, a stunning bolted 26 as well as some fun bouldering. A great place to spend a rest day. Routes in the valley are listed from top to bottom, followed by routes just outside the valley.

HEIGHT

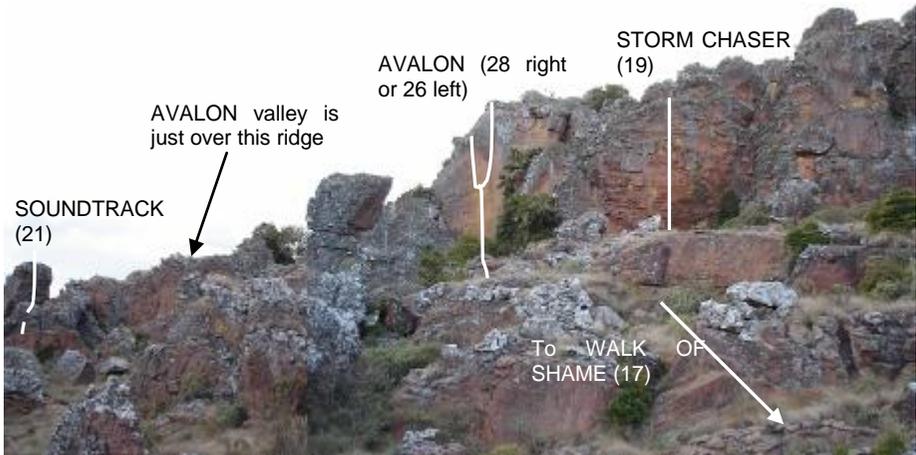
5-15 Metres

ACCESS

From the top pools, walk south for a minute or two. A flat-bottomed valley with short walls on either side will open up to the right. Head up the valley.

ASPECT

The valley runs from southeast to northwest, with climbing on both walls, so there is usually some shade. The valley does act as a sun trap, so it can get very hot.



Routes near Avalon from the cave side (looking north) Photo by Hector Pringle

AVALON

28 (or 26) **** [6B, N]

The steep yellow wall facing SW, at the head of and on the true right of the valley. Walk up the valley until able to scramble up and right, and then around to base of obvious bolted line. This face is obvious from the **cave**.

1. 15m 28 Join the dots, moving rightwards at the last bolt. Top out (no chains).

Variation:

1. 15m 26 Follow the natural line up leftwards from the last bolt.

Notes:

1. *Gear required:* 6 draws for the route. Friend 1.5 & 2.5, wires for the top belay.
2. The old bolts on this route were replaced in September 2005 with 10mm stainless steel bolts.

Descent: Scramble down the back of the crag

FA: Mike Cartwright, 1990.

GRAND ILLUSION 16 *** [N]

A good crack up an orange wall just below AVALON. Situated on the true right of the valley, on the last wall before the valley steepens up to AVALON.

1. 15m 16 Climb the crack.

Descent: Scramble down and to the right.

FA: Mike Cartwright, 1990.



Steve Crowe on the first ascent of INSPIRATIONAL EXCHANGE (21) with the Avalon Valley below him

Photo by Karin Magogg

INSPIRATIONAL EXCHANGE

21 *** [N]

Climbs the face just to the left of GRAND ILLUSION.

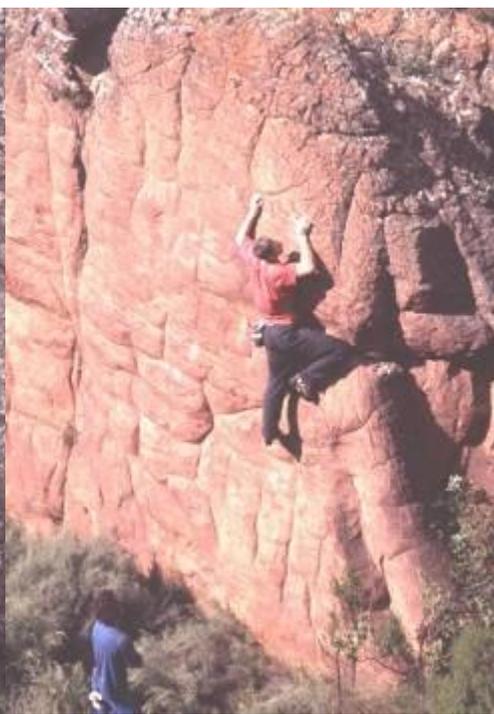
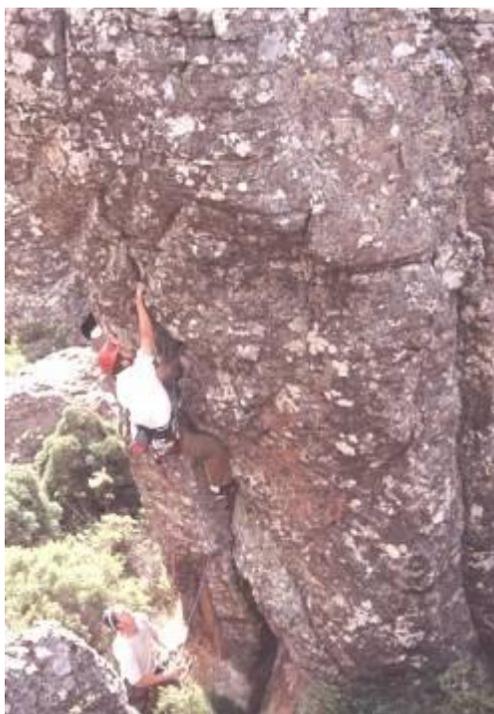
1. 15m 21 Start a metre left of GRAND ILLUSION and head up the face, trending left. Place gear at a vague rail on the arête and then finish up right.

Notes:

1. Gear is marginal. Opened on pre-placed gear.
2. Opened on an international MCSA meet, gritstone-style. Steve is from the UK.

Descent: As for GRAND ILLUSION.

FA: Steve Crowe, April 2005.



**Ian Kotze onsighting
SOUNDTRACK (21)**

Photo by Karin Magogg

SOUNDTRACK

21 *** [N]

A short overhanging finger crack on a buttress on the true left of the AVALON valley, opposite GRAND ILLUSION. The buttress faces south east.

1. 10m 21 Climb the crack.

Descent: Scramble off the back of the buttress.

FA: A. Margetts, 1990.

Bouldering in the Avalon Valley

Photo by Steve Crowe

STORMCHASER

19 *** [N]

A short, slightly overhanging, southwest-facing face, just south of AVALON. From the AVALON valley, scramble up on the true left, past SOUNDTRACK. STORMCHASER is to the left, on a red-yellow wall, facing the same direction as AVALON and with a flat platform at its base.

1. 15m 19 Climb the main break straight up the face, taking care on the flakes near the top.

Notes:

1. Opened on the wettest weekend of the decade – the kloof was shoulder-deep in water!

Descent: Either abseil off some tat or solo down the east side of the buttress (carefull!).

FA: Hector Pringle, Graham Terrell, February 2006.

WALK OF SHAME

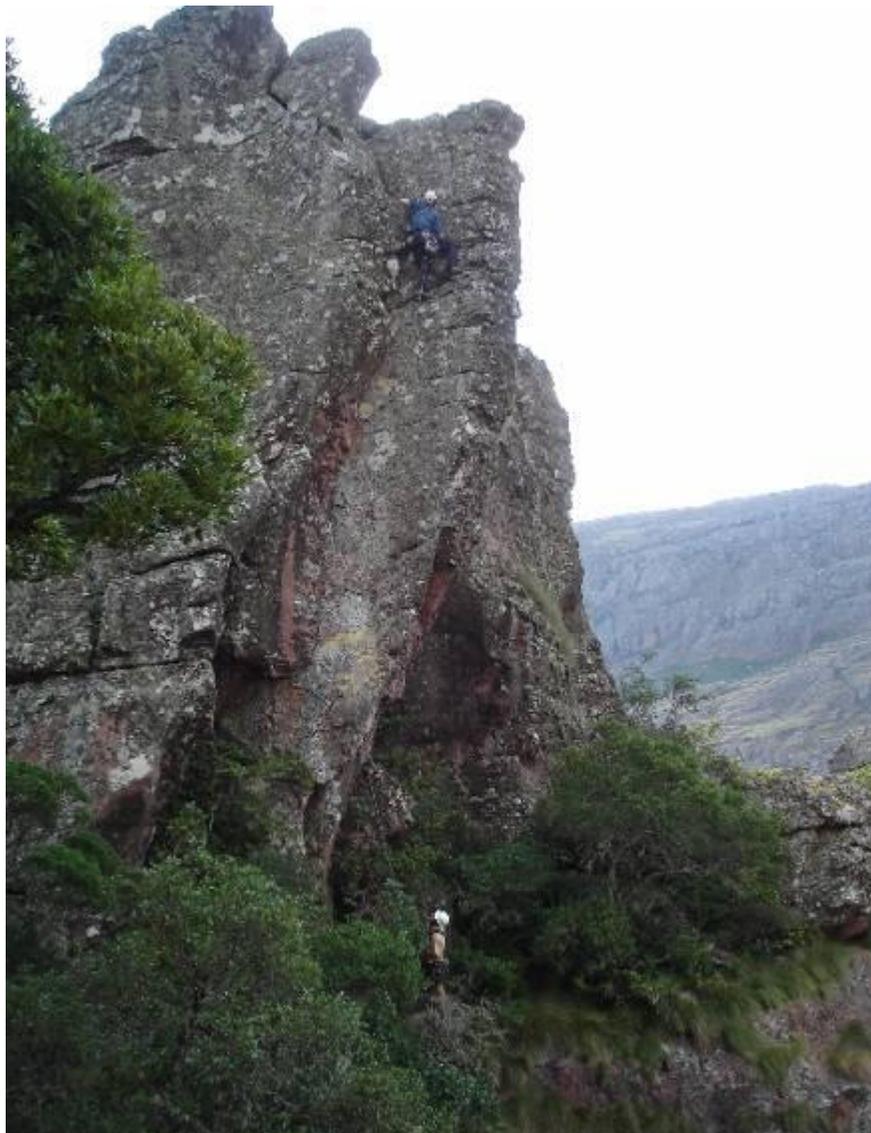
17 *** [N]

A splitter left-facing corner crack south of AVALON. From the AVALON valley, scramble up on the true left, past SOUNDTRACK and STORMCHASER. The corner is obvious to the south.

1. 15m 17 Climb the corner.

Descent: An adventurous scramble east then down to the north.

FA: Hector Pringle, Carl Kritzinger, Marion Penso, January 2007.



Hector Pringle on the FA of WALK OF SHAME (17)

Photo by Marian Penso

MAZE AREA

This area has some thin slab routes as well as plenty of bouldering. Another good place to spend a rest day if you feel like a bit of exploring. There are plenty of short routes waiting for a first ascent in this area.

HEIGHT

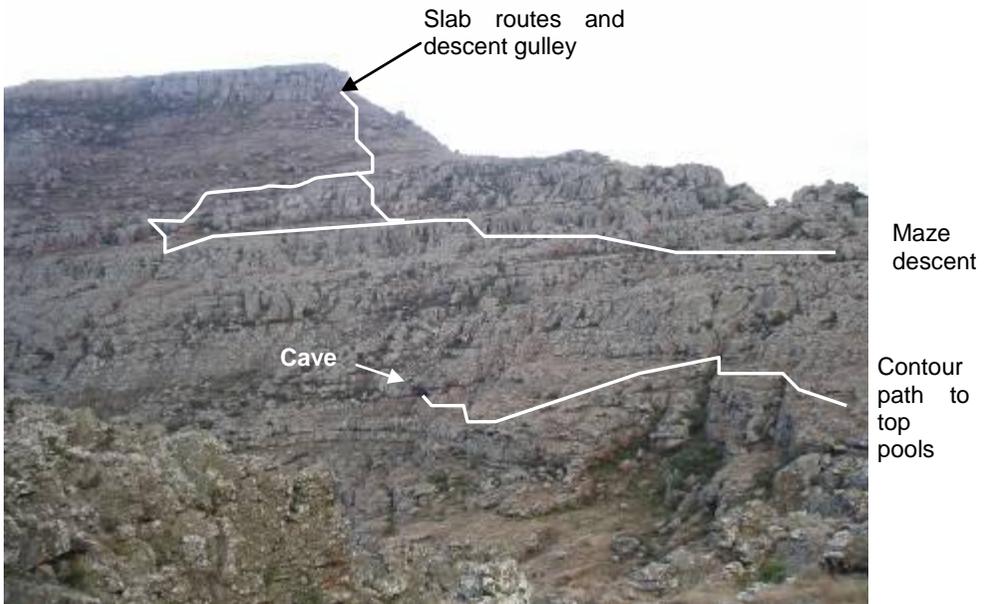
5-25 Metres

ACCESS

It's called the maze for a reason. The established routes are actually above the maze, at the base of the descent gully coming down from the summit of Blouberg. The routes climb the grey band of cliffs visible from the upper pools. These routes are probably best done on the way back to the cave after doing one of the routes on the main wall. To get through the maze from the bottom, start at the top pools and follow the path towards the nek at the top of the ramp. Break off left half way along this path, follow your nose through some gullies and hunt about until you find a cairn. Follow the cairns. There are many ways through the maze and some involve a fair amount of scrambling.

ASPECT

In the maze itself, shade can always be found. The slab routes near the descent gully face north east, and get shade for most of the afternoon.



The maze from the South Donjon

Photo by Hector Pringle

CRAG RATS AGAINST MILEAGE

23 ** [B, N]

This bolted pitch is on the slabish wall just outside and on the true right of the gully that marks the start of the maze descent route. From the top of the maze, walk up the grassy slopes to the wall.

1. 25m 23 Join the dots. Finish up and right after the last dot to belay under the roof.

Notes:

1. This route has no chains. Friend 1.5 and Rock 8 required for the top.
2. The bolts are old and should be clipped with caution.

Descent: Scramble off rightwards into the gully.

FA: Mike Cartwright, 1988.

THE LAYER THEORY

21 ** [1B, N, 2P]

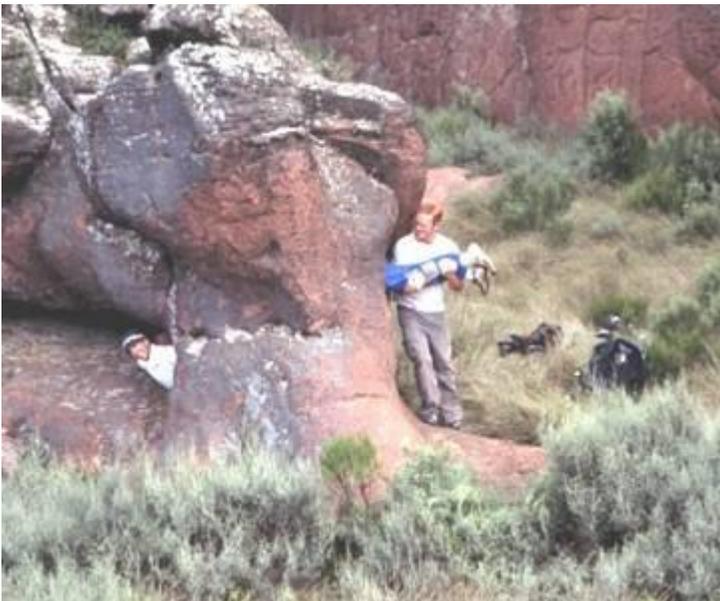
This states enough thin layers of clothing worn at night obviate the need for a sleeping bag in winter at Blouberg. Its corollary says that enough poor protection before a long runout obviate the need for cowboy action on the route. The validity of both have been questioned.

1. 25m 21 Start 5m left of CRAG RATS AGAINST MILEAGE. Climb the corner crack until it ends. Ascend a further 4m to a questionable peg. Move left along the thin seam/rail to place more gear. (Peg, small Metolius and Walnut 0, 00). Climb up to the undercling and continue up to the ledge.

Notes:

1. If you are as short as Lobster, this is impossible. If you have a psyche problem, don't bother. Now sports a bolt (the bolt is most likely dubious by now)

FA: Clive Curson, 1989.



Troglodytes in the AVALON valley

Photo by Steve Crowe

THE DONJONS

The Donjons are the three peaks that encircle the main Blouberg peak to the east. The cave looks out onto the back of the South Donjon. The Frans' Kraal walk-in takes one under the big east face of this peak. There are currently two routes on this face. The East Donjon is fairly scraggly and vegetated. The prominent feature on this peak is the massive ramp and time-bomb block on its southern side – visible from the Frans' Kraal walk-in as well as from the plateau at the top of the ramp. There are no established routes on the East Donjon. The North Donjon has a big north face and a vegetated and rugged south flank. There is currently one route up the north face of this peak.



Time bomb and storm clouds

Photo by Hector Pringle

SOUTH DONJON

Currently there is only one established climbing area on this peak: The massive East face sports two long adventure routes, but there is plenty of scope for new shorter routes, particularly on the north face.

EAST FACE

ACCESS

Approach is easiest from the plateau at the top of the ramp via the neck between the South and East Donjons. From the top pools head east, across the airstrip. Keep going to the edge of the escarpment. A vague path, with some scrambling sections heads down into the forest of the neck below. Scramble down to the right into the forest, then across, to the lip of the hanging valley overlooking Frans' Kraal. The East face is around to the right from here. On the way you pass under some very impressive walls which still need to be climbed.

Descent is via lots of bush whacking back to the top plateau. Try stay towards the northern side of the Donjon.

ASPECT

The east face gets morning sun.

THE SHIELD

22 ** [N]

Climbs the obvious stepped corner system on the east face of the south Donjon. The route starts up a corner left of a 6m high pillar next to the rock face.

1. 43m 19 Climb the corner exiting left and up to the ledge on top of some flakes.
2. 38m 17 up the front of the pillar for a few metres then into corner on the right and up to traverse line. Traverse right and up to ledge beneath roofs.
3. 41m 22 Climb up corner/peapod/groove/chimney above to a stance below large roof (Originally climbed as 2 pitches (20A1 and 19A1) with a hanging belay).
4. 40m 20 Traverse right under roof and climb corner/chimney above to ledge on arête. (Originally 2 pitches, 19A1 and 19).
5. 40m 18 Climb the corner past a tree to a bushy ledge. Climb diagonally left up lichen-covered face to belay in gully.

Scramble rightwards up the gully then walk right along the ledge to another gully which is followed to the top.

FA: Clive Curson, Ian Slatem, 1986.

FISLAYJAM

16 * [N]

This route starts on the N.E. corner of the South Donjon, where a very obvious series of horizontal bedding plane ledges run into the rising foot of the cliff just around the corner.

1. 5m 10 Ascend the initial 5m. Walk to the left about 300m.
2. 30m 10 Climb down to the next obvious ledge, traverse left using underhand grips, and ascend to a stance at the foot of an obvious recess.
3. 33m 14 Ascend an easy section of chimney to a ledge. The Fislayjam section follows, up a slightly overhanging section of the recess. Continue up easier rock to a tree stance.
4. 33m 14 Continue up recess, up a face to left of crack, and left around small overhang. Continue over dirty section to block and piton stance on long ledge.
5. 7m 14 Ascend slight recess (to left of main recess) and do an awkward swing back into the main recess. Tree belay.
6. 33m 12 Climb easy chimney, then face followed by a more difficult face and layback crack to a large ledge with ample blocks.

Scramble diagonally up right through bush to the top.

FA: John Anderson, Rod Blackhurst, Dave Alexander, 1965.



The impressive east face of the South Donjon

Photo by Hector Pringle

NORTH DONJON

ACCESS

Note that the editor has not actually walked the approaches described below. Allow plenty of time and expect some interesting route finding.

There is currently one route on this peak, on the northern face. There are two approaches:

1. From the plateau below the Donjons, use the Frans' Kraal northern variation. I.e. from Frans' Kraal, after reaching the first big plateau, turn right (north) and go around the East and then the North Donjon counter clockwise. Bush whack up to the north face.
2. From the **Cave** head between the South and East Donjons, as described in the access to the East Face of the South Donjon. Instead of bashing through the forest to the South Donjon, turn left (west) and head down the main watercourse, between the north Donjon and the wall beneath the ramp. There should be a path most of the way. At the bottom, walk clockwise around the northern Donjon to get to the north face.

Descent is via lots of bush whacking down the southern side of the Donjon, back to the neck between the east and south Donjons. Alternatively, to descend back to the base of the route, it is possible to abseil down a gully.

ASPECT

The north face gets sun most of the day in winter. In summer, there is shade from about 1pm.

NO MOON

17 * [N]

A large gully bisects the northern face of the Donjon. About 50m west of the base of the gully is a long, low roof (20m wide and 2m deep at chest height). The climb starts at the western side of this roof where it runs into a rise in the ground, in the first obvious corner. Although the last pitches are of easy grade, they are particularly enjoyable.

1. 35m 14 Up crack in corner 5m, left and up over awkward bulge. Ascend open book above, traversing left at the top of the open book. Climb the second open book with pink and white streaks, again traversing left at top onto ledge.
2. 20m 17 Climb third open book at right hand side of ledge and traverse left at top under roof. Proceed up nose (crux) onto flake and traverse left past pigeon nests under roof to grassy stance.
3. 40m 12 Follow crack on lichen covered rock on good holds.
4. 40m 12 Continue up the crack.
5. 40m 11 Continue up the crack to ledge.
6. 30m 11 Climb to a large ledge with trees, at base of overhanging buttress.
7. Walk left about 30m into the large gully and abseil.

FA: Bruce Reela, Sakkie van Rensburg, 1985.

NORTH WALL

This is the main event at Blouberg, home to some great single day, big wall classics of moderate grade, as well as true, scary big wall aid and free routes. The character of the wall changes significantly between the various areas. The usual access from the cave is down the ramp (originally called THE DIAGONAL and given a grade of B, 1960 MCSA Journal), which cuts diagonally across the eastern part of the wall, starting from the little grassy plateau just above the top pools.



The North Wall. GREAT GULLEY cuts the wall on the extreme left, with the WALL OF WHITE LIGHT just to the right of it. The MOONLIGHT corner heads up to the sloping ledge to the right of this. The MOON and BIG CORNER areas occupy the right hand half of the picture.

HEIGHT

100-350 Metres

ACCESS

There are a few different ways to reach the North Wall:

1. From the **Cave**: Contour round to the top pools (i.e. to the north). From the pools, head west along a good path across the little grassy plateau. The ramp extends down to the west from a small neck, from which the north wall can be seen in all its glory. There is a good path down the ramp. From the bottom of the ramp try and stick fairly close to the wall on your left.
2. From the **summit** of Blouberg: It is possible to scramble down on the western side of the wall. There is a gully that puts one near the base of MALEBOCH. This descent is particularly useful if climbing more than one route in a day. No

detailed description is yet available for this descent, so expect a bit of route finding. Steep scrambling and/or abseiling might be required.

3. Also from the **summit**: Rap down the convenient rap route. The start of the rap route is tricky to find if you don't know where to look. It is advisable to climb BUSHPIG first (which follows the rap route) to figure out where the chains start.
4. From below: On the Frans' Kraal walk-in head counter clockwise around the East and North Donjons, along the big lower plateau. Bundu bash up to the base of the ramp and head right along the base of the wall.

ASPECT

The North Wall, for the most part, faces north east, so expect morning sun. The wall can be baking or freezing at any time of year, but if there are no clouds it will definitely be hot until after lunch. Because the mountain lies north of the Tropic of Capricorn, the North Wall gets shade after about 1pm in summer. In winter, the wall is in the sun for longer.

AREAS ON THE NORTH WALL

There are 7 distinct areas on the north wall, each with its own feel and character.

- LEFT OF THE RAMP - Directly below the top of the ramp is an impressive wall which is, however, quite vegetated. This has one route up it, DARE TO BE DIFFERENT.
- LOST TRIBE AREA - Two thirds of the way down the ramp, the vegetated rock opens up into a beautiful orange amphitheatre with some fine shorter routes (5 odd pitches).
- LEFT FACE AREA - From the bottom of the ramp, moving rightwards the wall shows its true colours with a few 300 m routes in the LEFT FACE area, being the section of wall between the main feature of GREAT GULLEY and the base of the ramp. Some of the easier (although vegetated) routes are in this area.
- WALL OF WHITE LIGHT - To the right of GREAT GULLEY lurks the truly impressive WALL OF WHITE LIGHT, named after the aid test-piece that winds up the blank walls and big overhangs. Expect some serious climbing in this area.
- MOONLIGHT AREA - The WALL OF WHITE LIGHT is bounded on its western side by the striking MOONLIGHT corner. This corner provides a convenient access route to some fine adventure routes up the faces above and to the right.
- MOON AREA - Extending westwards from the start of MOONLIGHT, the base of the wall becomes a large, grassy ledge with a 20m cliff below. This is the MOON area, a very craggy section of the wall with some ultimate classic moderate routes. This area seems tailor made for friendly big-walling, with ledges at convenient intervals, and usually 2 or 3 options off each ledge.
- BIG CORNER AREA - This area is out of sight, around the skyline of the wall as viewed from the top of the ramp. This has a similar feel to the MOON area, although routes such as THE RAZORS EDGE can get a bit wild.

LEFT OF THE RAMP

This wall is quite vegetated and there is only one route here.

DARE TO BE DIFFERENT

** 21 [N]

Start about 500m left of the base of the ramp below a drip coming from an overhang about 40m up. Start on a boulder about 10m left of a large tree with a white bark. There is a small tree on the face about 8m up.

1. 25m 19 Straight up, through a diagonal L to a corner. Up the corner for a few metres, then right to a ledge.
2. 15m 21 Diagonally up and left to below a roof. Pull through and up to a semi-hanging belay.
3. 20m 20 Traverse right around the nose, and upwards past a drip.
4. 25m 16 Climb up and right to a cabbage tree. Traverse right to break, then up to a ledge. Traverse 5m left below a crack.
5. 15m 20 Climb steep crack to ledge then move 5m left, and down to below chimney.
6. 25m 17 Climb up chimney. Then left through overhang and up to a ledge/cave just below corner.
7. 45m 19 Start on right, up corner to below roof, then traverse left to arête. Up over easy ground to burned grass ledge.
8. 45m 10 Up diagonally left over pleasant clean rock to traverse level, traverse left to below chimney.
9. 25m 16 Up chimney then up through bush to top.

Crawl 45 to 50 seconds (i.e. less than one minute!) stroll to pool at top of rock.

FA: S. Middlemis, E. February, 1992.

LOST TRIBE AREA

Two thirds of the way down the ramp is an orange amphitheatre with roofs. From the path, scramble up diagonally right (looking at the cliff) to a large ledge below a break in the centre of the amphitheatre. There are some clay pot shards a few metres to the right. Some routes here only go up one or two pitches, and descent is either via topping out on a different route, or rapping off the bolts on EXODUS.

LOOK SHARP

*** 21 [N]

Start 20m left of LOST TRIBE at the base of a blunt arête. A steep corner can be seen about 10m up. Cairn.

1. 35m 19 Climb up diagonally left for a few metres over juggy rock (loose looking, but mega solid). Climb up to corner, climb it for about 6m, then move out left onto the arête, then straight up to a small stance.
2. 25m 19 Straight up for a few meters then traverse right and up (airy), and along a ledge until about 4m left of the 3rd pitch of LOST TRIBE (i.e. the big corner to the right). Climb up and left, then straight up to a stance on top of some blocks below a steep crack.
3. 20m 20 Climb the steep rock and crack above to a roof. Move 2m left and pull up through onto a ledge above. Walk 5m left.
4. 20m 19 Climb the crack/recess to a roof. Pull through the roof and move right and up to a stance on a small ledge below a flake.
5. 35m 21 Climb the corner/flake to the roof and make long moves right to gain a jug. Pull up then move 2m left to a shallow corner. Up the corner and the one above to until one can climb easily up to the left to a large scoop below a roof. Traverse about 5m left to stance on a narrow ledge.
6. 20m 19 Climb the crack above the stance to another ledge (8m). Move left then climb the steep face/crack above to a ledge.

Scramble up from the stance to a bushy ledge. Bash to the chimney gully about 10m right and climb the tree and arête above to take you to ledges and gullies that are part of the LOST TRIBE scramble. Bash/climb to the summit. A casual stroll (via the maze) brings you back to the campsite.

FA: Stewart Middlemiss, Ian Slatem, 1988.

THE JOURNEY

** 21 [N]

Start in the obvious recess left of LOST TRIBE.

1. 21 Climb the recess to a stance common with LOST TRIBE.

FA: Clive Curson, 1992.

GETTING THERE

** 23 [N, A]

Start from the stance at the end of THE JOURNEY.

1. 23 Break through the right hand edge of the roof. Climb to the chains above.

FA: Clive Curson, 1992.

LOST TRIBE

*** 21 or 18A2 [N]

A short route with excellent climbing starting 1m right of the main recess.

1. 35m 18 Move up slightly right to the bottom of an obvious crack, is climbed until able to veer left to the base of a recessed crack which is climbed to a stance on loose blocks.
2. 15m 21 (18A2) Traverse 6m left to below the first break through the overhang. Aid up, with 3 nuts, to a large ledge.
3. 35m 16 Climb up the recess until forced to exit right. Traverse 10m right and them up to stance on a block.
4. 20m 18 From the block drop down and traverse 2m right to below a crack. Climb the superb crack until able to move right onto a ledge with blocks.
5. 45m 16 From the right of the stance move diagonally up to a rail. Rail right then climb up to a tree in the gully. Scramble off to top of the maze.

Notes:

1. *Variation:* 4. 25m 20 Instead of moving right, continue straight up crack to ledge on the left with chains. 2 abseils take you back to the ground.

FA: Tarquin Holt, Steven Mallory, 1983.

FFA: Mick Haffner and party, 1985.

THIRD WORLD CHILD

*** 25 [N]

Start from the "nose" stance after the traverse pitch of LOST TRIBE. I.e. at the end of pitch 3 of that route.

1. 25 Climb straight up to the crack and follow this to the roof. Pull through and stance. (Good Rock 4 at lip of roof).

Notes:

1. Mr Clegg took time out from his hectic concert tour schedule to open this route.

FA: Mike Cartwright, Johnny Clegg, 1990.

EXODUS

*** 23 [N]

Start as for LOST TRIBE (about 10m right of the central break).

1. 40m 23 Follow LOST TRIBE for a few metres until it veers off left. Continue up the layback crack until it ends. Traverse right and up to gain a recess leading to easy ground which is followed to a ledge.
2. 40m 20 Climb up leftwards and pull through the roof at a crack. Continue left and up to gain LOST TRIBE's long hand crack/recess. Climb the crack and exit left to belay on a long narrow ledge (LOST TRIBE moves right slightly lower down).

Where to now? Either rap off, traverse right and scramble as for LOST TRIBE, or traverse left for about 25m and climb LOOK SHARP's flake. Alternatively, the brave may traverse further left to gain an interesting recess which leads to slabs, ledges, corridors and pillars.

Notes:

1. The first ascensionists took the last option described above to top out. Only the VERY brave should try it.

FA: Mike Cartwright, Kevin Smith, 1990.

CARAVANS

** 23 [1B, N]

Start 5m right of LOST TRIBE. Scramble 5m.

1. Climb crack and climb past bolt and good RP 4 to block. Climb wall above to large ledge.

Notes:

1. The bolt is probably dubious by now. It was placed by Mr Cockburn after all.

FA: Mike Cartwright, G. Cockburn, 1990.

THE NEW STONE AGE

** 23 [1B, N]

Start 5m right of LOST TRIBE. Scramble 5m and belay on the right end of the ledge.

1. Climb past bolt to a good RP 4. Climb the wall and corner to large ledge.

Notes:

1. The bolt is probably dubious by now.

FA: M. Cartwright, G. Cockburn, 1990.

LEFT FACE AREA

This is the section of wall from the bottom of the ramp to just beyond GREAT GULLEY. The crag kicks back to its full height in this area, although it is quite vegetated.

DOWNWARD BOUND

* 20 [N]

Start about 125 metres right of the base of the descent ramp. The initial corner-crack is situated 30 metres right of a large right-facing dihedral, and 15 metres left of an orange slab capped by an arch.

1. 42m 17 Climb the corner-crack for a few metres, and continue up the right-leaning break to a ledge. Step off a short pillar on the right, turn the overhang, and traverse left to move up to a stance a few metres beneath a long roof. One is now a couple of metres left of the start.
2. 25m 20 Climb diagonally left over red rock, then rail left around an arête using a dubious looking block. Climb up and right to a steep recess which is used to pull through the roofs to a ledge on the right.
3. 40m 19 Move up the left-leaning ramp from the left end of the ledge to beneath the overhang. Traverse right until able to pull through the overhangs. Climb diagonally leftwards, then blast straight up the grey face (not much pro) to easier rock and the highest ledge, a few metres beneath an obvious triangular roof.
4. 40m 17 Move up a couple of metres, then right to cross the prominent left-trending gully-ramp. Climb diagonally right to gain a short chimney which is used to reach ledges above.
5. 45m 17 Walk right a few metres. Climb up and traverse left to the arête beneath the left end of a large roof. Climb up and right to negotiate the bulge above the roof. Climb the crack and continuation corner above, then move right and up into a shallow alcove. Exit left and climb a corner to a small ledge on the left beneath a large roof.
6. 35m 19 Traverse right beneath the roof, around the arête to a narrow ledge. Go right until able to gain the diagonal break leading up leftwards, through a small yellow wood tree. Continue traversing leftwards around arête (some way out in space) then climb a grey recess to a stance.
7. 45m 18 Move left and up, and traverse back right into a recess. Climb up to a crack, which is climbed past a small tree. Keep left and climb up until able to rail right to easier ground. Continue to the end of the rope.

Scramble to the top.

FA: Kevin Smith, George Mallory, 1989.

LEFT FACE

** 18 [N]

The route heads up the centre of the face, 120m to the left of GREAT GULLY.

1. 33m 18 Up smooth, narrow chimney/crack in a left facing corner formed by a buttress and the main face. Alternatively, start about 15m to the right, in a right facing corner on the other side of the buttress.
2. 50m 7 Ascend from top of crack to large grass ledge. Traverse right 66m and scramble up to a higher ledge at the base of a left trending ramp system.
3. 50m 7 Ascend diagonally leftwards to the highest yellowwood trees.
4. 30m 16 Walk leftwards along ledge. Either take the first crack which starts easily and ends with a difficult move, or take the second crack which has an awkward start past a small bush, but an easier exit via twin flakes. Continue diagonally leftwards to a tree belay under a steep face.
5. 20m 15 Traverse left, and then climb up 2m to the rail leading round bulge. Use the rail as an undercling and move left for a few meters until able to drop down onto a block (exposed). Move left into a gully.
6. 25m 12 Climb gully to stance at top of pinnacle.
7. 60m 15 An awkward start gains the recess leading upwards from the right hand end of the gully. Climb this, trending leftwards to top out at the start of the maze.

FA: unknown

BURN THE DOG

** 22 [N]

Start 90m left of SKIN THE CAT. A long roof can be seen 70m up. Start directly below the notch in the roof. Scramble 12m up LHS of pillar to a ledge.

1. 50m 19 Up flake on right for 8m. Move left on to face, up tree roots to tree. Up groove (becomes a flake) then up wall. Traverse right to ledge, up, back left into corner and up the ledge.
2. 35m 19 Up to next ledge, then up right to pull through right hand V-notch. Up to grass ledge. Walk 30m right and up to under steep cave and scramble up. (25m left of SKIN THE CAT).
3. 35m 21 Move up about 5m left of corner and move through roofs at their smallest. Diagonally up rightwards to crack, up this, then left to ledge.
4. 25m 20 Up to cubby hole under roof. Pull through and up right to ledge.
5. 35m 20 Up and diagonally left across slab to below steep gnarly rock. Pull through and up to stance at base of chimney.
6. 40m 22 Delicate Slab Pitch: Up chimney and out onto wall above. Up crack system straight up to ledge.

Traverse 12m right to base of corner behind tree.

7. 50m 18 Up corner/crack, move left onto arête at top, follow nose straight to top. Scramble to the top.

FA: Stewart Middlemiss, Clive Curson, 1990.

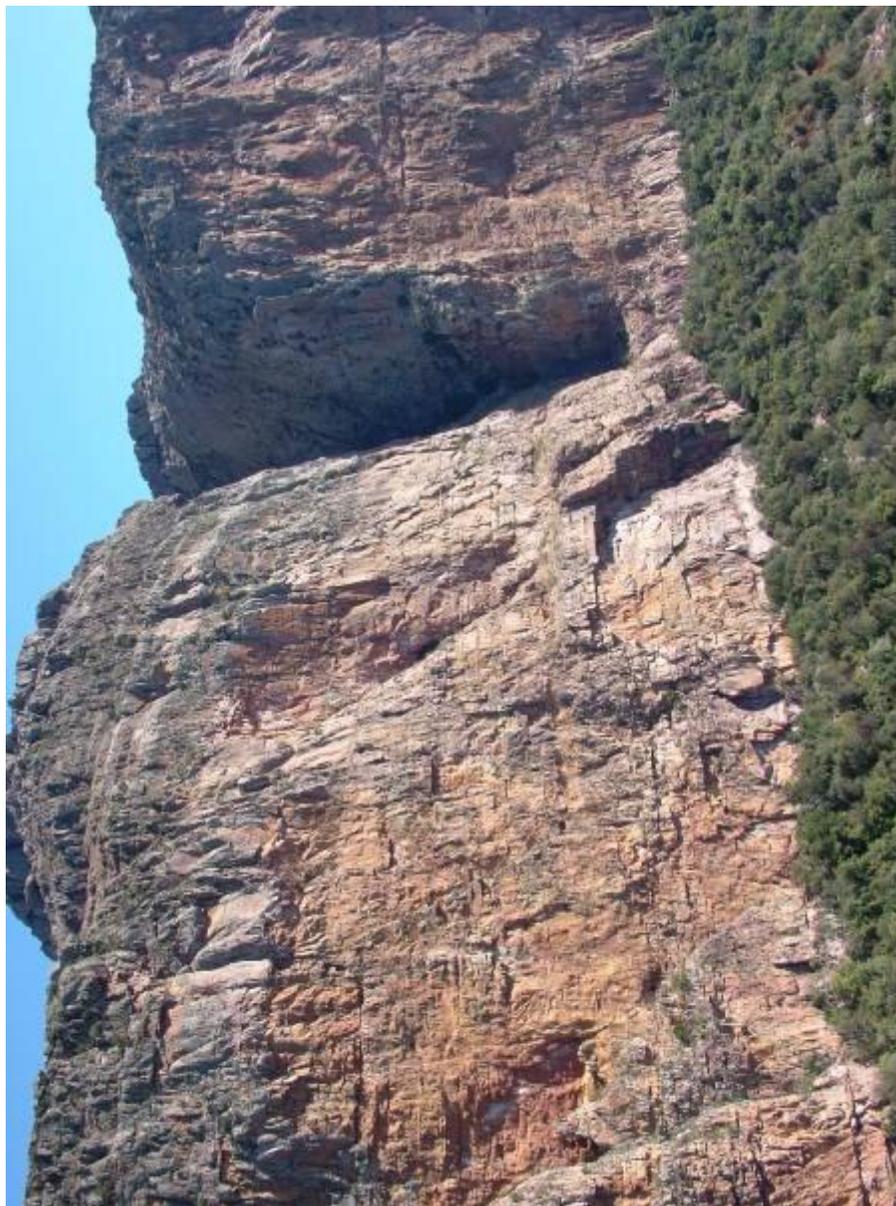


Photo by Rob Thomas

GREAT GULLEY and LEFT FACE from the air

SKIN THE CAT

** 20 [N]

A sustained climb on excellent rock, which ascends between LEFT FACE and GREAT GULLY. Start 15m right of the leftward slanting recess about 80m right of the alternate start of LEFT FACE, and 80m left of the GREAT GULLY. Start at a boulder below a prominent tree 25m up, which is just to the right of a large overhang stretching leftwards to the leftward-slanting recess. The first two pitches may be avoided by scrambling (7/10) up the recess to the large grass ledge.

1. 45m 16 Climb straight up to a slight arête and climb this, passing about 5m to the right of the prominent tree, to a ledge on the right. Climb the face above, bearing slightly left to stance.
2. 40m 16 Head straight up then left near the top, to the vast grass ledge from which the leftward-slanting ramp of the middle section of LEFT FACE starts.

Walk leftwards across the top of the leftward-slanting recess mentioned in the start, and scramble up from a point 30m further left (about 20m right of the start of the ramp). Scramble up 10m and then 8m right to the foot of a prominent rock slab leaning against the face, leading to a small overhang 6m up.

3. 45m 19A2 Climb left-hand edge of slab for 3m. Swing right and climb slanting crack to overhang. Step back down and right to crack at right-hand side of slab. Climb to overhang past some loose flakes, and continue up shallow depression above using two aid points. Climb delicately to a rail. Swing left and up into corner and move up 2m to stance. Move diagonally right for 2m to crack which is climbed for 2m before swinging back left on small holds and moving up the shallow corner to below small overhang. Climb overhang crack above (crux - originally aided) and continue up and slightly left to awkward resting place right of two small trees. Step left on detached block and move up to ledge between the two trees. Move diagonally up right and continue up small recess to stance on the left.
4. 25m 19 Hand traverse right for 8m to prominent leftward slanting recess. Climb this, past an overlap on the left, to stance. Continue up leftward slanting recess to ledge below smooth face. Stance on the left.
5. 40m 20 Traverse 8m right to first recess through face above. Climb up 4m to small overhang and step left to base of shallow recess above. Move up, swing right on small holds and climb up awkwardly to a resting point (crux). Continue up recess above to stance on comfortable ledge above tree.
6. 35m 19 Step right and climb up to crack on the left of large slab. Climb crack and continue up shallow depression above (crux) to where angle eases. Continue up another 5m then traverse left for about 8m to tree in main recess. Scramble up leftwards along bushy ramp and continue leftwards on exposed but easy rock for about 80m to point just before shallow recess leading up from below.
7. 55m 9 Climb up on right-hand side of recess until able to traverse across it and continue traversing leftwards over pleasant rock to the top.

FA: Paul Fatti, H. P. Bakker, 1985.

GREAT GULLY

** 13 [1P, N]

Climbs the obvious gully half way between **The Ramp** and the Main Wall.

1. 50m 5 Scramble up to the foot of a dry waterfall.
2. 33m 10 Ascend the face to a thin tree belay in a recess.
3. 25m 12 Move out left, up, and back into a recess. Continue up to the overhang and move out right (12) onto an extensive ledge.
4. Scramble for 100m up bushy gully.
5. 33m 10 From this point the route veers off to the right of the main trend of the gully which becomes unclimbable. Ascend the face to a small ledge (piton belay).
6. 23m 7 Continue up face to a tree belay in a slight recess.
7. 33m 10 Continue straight up until about 20m beneath overhanging rock.
8. 33m 7 Traverse right.
9. 33m 10 Traverse right, ascend a little and continue traversing.
10. 33m 10 Traverse right, ascending at intervals.
11. 33m 10 Climb down a little, then climb diagonally up to the right. Scramble to the top.

Notes:

1. The route as written up is quite difficult to follow, and most people end up climbing something harder than 13, sometimes even as hard as 19!

FA: Dave Cretchley, Tim Ferguson, Mike Richardson, 1965.

GULLY CORNER

** 15

See the topo on the next page

This route follows the ridge to the right (looking up) of GREAT GULLY. Two difficult sections are encountered:

1. At 66m up: Climb steep corner for 13m and traverse right for 5m to large stance.
2. 3/4 way up: 33m of good climbing in a cleft (F3) culminating in a strenuous one arm, one leg crack.

Rest of climb: 7-9.

Notes:

1. The route as written up is quite difficult to follow, and most people end up climbing something harder than 13. Experienced parties have encountered climbing as hard as 19.

FA: Unknown

WALL OF WHITE LIGHT

This is the scary looking wall with grass slopes below, extending rightwards from GREAT GULLEY. These routes are all serious undertakings. The wall is bounded on the right by the very obvious, 80m corner of MOONLIGHT, which starts at ground level.

AFTERGLOW

** 20A3 [N]

This route takes the very obvious open book to the left of a blank, overhanging red wall, i.e. to the left of YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE, and is therefore a 100m to the right of the Gully.

1. 25m 12 Start at a beacon at the base of a small pillar. Climb to the top of the pillar, then continue up a crack above the pillar. At the top, where the crack peters out, step to the right (difficult) to a small ledge.
2. 45m 20+ From the ledge, move to the left and up to the level of a loose flake 2-3m below a small yellow overhang. From here, step to the left into a black crack where one aid move allows one to climb to an overhang. Straddle out to the right under the overhang, then move up a metre, and back to the left to end up standing on top of the overhang. From here, easy but dirty climbing on the left hand retaining wall of the open book leads to a stance on a small ledge. (20A2)
3. 35m 18 From the stance, climb about 3m, then move 5-6m diagonally to the left to a rightward sloping slab with what appears to be difficult climbing above. Do not continue up the slab but climb with difficulty to the left, around to an arête. Continue up to a stance on large blocks.
4. 30m 18 Above is an obvious but overhanging off-width part, but from here, cross the face on small holds on to the arête. Continue easily up the arête just to the right of the large overhangs, to a long narrow ledge (bivvie spot).
5. 16A3 The main open book continues above. Climb 4m then use aid with difficulty to reach a small, sloping ledge. An obvious feature is the overhanging jamming crack on the left-hand retaining wall.
6. 25m 16A1 From the ledge, step to the left into the jamming crack and climb the crack free or with aid to a tree and a large ledge on the right. (This pitch now goes free, FFA by G. and S. Mallory, reference MCSA Journal 1988).
7. 18 The corner looks very dirty above, so move to the left onto the arête (4-5m). Do a difficult move onto easy rock, which is followed in several pitches trending leftward to the top of the wall. At this point one can see down into the main gully.

FA: Charles Edelstein, Peter Douglas, Alan Lambert.



Endless roofs: Backing off PSYCHO REPTILE (22) on the Wall of White Light Photo by Hector Pringle

ANOTHER DAY IN HELL

*** 25 (22A1) [1B, N]

Climbs the wall between AFTERGLOW and WALL OF WHITE LIGHT, finishing where the continuation of the AFTERGLOW corner system intersects the left skyline. A recess starts immediately right of a bush at the right-hand end of the open grassy area to the right of AFTERGLOW.

1. 30m 15 Scramble up the recess to gain the highest ledge.
2. 25m 20 Starting left, climb the undercut recess for a few metres. Traverse right across a slab to a groove and corner system which is followed until a short traverse right leads to a foothold stance in a small right facing corner.
3. 40m 20 Traverse 10m right then climb steeply to easier ground. Climb the slightly right-trending grooves, and when level with the base of a large left-facing corner to the right, traverse left to a small ledge.
4. 15m 18 Climb up then left over dubious rock to a stance.
5. 20m 18 Traverse left, past a recess, then climb steeply to a large ledge.
6. 40m 25 Start right of the 1.5m high block in the middle of the ledge system. Climb diagonally right for 10m (scarce pro) and move up to rails. Continue left and up, heading for a short crack right of a flake. Aid up the crack and use a bolt to gain a recess/crack on the left which leads to a good ledge. (22A1)
7. 15m 20 Climb the recess to the highest ledge (which extends left to the top of AFTERGLOW's corner).
8. 25m 21 Traverse 4m right and climb the recess until able to move back left. Climb a shallow crack/recess (tricky start), then traverse left to stance on a small ledge in a right facing corner.
9. 15m 20 Traverse left for 5m to the base of a wide recess. Climb this and finish on the left.

Three or four rope lengths of easier climbing on the left side of the buttress bring one to walking ground.

FA: Kevin Smith, Charles Edelstein, 1990.

A DOG DAY IN HEAVEN

**** 25 [4B, 4P, N]

This route takes one of the most direct lines at Blouberg, to the left of the WALL OF WHITE LIGHT. The start is 30m to the right of ANOTHER DAY IN HELL and about 10m left from the start of THE DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER. A small beacon marks the start. The route takes a more or less direct line transecting ANOTHER DAY IN HELL. It tops out to the left of the huge, trapezoidal roof which is easily visible from the ground, virtually at the top of the face and just to the left of the start. It is basically an independent line, but shares the bivy stance with ANOTHER DAY IN HELL. To keep the line direct it has two short sections which are common to that route.

1. 27m 20 Climb the clean line directly to the large ledge system above. Avoid the grassy corner on the right at 12m by staying on the face to the left of it.
2. 40m 22 Climb an obvious orange groove a few metres to the left of the start and climb through the overhang above. There is a peg visible at the overhang at 10m. Once through the overhang, continue up towards the right beneath a small roof to easier ground and then to a blocky stance topped by an overhang. Move right 2m and climb through the overlap to a rail (in common with ANOTHER DAY IN HELL). Continue up leftwards (crux). Move diagonally left a few metres (tricky) and then up to a point where you can traverse to a perch just left of a prominent right-facing corner beneath a large roof.

3. 50m 20 Move left 2m and up underneath a small overhang. Step right onto the ridge and continue up easier rock to a steep broken section at 40m. Pull through this on good jugs to a large ledge (bivvie common with ANOTHER DAY IN HELL).
4. 35m 21 ANOTHER DAY IN HELL takes the first diagonal break to the right starting at the end of the ledge. Continue past this for 3 - 4m and then take the obvious break heading for the scooped section of the wall 25m above. Fantastic climbing, protected by a bolt, brings you to a crux section, where an RP affords reasonable protection. Prior to this point there is a peg on the right. Move through this crux section (try not to break off the good handhold on the left), to a hanging stance off a big block. Pitches 4 and 5 can be combined.
5. 25m 24 Move right 5m to a point below two pegs 10m above. Place good pro in a rail and continue up to the pegs. A crux move past the pegs brings you to easier ground. Climb diagonally up left to a good stance.
6. 35m 23 Above is a shallow, right-curving corner with a peg visible but the route does not take this corner. Walk left about 5m to where the ledge ends, to a perch stance and climb the obvious orange corner directly above for 12m. When the corner peters out, do a delicate move right and then gingerly climb on to a large precarious-looking block. A tricky move (for short people) brings you into a left-leaning crack. Continue up this until it peters out after 5m, to a crouching position. Move up left onto lichen covered rock and then diagonally right to a good stance.
7. 35m 22 Some tricky moves up to the left bring you into a right-curving crack system topped by a roof. At the roof rail right (slippery) and then climb up to a small stance under a small roof.
8. 40m 25 Continue up the broken corner-crack to the roof above. A hard move up through the left brings you into an orange corner. Climb this to a rail underneath an overhang. Rail left to an amazing stance on the skyline. This pitch has three bolts.
9. 50m 17 A chossy start brings you onto lichen-covered rock. Continue up the obvious line more or less straight to the top.

From here the scramble off is straightforward and fortunately not too bushy.

Notes:

1. Check out BLOUBERG: MY BACKYARD in the STORIES section for an account of the FA.
2. The route is well-protected, apart from pitch 4, which is runout and may be protected using an RP.
3. No special gear is required, however a set of RP's will prove useful.
4. The corner of pitch 8 was originally aided.
5. *Bivi sites:* at the top of pitches 3 and 5 there are excellent bivvies. The opening party also bivvied uncomfortably at the top of pitch 6. The bivvi site at the top of pitch 3 has a drum and there is at least one mattress, chalk and a duvet jacket. Please leave these articles in situ for the benefit of future ascensionists.

FA:

Pitches 1 to 6: Charles Edelstein and Matt Murrison, November 1996.

Pitches 7 to 9: Charles Edelstein and E. Maguire, August 1997.

THE DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER

*** 25A3 [B, N]

Left of the WALL OF WHITE LIGHT start is a long ledge 20m off the deck. Start from a block at the rightmost end of the ledges (20m above the twisted pair of trees). This is a serious route.

1. 38m 20 Climb straight up through broken looking rock and a small roof to a small stance directly above the start.
2. 42m 15 Continue up easier rock, moving right under the roofs and on up to a good ledge.
3. 20m 20 From the right end of the ledge move up over broken rock to a good left facing corner. Follow this to a small stance on the left on the arête above.
4. 40m 23 Move up from the stance and traverse right to a right leaning crack. Follow this until it fades. Move left and up to beneath roof. Climb straight up the wall above to the bivy stance.
5. 15m 25 Start from a small ledge 10m right of the bivy. Pull through roof (Friend #1&1/2) and continue to narrow ledge. Move left and up a short corner to rail. Move left and up to stance at a good rail.
6. 25m 23A3 Move up and right to rail via small nuts and a hook hole. Climb up and right to next rail, up to good rock placement then right to main left facing corner. Up this a few metres to a great hanging stance.
7. 20m 24 Continue up crack to top of flake. Follow right hand break to rail beneath roof. Hang a right! When you see bolts place a Friend #2 far right and drop in to chains.
8. 15m 25A1 Climb up to bolts. Aid on bolts (a cheat stick is useful) Continue up and right to belay on ledge above roof.
9. 30m 18 Climb the left facing corner/crack to a cubby. Move diagonally left across the face to belay on a ramp in curving twin cracks.
10. 44m 25 **Five Bolt Pitch**: Climb cracks and then move out left to dodge roof. Rail right above lip and move up across slab heading for V-groove. Climb groove and main recess above, then move out left under small roof. Move back right above lip to stance.
11. 40m 20 Climb up and right and then back left to ledges. Climb pillar and faces above. Traverse right into chimney. Top out.

Notes:

1. *Special equipment*: Hook (dowel) to fit 20mm by 5mm diameter hole, 2 foot cheat stick.

FA: Mike Cartwright, Cathy O'Dowd, 1990.

DREAM OF WHITE DOGS (THE DREAM)

*** 26 [P, B, N]

The route starts one metre right of Delicate Sound of Thunder and around the corner on the right of the start of Dog Day in Heaven. 12m to the right is the start of Wall of White Light and the start of Moonlight is about 150m to further right. Great Gully is about 100m to the left.

1. 30m 19 Climb the left slanting ramp until able to move left past a perched block to a stance.
2. 25m 21 Move back right past the perched block and up to the overlap. Tricky move leads to easier rock. Continue up to a convenient stance.
3. 35m 18 Climb up to a large shattered ledge below a very steep overhanging crack system.
4. 35m 26 Undercling traverse to left where a peg is visible. The peg is in a hollow flake so place a rock 1 or similar nut above it. Continue up to a bolt. From there continue straight up past the next bolt (or an easier variation is to traverse 2 m to the right, up crack and back above the first bolt). Continue through the roof and up to a bolt belay on a small hanging perch.
5. 35m 24 Directly above a blade peg is visible and bolts. Climb up the groove just below and left of the peg. Move up past the peg and bolt and then slightly left to easier rock move diagonally left and continue directly up to a left facing corner crack. Climb this to a rail system level with the bivvy ledge which is about 30m to the right. Stance at the bolt.

Move 20m left to a stance

6. 35m 22 Climb up to a good rail (the smallest alien is useful pro here) and up to the scoop above. Protect the next move with an RP5 and climb the scoop to easier rock and climb an easy crack to a perch. Small cam and nut belay.
7. 21 Step around 2m to the right to a straightforward crack and climb this to a blocky rail. Rail left to a thorn tree and up to crack. Place pro and stretch left to gain a small stance. Nut and cam belay.
8. 22 Rail left 4m or so on grey rock to a point where you can step up. Small cams for protection. The "bird-shit" crack of Dog Day in Heaven is a few metres to the left. Climb up to a dirty crack and climb it. Move diagonally right on easier rock and do a tricky move to a small, but good, stance.
9. 40m 19 Move over easy but dubious, lichen covered rock diagonally right for about 4m and then step left into a bushy, short chimney crack. Up this for 3m and then climb easily up large, hollow sounding grey flakes. Step to the right and stance.
10. 15 Up diagonally right for 3m and then move up left.
11. 14 Walk off up and to the left but belay recommended as a slip is tickets!

FA: C Edelstein, Andrew De Klerk. Circa 2000

DOG OF THUNDER

30A0 R **** [N, B]

Start immediately right of the start DREAM OF WHITE DOGS about 100m beyond GREAT GULLEY. Three bolts are visible.

1. 25 Clip the first bolt with difficulty and do tricky moves into the recess. Climb up recess to the bulge and layback and mantel strenuously to gain easier ground. Continue up the shallow recess to semi-hanging belay after 10m or so.
2. 23 Climb up and slightly right to place a good medium sized cam to the right of the pillar 5m above. Step left at the base of the pillar and avoid the undercut flake to gain the recess on the left of the pillar. Do technical moves to good holds. Continue through overlap above to gain a small but good stance.
3. 55m 21 Climb directly up for about 4m and then tend diagonally left to avoid the white rock to gain rappel anchors. Continue up tending a little left and then back right to gain a pillar. Climb this and find an overlap that leads to easier ground. Continue to the shattered ledge and bolt and nut belay.
4. 35m 25 Step off the right end of the ledge and climb the recess to gain an obvious overhanging crack (shared with DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER 21) At the crack step right to gain a right facing recess. Climb up to the left 2m to a perch (one can stance here with small cam belay). 3 bolts are visible up and to the left. Climb up 2m from the perch step right and then back left. Continue on good holds to the overlap below the bolts. Continue past the bolts to a ledge and good nut runners (25) (can belay here). Climb up the run-out face to attain a right facing corner-crack (20). Continue to the bivvy ledge.
5. 15m 16R Traverse carefully 15m to the skyline to a peg and bolt belay.
6. 20m 30 **The Ningenator Pitch.** Above are several bolts. Additional cams are also required. Climb up to a rail and move left to a rest at a medium cam placement. Rail right for about 5m to a bolt and move up over a bulge to gain a left facing corner. Continue easily to a bolt belay on a good ledge.
7. 15m 22 **The "Measuring-up Pitch.** Move right past two bolts and do a reachy move to a juggy recess/crack on grey rock. Continue easily to a ledge system and clip the bolt to keep the rope direct for the second.
8. 15m 30A0 **Abraxis in the Sky.** Climb past the bolts on edges to a two bolt semi-hanging belay (take at least two small cams 1.5 and 3cm or $\frac{3}{4}$ and 1 in). The crux is a long reach to a non-hold after the last bolt before the belay.
9. 20m 30 **What it Takes.** This pitch has several bolts but also requires a large cam, some small cams and medium nuts. Gain the crack and continue strenuously to a hard undercling move. Continue up and to the left and follow the bolts. At the last bolt do a tricky mantel and move right to a small cam and nut belay directly above the previous stance.
10. 20m 22 Climb up on the grey juggy rock and then step left to a ledge. Above is a stunning lay back crack. Step up into a crack and continue 3m or so. Move right into the layback. Climb up to the overhang and clip the bolt on the left. Reach high to a rail and then continue to a bolt belay.
11. 15m 19 Climb directly up and move left to gain gnarly crack system. Continue to a bolt and gear belay.
12. 30m 21 Continue up the bird shit crack and do some funky moves through the blocks above to gain easier ground on grey, juggy and a little scary rock. Continue to the top to a bolt and sling belay.

FA: Clinton Martinengo, Charles Edelstein, Stewart Middlemiss, November 2007.

WALL OF WHITE LIGHT

*** 24A3 [N]

This route is on the North Wall, taking a direct line up the middle of the steepest section of the wall between GREAT GULLY and MOONLIGHT. Start just over halfway along from GREAT GULLY towards MOONLIGHT, on a blocky ledge to the right of a 6m high flat topped tooth of rock.

1. 40m 24 Climb the crack system to a good ledge. (19 A1)
2. 45m 18 Traverse 10m right along the ledge, then climb up slightly leftwards, then slightly rightward to pass the first overhangs on the right. Continue diagonally leftwards to a vague break, which is followed to ledges on the right, beneath steep grey rock.
3. 45m 19 Move up 3m, then traverse left for about 10m, until able to break through the steep crack above. Climb a short groove on the right, traverse delicately right, and continue diagonally leftwards on a rail. Move right to a vague break, which is climbed to easy rock. Climb up to a belay about 15m above.
4. 20m 21 Climb straight through steep rock then move easily to a ledge. This ledge is part of a long narrow ledge system, just beneath a prominent horizontal band of overhangs halfway up the wall. An excellent bivy is situated 15m left.
5. 40m 24 Start 5m right along the ledge. Climb diagonally right beneath an overhang a couple of metres above the ledge, to gain a crack. Climb the crack then traverse left until able to move up to a ledge on the right. Climb up to a prominent rail, which is followed leftwards for a few metres, to a point below a shallow recess. Tricky moves lead up to a hanging stance in the recess, about 5m below a roof.
6. 20m 24 Climb up to the roof via right side of flake, then rail left and continue traversing to a narrow ledge. (17 A1 on aid up left side of flake)
7. 30m 22A3 Climb rightwards to the base of a thin left facing dihedral. Aid up the dihedral and face above to a horizontal crack, then left to the base of a groove (small wires, blades and 3 hook moves). Free climb to groove to easy rock on the left, which is followed to a stance next to a flake.
8. 40m 18 Climb the easy angled right-trending break then traverse right across a slab to a short crack. Climb this, and continue up the right facing corner above to stance below a roof.
9. 35m 24 Swing left around the arête, and move up to a rail. Climb the steep double cracks above and move left onto vulture ledges. Climb up to a blocky ledge on the right, traverse right, and move up to a rail. Climb a short way up the groove above, then make a tricky traverse left to reach a recess (above the blocky ledge). Climb this to a ledge on the right.
10. 40m 17 Traverse right to a large pillar, climb the crack on its left, then climb up and right to the top.

FA: Andrew de Klerk, Kevin Smith, 1985.

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE (FREE VERSION)

*** 24 (21A2) [N]

Start 100m left of MOONLIGHT.

1. 30m 12 Climb the crack/chimney on the right-hand side of the pillar.
2. 30m 21 **Sword of Damocles**: From the top of the pillar, climb diagonally left to a ledge (crux) The pointed flake is loose, but resisted all attempts to kick it off. Continue diagonally left to stance on a block/ledge near some bush. (17A1)
3. 25m 20 Move left along the ledge about 10m, then break through above (crux). Go up along the slanting break to stance below another steep section.
4. 25m 20 Climb the bulge, then continue up diagonal left break to a small stance.
5. 35m 20 Climb diagonally right for 5m, left and up, before descending and moving left to rejoin the slanting break. Pull through the steep section on good holds 5-6m then generally rightwards and up (scarce pro) to a point just right of the previous stance (small friends in rail).
6. 40m 19 Move right about 3m then break though the ledge above just before a vague arête. Continue up and right over easier ground to large ledges.
7. 45m 18 Walk right over easy ground into the slanting crack system. Climb up past blocky ledges then steeply up to bivy ledges.
8. 35m 21 Climb the crack/corner to the top of the ledge system. Continue up to where the crack splits. Hanging belay on the left.
9. 45m 21 Continue up the right-hand crack for about 30m to where it is possible to break left into a subsidiary dihedral. Climb up to a sloping ledge in a fantastic position.
10. 30m 18 Climb up just right of the arête up a flaky crack. At 10m move right onto bird-shit ledges and continue up to a huge ledge.
11. 30m 24 **Monkey Puzzle Pitch**: Above are two large corners. Climb the left hand one over flaky ground up to the roof. Pull through to place nuts 4m up. Down climb 10m and tension left to a grotty crack. Aid up to a roof then out to a stance on the skyline. It may be necessary to climb right to protect the second (19A2). The free version goes straight up the corner.
12. 40m 19 Climb the arête for a few metres before moving left to the base of a deep crack that leads to the bushy ledges at the top.

Notes:

1. The route as described above is a free version of the original route. It is believed that the original route followed the right slanting diagonal break from somewhere on pitch 3 or 4 to rejoin on pitch 7.

FA:

Original route: Eckhard Druschke, Dave Cheesmond, 1979 (10 aid pitches)

Free version: George Mallory, Clive Curzon, 1986.

The original route description is given below:

YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE (ORIGINAL ROUTE)

*** 20A2 [N]

Start 100m left of MOONLIGHT.

1. 30m 12 Climb the crack/chimney on the right-hand side of the pillar. (F1)
2. 30m 17A1 From the top of the pillar use 3 aid points to gain climbable rock diagonally left. Free up and then further left to stance on block near bushes. (F3,A1)
3. 17A1 Move up and left 3 meters using aid and continue up free to ledge. Continue up back right to belay (hanging) below overhang. (F3,A1)
4. 19A1 Up and through overhang (A1) then free up to next roof and rail right then up diédre to ledge. (G1,A1)
5. 17 Move up ramp to left. Climb around corner to left and jam crack to large ledge. Move right and up to next ledge. (F3)
6. 15A1 Start on the right hand side and climb up and traverse left to point above belayer. Climb groove on left side of pillar. Use one aid point to gain small stance on right hand side of nose above pillar. (F2,A1)
7. 20A1 Climb the crack to large ledges (bivy site). Continue up the crack until forced to use 2 aid points where the crack is choked. Up until the crack fades and move left to hanging belay in flared crack. (G2,A1)
8. 17A2 Move up and into right hand crack/open book. Continue up this to a stance on blocks. (F3,A2)
9. 20 Climb the face on right for a move then climb into crack. Continue up crack to loosish block and move right to stance. (G2)
10. 19A1 Move up to flake then use 4 aid points out under right hand flake. Cross slab diagonally leftwards into crack. Continue up crack to stance below steep corner on left. (G1,A1)
11. 15A2 Take the left hand crack (i.e. the steep corner) to large ledge above and left. (F2,A2)
12. 19A2 Claim the main left hand corner over large flake, through overhang and up to a small stance on the right, below the top roof. (G1,A2)
13. 19A1 Move left on aid, place 2 points above the roof and tension left into a large deep crack. Climb this to the top. (G1,A1)

Notes:

1. The route description given above is the original, first published in the 1988 Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa, pp124-5. It is reproduced here with kind permission from the MCSA.
 2. Gradings have been converted to the modern SA system, but they are included in brackets at the end of each pitch for completeness. Some G2's are harder than others!
 3. Pitch lengths were not published.
- FA: Eckhard Druschke, Dave Cheesmond, 1979



Ian Kotze following pitch 2 of PSYCHO REPTILE (18) Photo by Hector Pringle

PSYCHO REPTILE

**** 22 [1P, N]

An obvious roof 20m up is situated about halfway between YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE and MOONLIGHT. Start about 5m left of the roof where a 1m boulder lies about 1m from the base of the face.

1. 42m 21 Climb a crack/recess system, step left at a rounded ledge, and continue to another vague ledge at a point a few metres up and to the left of the roof. Up another few metres until able to climb diagonally leftwards to a stance (friend crack).
2. 40m 18 Climb up, trending slightly rightwards, to a hand crack a few metres to the right of a 7m x 1m roof. Up the crack and traverse left to an adequate ledge above the roof (fixed piton).
3. 40m 16 Climb up and traverse left to the arête. Climb left and up until able to trend diagonally right and up to shattered ledges below steeper rock. Walk 10m left to stance about 10m right of a grassy right-facing corner.
4. 30m 18 Starting off blocks climb a narrow left-facing dihedral. Traverse right (Poor pro) until able to move up to a ledge to the right of a large flake.
5. 40m 15 Traverse right to gain a crack and block system which is followed diagonally rightwards to a stance on top of a large pillar/flake.
6. 45m 20 Traverse left and climb up to the base of the obvious right-facing corner crack. Follow this to a ledge, then climb another 6 metres to the top of a flake. Stance on the highest ledge to the left.
7. 40m 22 Starting near the left end of the ledge, climb a left facing ramp, up past a block to reach a rail. Rail a few metres left until able to move up about two metres. Traverse back right to above the stance. Then climb the obvious break and slab to stance high on the left.
8. 30m 22 Traverse right beneath the overhang to the undercut base of a crack. Climb this, and finish right on a ledge. Climb the corner on the right and stance on a large ledge.
9. 50m 20 Starting in the middle of the ledge, climb straight up to a rail. Traverse right a few metres, and climb the face above, trending rightwards at first. Exit right onto sloping ledges, then traverse right and up past the base of a vegetated groove, to stance about 5 metres to the right of a small yellow wood tree.
10. 30m 22 Climb diagonally right over a grassy ledge and up a smooth, shallow recess. Continue past a small roof to gain a jam-crack. From halfway up this crack, traverse across the smooth face to a crack 3m right. Up this to exit right onto a ledge.
11. 25m 10 A rising traverse right to stance 4m below a roof.
12. 30m 16 Move up to the roof and dassie-crawl left onto a good ledge. Continue around the arête and climb the face on the left to top-out Monteseel-style.

Notes:

1. The first ascent required considerable cleaning. It does not see many ascents and so there is a chance the climb could be dirty.
- FA: Kevin Smith, Stewart Middlemiss, Clive Curson, 1990.

MOONLIGHT AREA

MOONLIGHT is the very obvious 80m east facing corner, starting from ground level and ending at a sloping grass ledge, at the right hand side of the Wall of White Light. The MOONLIGHT area extends rightwards from here. Large portions of the base of this section of the wall are very chossy, so all the routes use MOONLIGHT's initial corner to access the sloping grassy ledge. An easy traverse cuts right from this ledge (the traverse is, in fact, part of MOONLIGHT), providing the gateway to the good rock above.

FUTURE SHOCK

*** 23A2 [1P, N]

Climbs the huge recess system, visible from the top of the ramp, to the left of MOONLIGHT DIRECT. This is the dark, overhanging recess directly above MOONLIGHT's initial corner. Scramble 20m to stance in MOONLIGHT's left-facing corner/crack.

1. 50m 18 Climb the corner/crack to the grass ledge (as for MOONLIGHT). Scramble up to the top of a short pillar at the back right corner of the big ledge. One is now in the base of the left-facing dihedral.
2. 40m 21 Climb the dihedral, past a hanging block, to a hanging belay beneath the large roof.
3. 20m 20A1 Move out left, turn roof and continue up to a hidden ledge.
4. 35m 22 Climb deviously up in the main corner system to a tiny stance at the base of the bomb-bay Chimney (fixed piton).
5. 40m 23A2 **The Batman Pitch**: Aid up back of chimney (small wires) to where crack peters out. Wild stemming leads to a yellowwood tree. Pull through the overhang and continue up to the roof capping the chimney (poor pro). Aid out along roof-crack to hanging belay (Friend 3).
6. 20m 20A1 Aid around lip of roof to gain a fighting off-width, which leads to an alcove.
7. 45m 18 Turn overhang surprisingly easily by means of strenuous armpulls and climb continuation recess to highest ledge.
8. 130m Bash to summit.

Notes:

1. Guano detracts from otherwise impressive climbing.
2. Opening party climbed with double rack.

FA: Mike Cartwright, Clive Curson, Stewart Middlemiss, Kevin Smith, 1990.

MOONLIGHT

* 18 [1P, N]

From the ramp leading down to the foot of the main band of cliffs, a slightly overhanging crack or recess leading up to a very large grass ledge about 250ft above the ground can be seen about 150 yards beyond the main gully in the centre of the cliffs. The route follows this crack, then proceeds to the right along to the far (right) side of the grass ledge, and then continues another 250ft or so further to the right along a small broken ledge at the same level. The route then roughly follows the skyline.

The original route revisited for only the 5th time by Clive Curson, Snort Edelstien and Stewart Middlemiss. The 21 pitches previously described by P Fatti, A Chinery and A Shaw in 1965 may be shortened to 6 as follows:

Scramble 20m up the corner (7)

1. 50m 18 Climb up to the grass ledge, with an optional step right at about 10m. From the right hand end of the grass ledge, traverse about 60m right at grade 7 to the second corner (CRACK OF ADVENTURE braves the bushes above).
2. 50m 7 Round the corner, climb first diagonally right, then up left through sundry jungles passing a chimney to a grassy ledge.
3. 60m 17 Climb up and right to a recess. Up 2m and step left onto a rib. Up to the roof about 40m above the stance. Go 3m right (careful?) across a hollow flake, up through the major break to a small stance just above the tree.
4. 40m 18 Continue up the large recess then out left to a ledge. Climb right past a peg in the roof, across and up to the right leaning crack. Up easily to a huge block.
5. 30m 18 Climb tired rock, up the chimney, out and up easy ground to a platform.
6. 40m 17 Move up to the roof jam crack and out right to a ledge. Diagonally up right over arbitrary rock to a stance.

Either scramble up and right over exposed rock (E) or traverse across the jungled gully on the right to join the HEY JUDE walk-off.

Notes:

1. Read BLOUBERG NORTH WALL FRONTAL ROUTE for an account of the FA.
2. Some experienced parties that have climbed pitch 4 in recent years say that it is substantially harder than 18 (perhaps even 22ish), because all the good grips at the chimney exit have broken off. The second on this ascent had the dubious honour of removing the last remaining grip.

FA:

Pitches 1 to 4: Anthony Chinery, Tony Shaw, July 1965.

Pitches 5 to 6: Anthony Chinery, Paul Fatti, July 1966.

MOONLIGHT DIRECT

*** 22 [N]

Start as for MOONLIGHT.

1. 50m 18 Climb to the grass ledge as for MOONLIGHT.

Walk 80m to the right-hand end of the grass ledge.

2. 35m 16 Climb 6m up left-hand side of sloping face on corner then traverse right under overhang. Mantle up on loose block and up steep crack to square ledge. Step down to block wedged in crack. Handswing left around corner to ledge. Climb recess above for 5m and continue diagonally up leftwards to ledge below overhanging recess. Traverse 2m left along ledge and climb steep face on left for 10m to small, exposed stance below small tree.
3. 42m 22 Climb groove on right for 2m. Descend diagonally right (delicate) for 4m to ledge. Traverse 2m right to base of slightly overhanging groove topped by overhang. Climb this for 10m (A2, pegs and wires) (stance 3m below overhang). Continue up to overhang and traverse 2m left under it (A2) to base of short groove. The crux free move brings one to small ledge above overhang and below second one. Step left past this and continue up, using two pegs, until angle eases. Climb slanting groove and face for 11m to next overhang. Traverse right on 3 pegs beneath overhang to ledge (chockstone belay).
4. 33m 18 Move up 2m to higher ledge and continue up steep crack for 5m. Move diagonally up right to behind, then onto huge flake. Continue 3m to ledge and two-man bivy (peg belay). Climb steep recess above stance to overhang then traverse left under it for 5m to small ledge with a bush 6m below next overhang. Climb steep rock to 2m below overhang then step diagonally up left to foothold on the left of overhang (crux). Climb steep recess above for 3m. Make awkward traverse back right into stance in base of overhanging recess.
5. 35m 19 Climb arête to right of recess, move to crack and up to ledge. From far right of ledge, move up crack (peg for aid on first move). From top of crack move diagonally left along ramp. Continue to large cave with yellowwood tree.
6. 33m 14 Climb chimney at back of cave 16m and traverse right to large ledge. Continue diagonally rightwards on large ledges to base of deep 3m lichen crack. Climb this (strenuous) to large ledge.
7. 45m 12 Climb behind and on to flake on left. Continue up steep crack above then traverse right to steep face. Climb up on incut holds. Move diagonally left over steep grass into recess which is climbed to big ledges above.
8. 60m 10 Walk 15m right, then climb straight up for 45m, following easiest line.
9. 45m 11 Climb straight up over vegetated rock, finally finishing up chimney.

Notes:

1. The rock is exceptionally good throughout. From pitch 2 to 9 the climb is very sustained and exposed.
2. Pitons were not left in-situ on FA.
3. The above is based on the RD for the original aid route. The free version follows the same line.

FA: Paul Fatti, Art McGarr, 1972.

FFA: Disputed, but sometime after 1981 (reference MCSA Journal, 1988, p125)

CRACK OF ADVENTURE

** 22 [N]

The first pitch and subsequent scrambling are common with MOONLIGHT, but are rewritten here in the form they are currently climbed. Start as for MOONLIGHT and MOONLIGHT DIRECT. Scramble up in the corner for about 15m.

1. 45m 18 Climb the recess/corner to the huge grass ledge.

Walk to the right-hand end of the grass ledge and traverse right (grade 7) for as far again to stance on the left side of a buttress leaning against the face.

2. 45m 15 Climb the recess on the left side of the buttress and continue up a few metres to beneath a bushy slot. Traverse about 10m left and up to a ledge.
3. 30m 13 Climb up to the left-trending groove which leads to a large ledge. Walk left to belay at the base of the ominous right facing corner-crack.
4. 35m 22 **The Crack of Adventure**: Climb the crack. Continue up leftwards to an excellent ledge.
5. 30m 17 Move up the ramp and traverse left, around the skyline, and into the base of a left trending recess. Follow this recess through a yellowwood tree to stances.
6. 45m 14 Climb up for about 10m, and climb to a ledge on the left. Climb a short face and grassy ramp to ledges on the left.
7. 100m of upgradeable scrambling (a la MOONLIGHT DIRECT) leads to the top.

FA: Kevin Smith, George Mallory, 1986.

THE ROAD TO NOWHERE

*** 22A3 [2B, N]

The route starts as for MOONLIGHT, takes the natural line leading up to the CRACK OF ADVENTURE and then takes the incredible wall between that climb and MOONLIGHT (Original).

Scramble 20m up the corner.

1. 50m 18 Climb the corner to the large grass ledge. Stepping out right after 8m does not change the grade.

Walk to the right hand end of the ledge. Then a 7 traverse 40m over sometimes broken rock take one to a small cave.

2. 35m 20 From a point 4m right of the cave (about 3m left of the hard looking corner) climb diagonally up left and up to the large roof. Traverse right 8m to a break which leads steeply up to a small ledge. Continue up the corner above and step right to belay on a ledge on the arête.
3. 40m 19 Climb up and right to a cubby hole in another left facing corner. Pull up from the right onto the face above. Move up till a right tending crack leads to the large ledge system (about 12-15m right of the base of COA) One is now aiming at the corner starting some 30m up and 7m right. Continue up to the next ledge if desirable. (*)
4. 55m 22 **Midget proof Pitch:** Move up 2-3m to a wide foot rail and traverse 7m right. Climb up and move back left to reach the base of a flake leading up right to a detached ledge (*). Traverse right 8-10m until one is almost under the left hand edge of the large roof on MOONLIGHT. Climb up 3m and traverse left to a point 2m right of the belay. Climb up 3m to a welcome rail. Left 1m then stretch hard up to a sloping ledge. Climb delicately up right till one can reach up (far!) to a rail. Up and left to gain the base of the corner. By judicious gear bouncing on the (easy) traverses the ropes only travel about 35m
5. 42m 22 **Yosemite Pitch:** Climb the corner and crack straight above up to a ledge. Amazing!
6. 35m 19A3 **End Of the Road:** Start on the left and climb to the base of the crack above. A hook move from the top of this gets you to the crack on the right. Climb and aid this. 3 or 4 hook moves above this get you to a bolt, from which you can reach the next crack. Where this dies, hook up and left for 5m passing another bolt to gain another short crack. From the top of this traverse 3m left on another point to reach climbable ground. Climb up 15m to easy ground.

Scramble right (and sometimes down) 100m to the HEY JUDE scramble off.

Notes:

1. The first bolt was replaced in Oct 2011 with an M10, 60mm stainless steel bolt. The top bolt is very suspect but was not replaced as there is good gear nearby.
2. The last pitch has been unsuccessfully attempted free by multiple parties on top rope. If the first bolt is moved about 90cm lower it will be in a better position for free climbing, but permission must be sought from the first ascensionists before doing this.

FA: Clive Curson, Stewart Middlemiss, 1989.

MOON AREA

When walking rightwards from MOONLIGHT the base of the wall forms a wide grassy ledge, visible from the top of the ramp. The moon area encompasses the routes that start off this ledge. This is the friendliest, craggy section of the wall, with many classic moderate routes.

FEATURES

Grassy Ledge - About 3 pitches off the deck a big ledge cuts right across the MOON AREA. The pitches leading up to the ledge are generally not brilliant, but above the rock becomes excellent. Most of the good climbing in the MOON AREA can be accessed by climbing the start to either HEY JUDE or SOMETHING OF VALUE to the grassy ledge, and then walking to the start of the remaining pitches.

Jungle Ledge - About 2 pitches above the eastern end of the **Grassy Ledge** is a big, lush bowl of a ledge with a nice shady tree. The ledge is encountered on routes that go up near BUSHPIG and it is an excellent bivi spot.

Bivi Cave - About 3 pitches above the western end of the **Grassy Ledge** is a sheltered cave which makes a good 2-person bivi. The cave is encountered on routes that have upper pitches near LAST MOON.

Rap Route - The rap route basically follows the climb BUSHPIG. To get to the start, from the HEY JUDE pools at the top, find the gulley that HEY JUDE tops out on. Scramble down this until able to abseil diagonally down left from a tree (looking up) to a big boulder perched on the edge of the true cliff. The first set of chains are just below this boulder. You'll need 2 x 50m ropes for the rap route. Once on the **Grassy Ledge**, the route continues down just left of HEY JUDE, and almost directly on SCATTERLINGS. Two abseils put you on the ground from the **Grassy Ledge**. The last abseil is free hanging.



Looking East from the Bivi Cave

Photo by Hector Pringle

ADVENTURE TIME

** 22 [N]

Start location as for HALFMOON.

1. 40m 21 Climb up the steep red face immediately left of HALFMOON's corner/crack, and move out right above the 2nd roof onto a ledge. Climb diagonally left to a stance (stance common with HALFMOON).
2. 40m 18 Climb up to the roof, then traverse left until able to climb straight up steep rock to a ledge on top of a pillar (stance common with HALFMOON).
3. 40m 14 Traverse 5m right then climb straight up to a large ledge. Belay in the cave 5m left of the corner.
4. 40m 19 Pull through on the left-hand side of the cave, and climb up to a ledge. Move left and climb the thin corner, moving out left under roofs to a good ledge.



Abbing to the Grassy Ledge Photo by Alan Grant

5. 40m 20 Move up 3m to a rail and traverse left to move up to a small ledge at the left extremity of the roofs above. Move right on the lip for 2m and up a small corner to a large horizontal break. Traverse 20m left to a ledge with a block.
6. 50m 22 Up to a short corner, up this (5m) then traverse 5m left to a thin crack. Up the crack to a long rail. Move left 4m and up the face for 6m to a horizontal break. Up the steep face/crack system to a corner, up to the top of this, moving out right and up to a tree.
7. 45m 16 Past the tree following the obvious line to the top of the pillar.
8. 40m 14 Up the face on the right, then diagonally left to a chimney. Up the chimney to a ledge.
9. 60m Roped scrambling to the top.

FA: Stewart Middlemiss, Kevin Smith, Clive Curson, 1990.

HALFMOON

** 18

Start about 250m right of MOONLIGHT a short distance past a large pile of boulders. A series of corners and ledges slant diagonally up rightward for about 30m. A prominent series of overhangs leads diagonally up leftwards about 33m up.

1. 30m 12 Start up short steep recess then diagonally up right to ledge. Step right and climb up just right of overhanging recess to next ledge. Climb up, via another ledge then a series of vertical cracks to small stance.
2. 30m 14 Traverse left 8m via prominent detached block (appears safe) to recess right of pillar. Climb 3m up thin recess then traverse delicately left around pillar into another recess. Move up left side of recess (loose blocks at start) to just below overhang. Traverse 3m left then up, passing overhang on left to ledge.
3. 23m 16 Climb up 3m and traverse left 7m into base of open recess. Climb up slightly right, to short overhanging section. Climb this to small ledge on right.
4. 30m 14 Traverse left, moving up in a few places and finish traverse along narrow, grass covered ledge. From left of ledge, climb up steep face on slightly unsound rock, move slightly left, into easier angled recess slanting up rightwards and follow this to large ledge.
5. 43m 14 Step up and traverse 8m right to below bulging face. Surmount bulge at easiest point then traverse towards small tree in vegetated recess. Avoiding tree on the left, traverse across recess and climb right hand face which steepens near the top, to stance in easier angled recess above.
6. 17m 7 Climb diagonally right to large grassy ledge. Walk about 85m rightwards to where ledge ends at overhanging vegetated recess.
7. 25m 14 Traverse right across recess and climb up 3m to grassy ledge. Traverse back left into vegetated recess above overhang and climb it to stance on the left.
8. 25m 16 Climb diagonally up left for 12m then straight up to ledge below steep face. From left end of ledge climb up thin face to just below a turf ledge. Step right and continue diagonally up right to ledge.
9. 25m 16 Climb face above, partly via layback crack, to base of overhanging corner and jamming crack (hard). Ascend this and continue to large stance.
10. 14m 7 Traverse right to large tree in lush recess (**Jungle Ledge** - superb bivvy). About 35m above ledge are two chimneys. The route goes up right hand one.
11. 25m 14 Climb recess behind tree starting left and traversing to the right side 4m up. Continue up to overhang at top of recess and move out delicately around corner into groove in right hand face. Climb up 5m to ledge on right.
12. 30m 16 Climb face diagonally above for 7m. Trend left towards ledge below prominent right hand overhanging chimney. Climb to chimney with difficulty and climb it more easily to ledge below red, recessed face (bivy site).
13. 25m 17 About 8m up face is small tree with a crack to its left. Climb face, starting on the right then traversing left into crack just below tree. Aid on a nut to pass tree on left and continue as far as possible up crack system to awkward resting place in small open book. Aid on piton to the left to cross an undercut face and gain base of prominent chimney. Climb up 8m to ledge.
14. 25m 18 Climb the chimney and continuation cracks to ledge.
15. 25m 16 Climb continuation chimney above.
16. 25m 10 Continue up until able to scramble.
17. 66m 5 With bits of 10, scramble via short unpleasant chimney to summit.

Notes:

1. One of the "big push routes" see THE BIG PUSH in the STORIES section.
- FA: Paul Fatti, Art McGarr, 1976.

REBEL YELL

** 21 [N]

Climbs the pillar to the left of the 50m long roof situated about 70m up, between HALFMOON and HEY JUDE. Start below the pillar at a V in the path between two boulders. Above is an obvious fist crack on the left side of a large flake.

1. 20m 21 Climb the fist crack, move right, and climb the final few metres from the top of the flake to gain a narrow, continuous ledge.
2. 30m 19 Climb up to the base of an obvious V-groove, and climb this to exit right. Traverse right, move up into the base of a stepped corner and climb this to a ledge on the arête on the left.
3. 25m 18 Climb up about 15 metres to the level of a prominent traverse line which is followed left to a stance on the arête (a loose pitch).
4. 50m 20 Climb more or less straight up to large grass ledge. The next pitch starts about 10 metres to the right, from a tree about 6 metres left of a damp corner.
5. 50m 19 Move up steeply and rail right to pull onto a ledge. Follow a left trending dihedral to a ledge, then climb straight up, keeping left, to a high stance.
6. 40m 16 Climb up rightwards to a grassy ledge at the left base of a huge pinnacle. Climb the recess on the left side of the pinnacle to a ledge on top.
7. 30m 21 Step onto the face at the base of obvious left trending crack system. Tricky moves to start lead to recess which is climbed to semi-stance on the left.
8. 20m 21 Climb the left-hand left-leaning crack, moving left at the top to gain a scoop. Continue up leftwards until able to traverse left to a stance.
9. 45m 20 Starting on the left, climb up to a scoop. Continue up the break, through a tree, and climb the right-hand crack through two roofs to reach a good ledge (MOONLIGHT stance). Jam through the apex of the roof to the highest ledge.
10. 40m 19 Climb the right leaning crack, traverse left to the base of a right facing dihedral, and climb this to large ledges.
11. 75m 15 Follow the right-trending ramp on the wall above. Continue to the top.

FA: Stewart Middlemiss, Kevin Smith, 1988.



Another day in Africa - sunrise from the wall

Photo by Hector Pringle

SOLAR ECLIPSE

*** 22A2+ [2P, N]

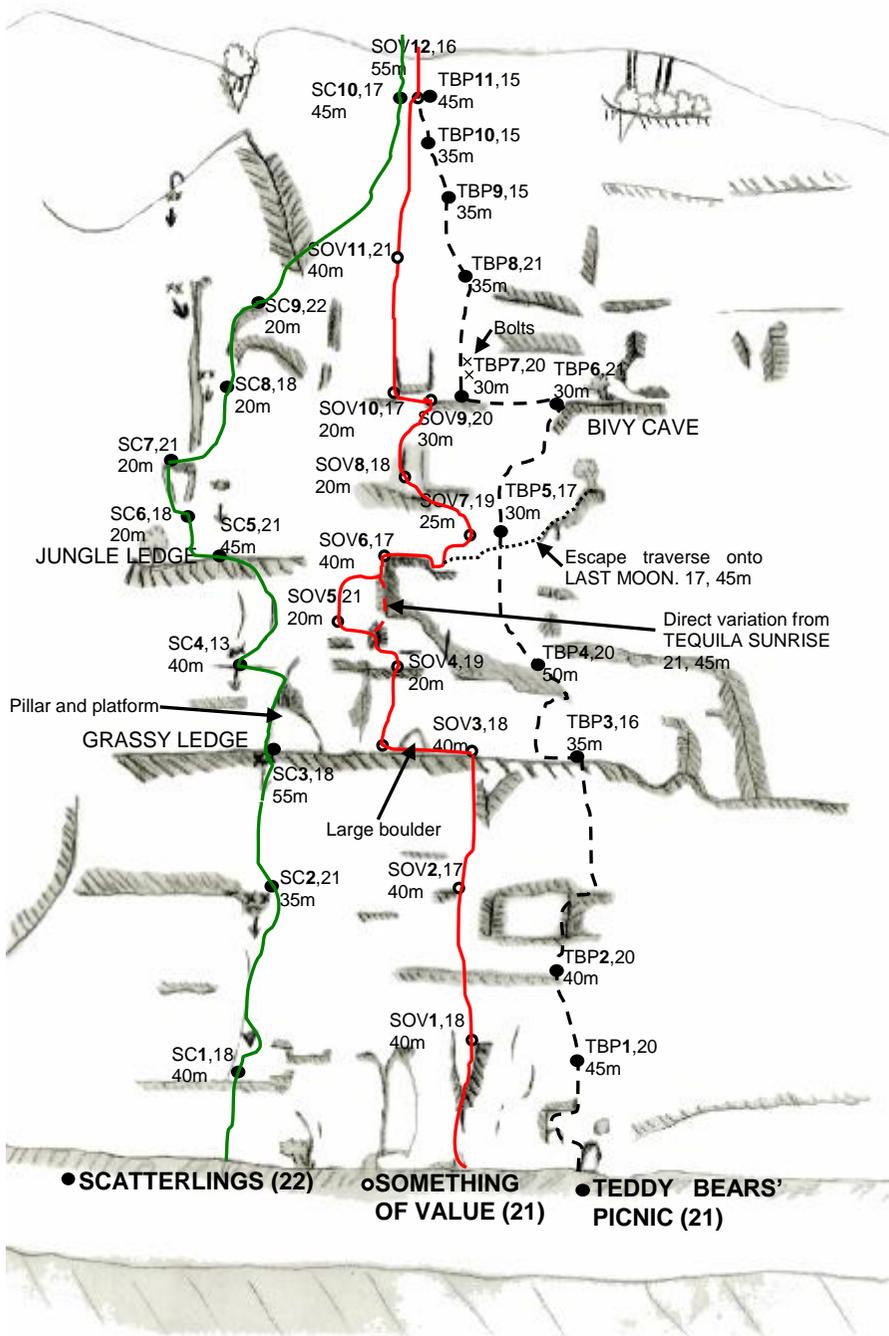
Between HALFMOON and HEY JUDE, there is a 50m long roof at 70m height. In the middle of the roof are two large flake lines. Below the right-hand one, on a ledge about 10m off the normal ground level, is a pillar with a chimney-sized gap behind it. Start at the base of the right hand side of the pillar.

1. 45m 20. Climb right hand side of pillar. Continue up flake line until first roof is reached. Move left to a break, and continue up to narrow ledge, directly above pillar, and about 8m below main roof.
2. 30m A2. **Great Roof Pitch**. Thrash through hanging gardens up and left from stance (the swath of clear-cut from FA is likely to have re-grown). Move left at roof, then out along flake. At piton, move left for two moves onto drilled bat hook hole. Move up through overlap to reach rail, then right onto ledge with poor peg belay.
3. 40m 16. Move right into corner, then up and left to a grassy ledge, belaying off a tree. Awesome bivy to right of tree on cleared ledge below some low roofs (blackened corner). Next pitch starts from left end of these roofs, as for PROJECT THREE. The **Grassy Ledge** can be reached by walking right.
4. 30m 21. Pull through initial overhang at chest height, move right, then follow corner to next roof. Move left, then up to stance on small ledge 10m left of peg on HEY JUDE.
5. 35m 19 Clamber up blocks forming right hand side of stance. Follow intermittent crack above, stepping left when holds run out, then right again 2m higher. Continue up to stance on right end of **Jungle Ledge** (essentially the same pitch as PROJECT THREE).
6. 50m 22A2+. Move up and right from stance, with very technical climbing leading to left-facing corner 15m right of HALFMOON's chimney. When free climbing becomes untenable, start aiding. Beyond the roof, technically easy but exciting aid leads up and left of overhang, then up again on slabs until a stance can be made just below the right-leaning cracks.
7. 40m 22 (19A1) Step left from the stance to gain the long right-leaning crack. Follow this until the crack splits. The right-hand line becomes a frightening off-width through a huge roof. Follow the left-hand line around the roof with two points of aid, then right into a gully (as for SCATTERLINGS).
8. 15m 15. Continue up through trees until the Disco Ledge Bivi is reached (a flat-topped pillar about the area of a small car, with a small cave/fissure behind).
9. 5m 15. Leave the Disco Ledge via the crack that the gully has narrowed to.
10. 100m. Contribute to deforestation on your way to the top.

Notes:

1. *Special equipment*. Two hooks suitable for small edges, two standard hooks, one hook for 5mm wide, 8mm deep holes. Aiders (etriers) are useful. A hand-bolting kit is recommended to beef-up the second stance with two bolts. A double or triple rack of small wires is useful for pitch 6.
2. *Free notes*. Pitch 2 can probably be mostly freed at grades that someone you know can climb. Pitch 6 would be bold, but most moves should be doable free.
3. Pitch 7 sounds suspiciously like the crux of SCATTERLINGS (22)?

FA: A. Hufner, D Morgan, 14-16/02/1999.



Topo – Moderate routes in the Moon Area

By Hector Pringle

SCATTERLINGS

**** 22 [N]

(See topo of moderate routes)

A 50m long roof is situated about 70m up, between HALF MOON and HEY JUDE. SCATTERLINGS climbs up about 10m to the right of the right hand end of the roof. Directly below this point, scramble up 2m to the base of a short square recess. This point is about 15m left of HEY JUDE's start.

1. 40m 18 Straight up a blocky rock, past wide ledge and small tree to base of crack system running up scooped face. Climb crack and corner then traverse 4m left to ledge on arête. 10m up to the right is obvious small nose-like roof.
2. 35m 21 Climb right and up to a rail which extends rightwards 4m below nose. Rail right, about 3m past the nose, then climb up until level with roof. Traverse left onto the nose then move up to a rail which is followed left until able to climb up leftwards to a small ledge. Climb up a few metres further to a large ledge on the right. One is now directly above the start of the climb.
3. 55m 18 35m up to the left is a small tree. Climb diagonally leftwards up railed face. At about 20m move right past end of long narrow roof. From small tree follow left-leading corner to ledge on top of pillar. Continue up to left end of **Grassy Ledge**. The chains of the **Rap Route** are just below the ledge.
4. 40m 13 Climb up obvious gully/corner on left side of pillar (HEY JUDE climbs right side of pillar). Before the top of gully traverse left a few metres until able to climb up and left to ledge directly above previous stance. (HEY JUDE stances further left, where there are chains hidden by grassy tuft).
5. 45m 21 Move past a small cammed block to righthand end of ledge. Climb up rightward to gain vague crack system leading up wall. Climb crack to its end, then move left to base of narrow left facing dihedral. Climb this to small roof then move slightly left to gain a crack (about 2m right of HEY JUDE). Climb up to rail and traverse 3m right. Climb straight up past a prong to ledge, move 2m left, then continue up to long narrow ledge.

Walk left for half a rope length, to a point 10m right of the tallest tree (**Jungle Ledge**). HALFMOON heads up big recess on the left.

6. 20m 18 turn the small roof a few metres up, then zig-zag up face above to reach ledge and block. Above and slightly left are two steep.
7. 20m 21 Climb up and left to base of right-hand chimney (HALF MOON). Undercling left to gain left hand chimney/recess which is followed to ledge.
8. 20 m 18 Climb diagonally right to gain right leaning crack. Gain the top of large block/flake left of crack. Continue up crack to cubbyhole (uncomfortable).
9. 20m 22 Climb the continuation crack (amazing!) until an easier angled slab on the right is reached. Stance at apex of slab.
10. 45m 17 Move round right into recess. 10m up this climb out diagonally rightwards and continue up to easy ground and ledges.

Scramble about 75m to the top.

Notes:

1. It makes sense to link pitches 8 and 9.
2. Gear is bomber on all the hard pitches.

FA: Kevin Smith, George Mallory, 1987.

PROJECT THREE

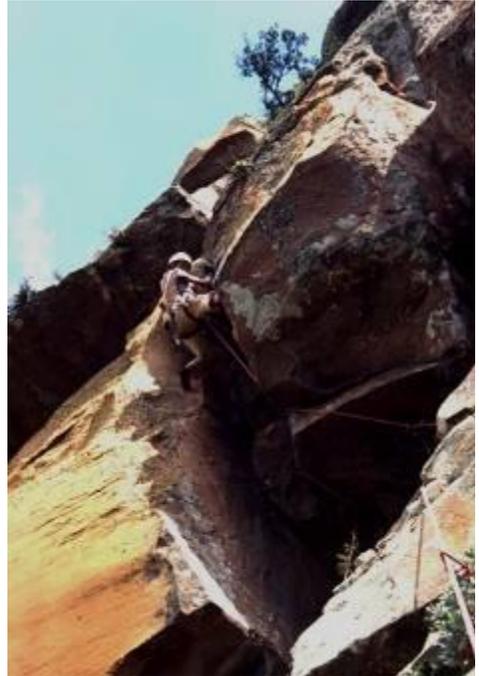
Starts between SCATTERLINGS and EIGHT MILES HIGH, about 15 metres left of HEY JUDE, straight up to the grass ledge between the two climbs. Start about 5 metres left of EIGHT MILES HIGH.

1. 40m 17 Up 7m then 2m right to crack which is about 6m left of EMH. More or less straight up to a ledge.
2. 40m 19 Climb up behind stance passing small overhang on the right at 7m. Continue up and slightly left to pass another roof on the left. Rail haul up to ledge under small roof above previous stance (5m left of EMH).
3. 35m 22 7m up is a bulge with a small triangle in it. When established above this, move left 2m then straight up the crack to the **Grassy Ledge**.

Walk up and 25m left to cleaned ledge, below some overhanging rock (3m right of tree).

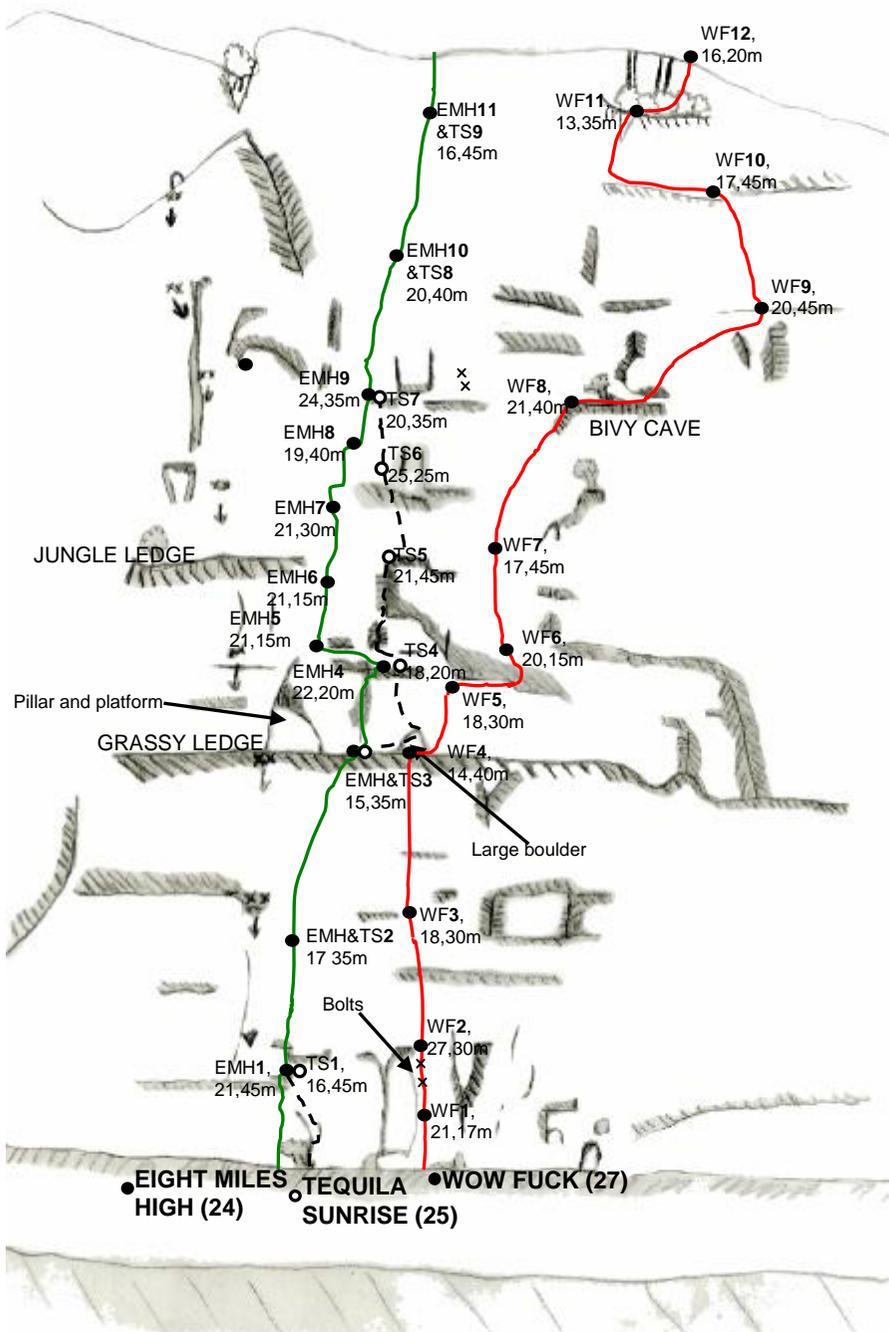
4. 30m 20 Climb corner above blackened overhang, moving right at 15m. Move up, then trend back leftwards to ledge slightly above and 5m left of HEY JUDE's peg stance (rap chains hidden by grass tuft).
5. 35m 20 Climb the crack above the left hand edge of the stance, stepping right at about 12m, then moving up and back left. Stance at the right edge of the **HALFMOON Jungle Ledge**.
6. 45m 18 Climb the short corners rightish to reach the slabby face. Continue up leftwards to the base of a crack through a steep orange section. Aid this or (alt.) climb the narrow **HALF MOON** chimney (5m left) to a ledge.
7. 45m 23 Continue up and climb the left facing corner above the niche on **HALFMOON** to a small ledge where the crack splits under a large roof. The bulge is harder for climbers shorter than 1.8m.
8. 35m 18 Climb the right hand crack up to a big rail and move out right under the roof to bucket seat on the lip. Continue up the crack and ledges above on the right to the **HEY JUDE** scramble.

FA: Clive Curson, Stewart Middlemiss, 1989.



Karin Magogg cranking the roof in the Scatterlings chimney (pitch 7, 21)

Photo by Steve Crowe



Topo – Hard routes in the Moon Area

By Hector Pringle

EIGHT MILES HIGH

***** 24 (21A0) [1P, N]

(See topo of hard routes)

Takes a fairly direct line up the wall, the first three pitches between SCATTERLINGS and HEY JUDE, and the remaining between HEY JUDE and SOMETHING OF VALUE.

Start about 3m left of HEY JUDE at the base of a rounded slab.

1. 45m 21 Climb the thin crack system running up the centre of the slab to a ledge. Climb the hand crack on the right side of the pillar above, and continue up and right to a narrow ledge (shared with HEY JUDE).
2. 35m 17 Pull through the narrowest point in the roof about 3m right of the stance. Climb trending slightly left to small ledge at the base of a shallow water scoop.
3. 35m 15 Climb up scoop, trending right at top to exit onto **Grassy Ledge**. Directly above is an immaculate corner, about 10m right of HEY JUDE.
4. 20m 22 Gain the base of the dihedral, climb it and pull through the overhang to beneath the long roof (blade peg). It makes sense to link straight into the next pitch to avoid a factor-2 fall. If not, rail right to a long ledge (SOMETHING OF VALUE stances further to the right).
5. 15m 21 **Circle-Arrow Pitch**: Climb left and up from the left end of the ledge to gain the rail beneath the roof. Rail left to a ledge.
6. 15m 21 **Hot Tin Roof pitch**: Climb the crack on the left side of the ledge to beneath a roof. Turn this on the right and climb a short recess to exit left to a narrow stance.
7. 30m 21 Climb more or less straight up the face above to gain the ledge beneath the long roof. Pull through the roof at the narrowest point and move left. Climb a short steep face to a narrow stance.
8. 40m 19 Climb up leftwards for a few metres until able to traverse easily right some way to the base of a short pillar. Traverse right from top of pillar, to the base of prominent left-facing corner. Up this to ledge, then up corner above to reach the bogging ledge on top of the main pillar (**Stance of the Eagles**).
9. 35m 24 (21A0) **Pendulum pitch**: Climb a few metres up the narrow dihedral to a fixed wire. Downclimb to the ledge and pendulum to the base of a corner further right, or drop down with your hands at the level of the ledge and traverse right (free) across the face (or dispense with the top rope altogether and rely on two good cams at the level of the ledge to protect the crux). Climb the corner system until able to exit left to a long ledge. Traverse left (past the SOMETHING OF VALUE off-width) to belay above the previous stance.
10. 40m 20 **Emmlets Direct Pitch**: Climb up the black scoop (no pro) to reach holds above the overlap. Climb straight up the obvious crack to the biggest ledge. Above and slightly left is a chimney whose base is blocked by trees. (Alternatively: From the stance traverse left, climb up and traverse back right above the overlap to gain the obvious crack - 19).
11. 45m 16 Climb the juggy face immediately right of the chimney. Move left at the top then diagonally left up the slab into the corner beneath a roof-crack. Climb the crack, keeping right at first then trending left to gain the final ledge.

Scramble to the top.

1. Read EIGHT MILES HIGH in the STORIES section for an account of the FA.
2. Be careful on pitch 4. It bites! To find out why read BROKEN ON BLOUBERG in the STORIES section.

FA: Kevin Smith, Stewart Middlemiss, George Mallory, 1988.

(See topo of easy routes)

LAST MOON is a gnarly fist sized crack in a left facing 40m corner. Start from the highest ledge 10m left of LAST MOON below the right facing corner flake.

1. 45m 16 Climb to bottom of flared chimney crack. Step across right to a little foot ledge and pull up. Traverse 1.5m right then ascend face, moving diagonally left as high as possible. Traverse about 8m left to below hanging block. Ascend crack system 2m left of hanging block. Climb face in steps diagonally right to good ledge.
2. 35m 17 Climb up to narrow roof. Traverse 8m to the right. Continue hand traversing 6m to end of traverse line. Pull overhang and climb face to good ledge.
3. 45m 16 Climb slightly diagonally right for about 15m. Traverse left for about 5m via pull-up on block. Follow recess line diagonally left to **Grassy Ledge**.

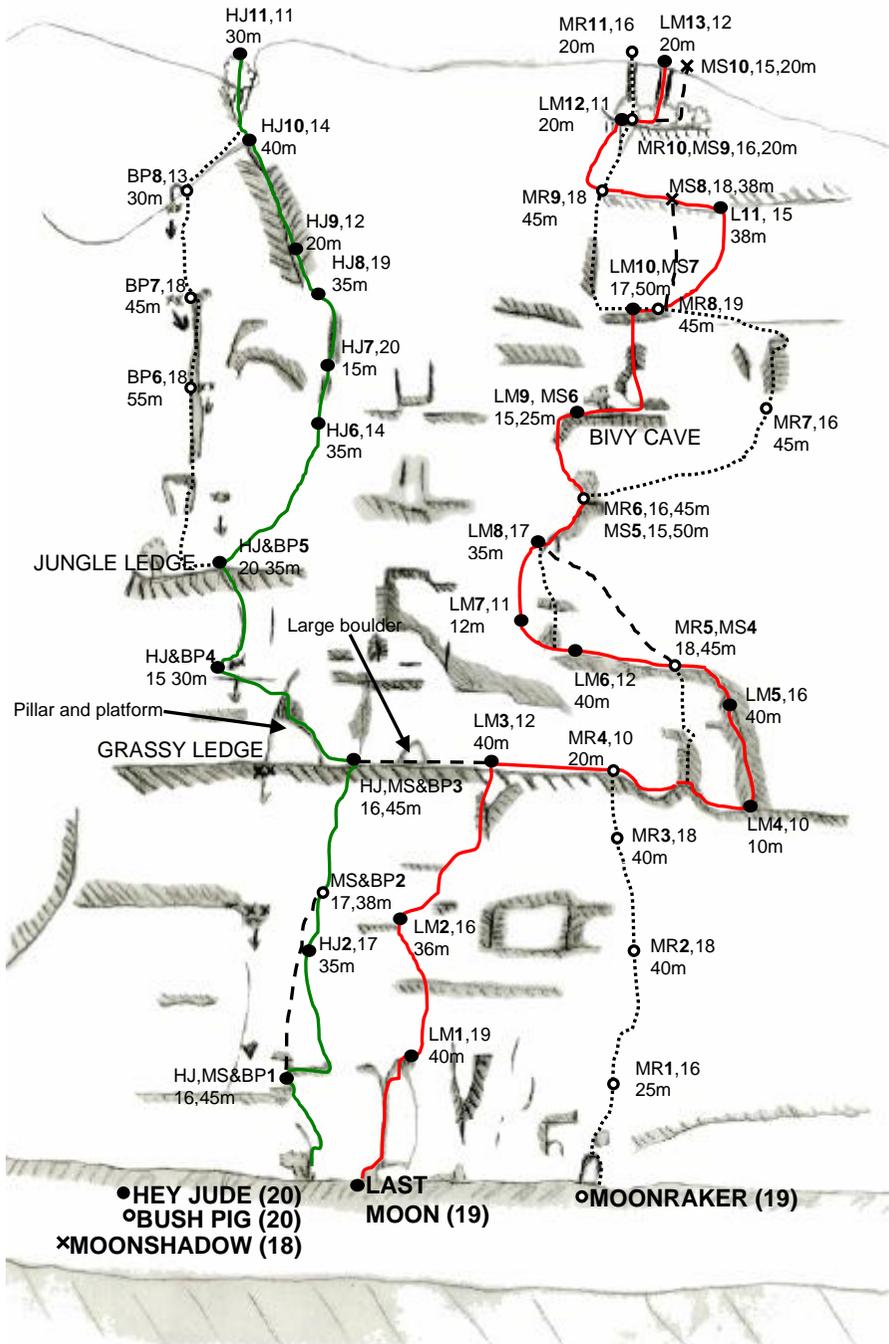
Walk to pillar on left of ledge and scramble up to base of crack forming right side of pillar.

4. 30m 15 Climb crack to top of pillar. From top of pillar, climb up another 3m to a good handrail. Hand traverse left for about 15m to a good ledge. The rap chains are hidden by a grass tuft near the stance.
5. 35m 20 (17A1) Climb up via small ledge to bottom of recess (the only one cutting through this face). Use aid (one knife) to get to crack. Follow crack for 5m using another aid point to reach small ledge above. Climb up for 6m and then diagonally left to block (mostly aid climbing with a few free moves). Climb diagonally out right to sloping block. Continue straight up to narrow ledge (originally 3 pitches). This ledge leads leftwards to the **Jungle Ledge** bivy site.
6. 35m 14 From end of pitch 5 continue up shallow groove for about 10m and then traverse diagonally right to big block.
7. 15m 20 (17A1) **Twin Cracks Pitch**: Ascend crack left of block with some aid moves, to the left side of the pillar. Continue to top of pillar.
8. 35m 19 (17A1) Climb off-width crack above the ledge (use one sling for aid just below the ledge). Follow chimney-type recess to ledge and stance on right.
9. 20m 12 Climb diagonally right into gully above. Scramble 10m through trees to mouth of deep cave.
10. 40m 14 Climb slabs on left to broken ground.
11. 30m 11 Fight 10m to chossy gully and climb same to top.

Notes:

1. A #4 Camalot and #4 Friend or equivalent are useful on pitch 8.
2. One of the "big push routes" see THE BIG PUSH in the STORIES section.

FA: J. Linke, H Zangerl, R Druschke, E Druschke, 1981.



Topo – Easy routes in the Moon Area

By Hector Pringle

MOONSHADOW

**** 18 [N]

(See topo of easy routes)

LAST MOON is a gnarly fist sized crack in a left facing 40m corner. Start from the highest ledge 10m left of LAST MOON below the right facing corner flake (as for HEY JUDE).

1. 45m 16 Start up the flake and move right at 5m. Climb the slabs trending left to a flake/crack. Climb this then up and right on good holds to a ledge.
2. 38m 17 Climb up from the right hand edge of the ledge for 8m (through small roof). Straight up another 30m to stance directly above the previous stance on a good ledge.
3. 38m 15 Climb up on good but improbable looking rock. Trend right and then stance at the back of the **Grassy Ledge**. (blocks).

Walk to the right hand end of the **Grassy Ledge**. Down climb to a stance on the far right of the ledge, at the base of chossy-looking, east-facing corner.

4. 35m 18 (17A0) Climb corner, stepping right at the top. Pull through roof on the left. Move right a few metres to a break. Follow this for 25m to a stance near some blocks (17A0 if you rest on a nut below the roof).
5. 50m 15 2m right is a left facing corner capped by a half metre roof. Climb this and continue up the next right facing corner to a ledge. Walk left until the ledge narrows, then blast straight up the wall above finishing up a left leaning corner crack to a large ledge. Climb up the wall to a small pillar. Move delicately right and then head for the yellowwood tree at the big platform up and right.
6. 15m 15 Head for the next yellowwood tree up and left. Follow the recess above to large ledges. The **Bivi Cave** lies to the right.
7. 45m 17 Move through the yellowwood and step off it on to the thin face. Climb the face diagonally left to the arête, follow this to the corner. Up this to step left at the big roof. Wind through on monster jugs to huge ledge.
8. 38m 18 From the upper ledge attack the jug forest above. Move right on to thinner stuff a little higher and climb to ledge.
9. 25m 16 Start from right hand side of large boulder. Climb the break, moving out left and exit into jungle.
10. 25m 15 LAST MOON takes the obvious major chimney behind the jungle. Climb the jug infested face just right of the chimney.

Notes:

1. This RD is a stand alone version of the easiest pleasant route up the north wall. It climbs parts of HEY JUDE (pitch 1), EIGHT MILES HIGH (pitches 2 and 3), MOONRAKER (pitch 4 and some of pitch 5), LAST MOON (pitches 6 and 7) and ROAD WARRIOR (pitches 8 and 9).

FA: Mike Cartwright. Grant Cockburn, 1990.

TEQUILA SUNRISE

25 **** [2P, N]

(See topo of hard routes)

LAST MOON is a gnarly fist sized crack in a left facing 40m corner. Start from the highest ledge 10m left of LAST MOON below the right facing corner flake (as for HEY JUDE).

1. 45m 16 Climb a few metres up the corner and then move right on to the face. Climb trending leftwards to the base of a short corner crack. Climb this and finish up and right to a stance.
2. 35m 17 Pull through the narrowest point in the roof about 3m right of the stance, then climb trending slightly leftwards to a reasonable ledge.
3. 35m 15 Climb the water worn scoop above trending right at the top to exit on to the mega **Grassy Ledge**. Walk about 10m to the right.
4. 20m 18 Climb the left-leaning ramp, then the face above to a long, narrow ledge. Belay on the right. (Alternatively, see pitch 4 of SOMETHING OF VALUE).
5. 45m 21 Climb the face to a rail leading left to the base of the dihedral, which is climbed to a roof. Move rightwards past the roof to pegs and follow the left-leading crack above to a small, off balance ledge. Navigate through the roof into the corner above and follow this to the jumbo ledge. Wild climbing.
6. 25m 25 From the front of the jumbo ledge, climb easily up the wall to a two foot roof. Move through this and up the crack on the right to stance above the next overlap. There is good gear below the crux sequence.
7. 35m 20 Move left then up and right into a thin crack. Climb up a bit and then head leftwards to the base of a clean corner system. Climb the corners to exit left to a long ledge. Scuttle left to belay about 3m beyond the obvious off-width crack.
8. 40m 20 Climb up about 5m to gain a crack. Climb this to stance at the highest ledge.
9. 45m 16 Climb the juggy face immediately right of the chimney. Step left at the top of the slab to below a roof crack. Up this keeping right at first then exit left to the ledge.

Stay roped to scramble rightwards up the stepped ledge system and then up to the top.

Notes:

1. In the interests of the quest for consumer climbing on the big blue mountain, this RD is a stand alone version of a pretty direct variation of existing routes up the craggy section of the main wall with a few new pitches thrown in for good measure. HEY JUDE (pitch 1), EIGHT MILES HIGH (pitches 2, 3, 8 and 9) and SOMETHING OF VALUE (pitch 4 and first half of pitch 5). The second half of pitch 5 and pitches 6 and 7 are independent of other routes.

FA: Mike Cartwright, Mike Brunke, 1989.

BUSHPIG

*** 20 (18A1) [1P, 6A, NJ]

(See topo of easy routes)

LAST MOON is a gnarly fist sized crack in a left facing 40m corner. Start from the highest ledge 10m left of LAST MOON below the right facing corner flake (as for HEY JUDE).

1. 45m 16 Start up the flake and move right at 5m. Climb the slabs trending left to a flake/crack. Climb this then up and right on good holds to a ledge.
2. 38m 17 Climb up from the right hand edge of the ledge for 8m through small roof. Amble up another 30m to stance directly above the previous stance on a good ledge.
3. 30m 15 Climb up on good but improbable looking rock. Trend right and then stance at the back of the **Grassy Ledge** (blocks).

Walk to major pillar on left of ledge and scramble up to a ledge at the base of the right facing corner formed by the pillar.

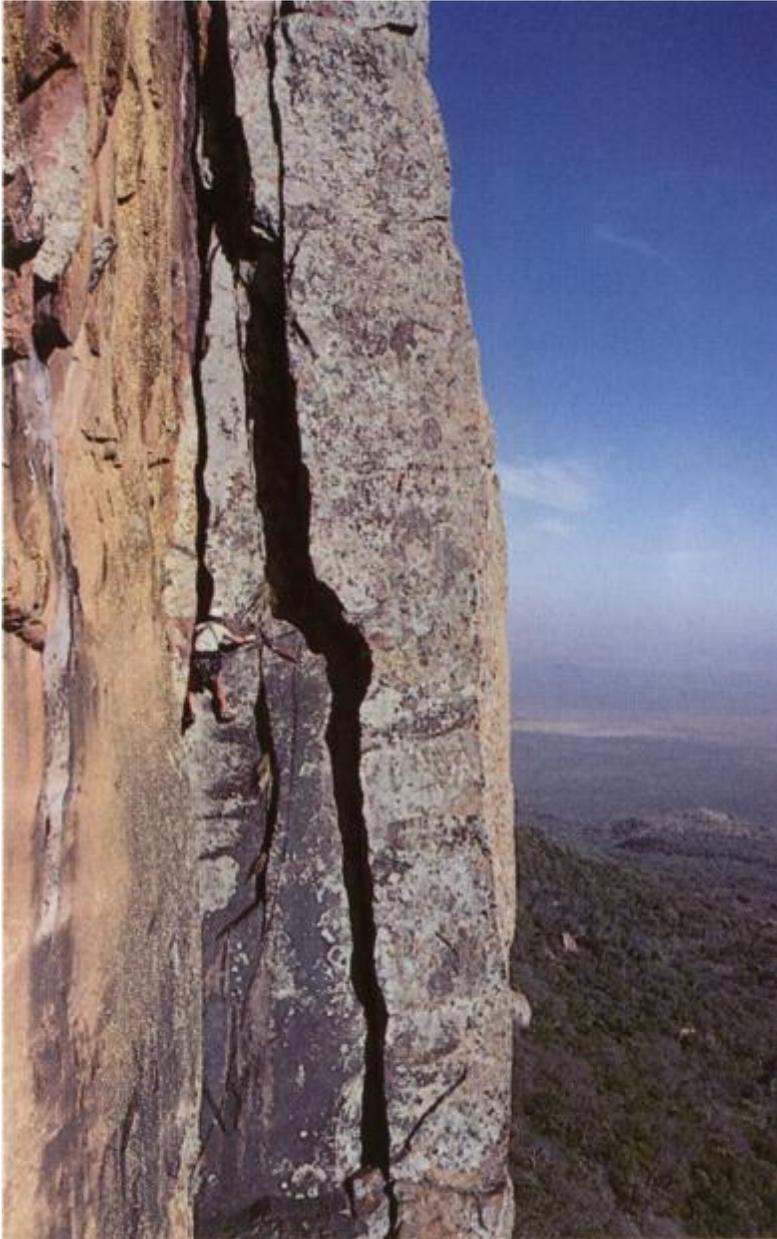
4. 30m 15 Climb the crack to top of pillar. From top of pillar, climb up another 3m to a good handrail. Traverse left for about 15m to stance at chains (hidden by a tuft of grass).
5. 45m 20 Climb past peg (17A1) above into recess. At top of recess, move through left break (17A1) on to face above. Trend left and then right to reach the right end of the **Jungle Ledge**.
6. 55m 18 20m above the ledge are two chimneys. Head for the right hand one and climb it, then continue past a good ledge up and right and then left to chains.
7. 45m 18 Climb chimney to chains.
8. 30m 13 Scramble out and up to chains.

Stay roped for the scramble to the top.

Notes:

1. This route was opened as a fast but pleasant outing basically using the rap ladder in reverse (from the **Grassy Ledge** upwards!). It climbs parts of HEY JUDE (pitches 1 and 4), EIGHT MILES HIGH (pitches 2 and 3), SCATTERLINGS (part of pitch 6) and HALF MOON (remainder of pitch 6 and pitches 7 and 8).
2. Pitch 5 was originally graded 18, for this route, but is grade 20 for HEY JUDE. 20 is a fair grade.

FA: Mike Cartwright, Clive Curson, 1991.



Leading the first pitch (19) of LAST MOON. The picture is taken from HEY JUDE's first pitch. WOW FUCK and SOMETHING OF VALUE start just around the arête to the right.

Photo by Paul Fatti. First published in MCSA Journal, 1997, p167.
Reproduced courtesy of the MCSA

GPS: Datum WGS84 S23 03 57.4 E28 59 10.9

(See topo of easy routes)

Start about 400m to the right of the prominent corner where MOONLIGHT starts. From that corner, traverse along the ledge at the base of the main face past a large pile of boulders to an obvious 40m high pillar with a gnarly crack system along its left-hand side. The initial pitches follow the crack system.

1. 40m 19 Climb to ledge beneath 2 chimneys. Climb right chimney awkwardly to second ledge, above which the crack steepens. Climb crack system (crux) to just below cubbyhole below overhangs. Swing 1,5m right to vertical crack on face of pinnacle. Climb crack to ledge.
2. 36m 16 Traverse about 8m right then climb diagonally left past loose flake to resting place below steep face. Move up and left to where the angle eases. Continue up to the left over ledges, then diagonally right to stance.
3. 40m 12 Climb up and diagonally left to stance at the base of **Grassy Ledge**. Walk to right-hand end of **Grassy Ledge**. MOONRAKER takes the chossy-looking, east facing corner above.
4. 10m 10 Climb down small pinnacle to narrow ledge. Continue right to a stance.
5. 40m 16 Climb diagonally left to small left-facing corner in overhangs. Climb the corner to off balance ledge, then right for about 1.5m to small, steep recess. Climb this to where the angle eases and continue diagonally right to a stance.
6. 40m 12 From right-hand end of stance, climb 3m, traverse 5m left, then move up. Step to the right, then move up to prominent ledge below overhang. Traverse left to stance in small recess.
7. 12m 11 Hand swing to the left and then continue traversing to the main recess. Climb the right-hand side about 4m to a block ledge with a yellow wood tree (good two man bivi site).
8. 35m 17 Climb recess to ledge at top of pinnacle. Difficult sections at about 10m and 30m. One point of aid was used in the second difficult section.
9. 25m 15 Climb steep knobbly face leftwards past tree and then continue up slanting recesses to large ledge, **Bivi Cave** and yellowwood trees.
10. 50m 17 Crawl through yellowwood tree to face on outside of recess. Climb steep face for 8m, at first upward, then diagonally left to join the recess. Continue to top of recess to small ledge beneath overhangs. From right edge of ledge, climb to overhang. Traverse left to left facing corner in overhang. Climb steeply to large ledge (awesome!).
11. 38m 15 From right end of ledge, climb diagonally right to where rock steepens. Climb more or less straight up to large ledge.

Walk about 50m left along the ledge.

12. 20m 11 Move up small face into slanting recess then up to a ledge. Traverse right then up short chimney to large bushy ledge.

Walk 20m to right to base of obvious steep chimney (the right hand of 2 chimneys).

13. 20m 12 Climb the chimney and continue to the top.

Notes:

1. *Variation to pitches 7 and 8:* 40m 16 Climb directly up from the stance and continue up a face and crack to the stance at the top of pitch 8.
2. *Variation to pitch 9:* 25m 20 Climb the left curving corner crack at the back right of the ledge. Continue up chimney to **Bivi Cave**.
3. One of the "big push routes" see THE BIG PUSH in the STORIES section.

FA: Paul Fatti, Art McGarr, 1978.

(See topo of hard routes)

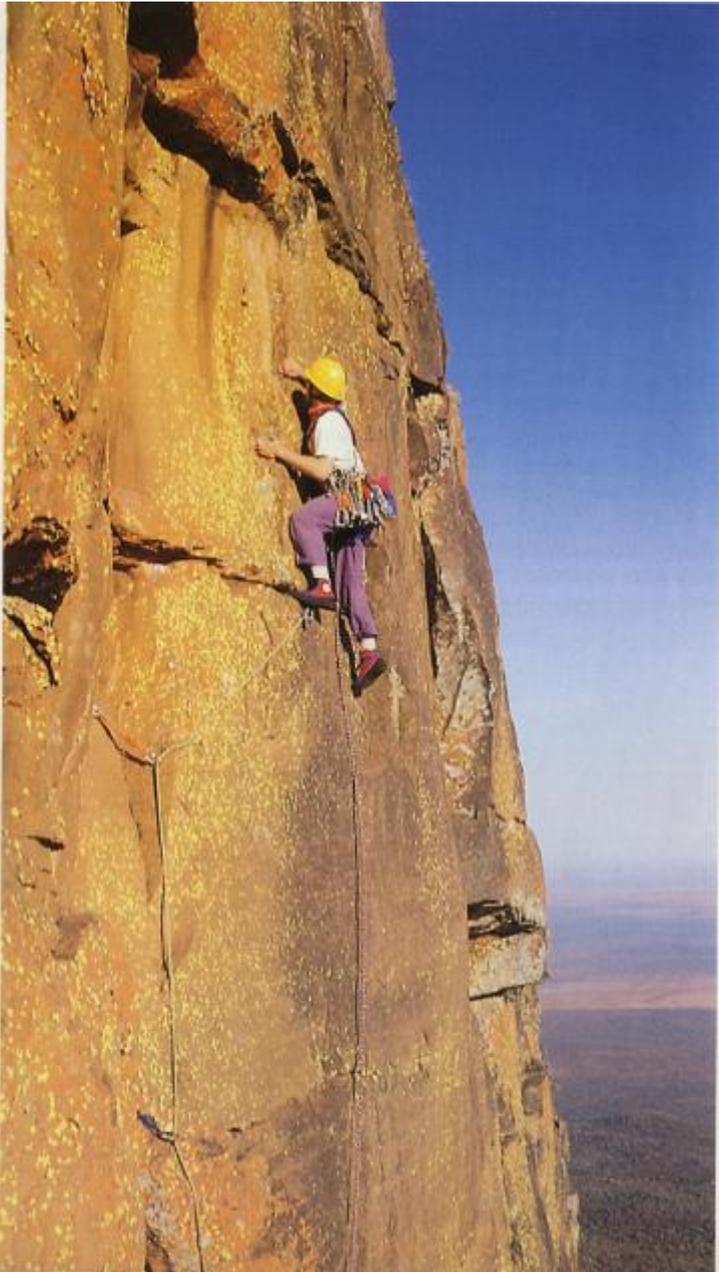
Starts between LAST MOON and SOMETHING OF VALUE.

1. 17m 21 Climb up to and through the apex of inverted V recess, then move up and right to belay in a hollow.
2. 30m 27 Climb the continuation recess and crack past two bolts on the headwall. Continue easily for another 15 metres to a ledge (shared with LAST MOON) (*Alternative*: 23 Climb the continuation recess but traverse right beneath the headwall, to a recess which is climbed diagonally leftwards to rejoin the last 15 metres of the original pitch).
3. 30m 18 Climb straight up then slightly leftwards to a ledge.
4. 40m 14 Climb up to the **Grassy Ledge**.
5. 30m 18 Start about 5 metres right of the large flake lying against the back of the grass ledge. Climb a crack/recess leading to a ledge in the base of a left facing corner. Extending to the right is a very large roof about 25 metres above the grass ledge. Move right around the arête and continue traversing rightwards until able to move up to a hanging belay immediately beneath the widest part of the roof. A handrail runs right beneath the roof from the stance.
6. 15m 20 Drop back down to a level about 3 metres beneath the roof. Traverse right for about 8 metres, then climb diagonally left to a stance above the right end of the roof. (*Alternative*: 22A1 Rail right until able to pull round the lip. Traverse left to a stance on the edge of the roof).
7. 45m 17 Climb up for about 15 metres to a long ledge. From a point a couple of metres left of the widest part of the ledge, climb up then trend right across the face. Stance on a ledge a few metres right of a 5 metre long lens shaped roof. (Stance shared with TEDDY BEARS PICNIC).
8. 40m 21 Climb the right-hand crack/flake, and traverse right to a flared crack leading to ledge (pitch shared with TEDDY BEARS PICNIC up to here). Continue up and right to the LAST MOON **Bivi Cave** in the base of a left facing recess.
9. 45m 20 Crawl out to the right and pull onto the face 2 metres right of LAST MOON. Climb diagonally rightwards across the face, heading for the skyline. After a thin traverse right, continue right and up until able to move back left and up to belay at the right hand end of a large ledge (last 8 metres shared with MOONRAKER).
10. 40m 17 Climb diagonally right for about 10 metres, to a one metre block on a ledge. Continue more or less straight up to a large ledge. (This pitch climbs between ROAD WARRIOR and LAST MOON).
11. 35m 13 Walk left and select a pitch up to a broad bushy ledge. (*Alternative*: 17 fight right to the base of a third chimney).
12. 20m 16 Climb the face to the right of the right hand chimney. (*Alternative*: 13 Climb to the top if you climbed the alternative to pitch 11).

Notes:

1. Pitch 6 is tricky. The leader is well protected but the second might have an exciting swing.
2. Pitch 8 was originally graded 20, which is a sandbag.

FA: Kevin Smith, Charles Edelstein, 1990



Russ Dodding leading the seventh pitch (19) of SOMETHING OF VALUE

Photo by Paul Fatti. First published in MCSA Journal, 1997, p168.

Reproduced courtesy of the MCSA

(See topo of moderate routes)

The route starts 10m right of LAST MOON at a 3m flake/pillar.

1. 40m 18 From the top of the flake, climb straight up the break above to stance on a ledge on the right.
2. 40m 17 Continue directly up the break, through a small overhang at 30m to a stance at the base of a small face.
3. 40m 18 Climb straight up to the **Grassy Ledge**. It is unnecessary to deviate more than a metre or 2 either way anywhere on the first 3 pitches.

Walk about 20m to the left (i.e. to about 4m right of the striking dihedral, capped by a long roof, taken by EIGHT MILES HIGH).

4. 20m 19 Climb up 4m to place gear behind a big flake. Continue up cracks until able to traverse right to another crack. Climb up to a large ledge, then walk 5m right to belay below the corner.
5. 20m 21 **Out of the Frying Pan**: Climb up on the right to the rail, traverse left to move up into the dihedral. About 3m below the roof move out left and diagonally up **Into The Fire**. Thin traversing leads to a ledge on the left. Stance under the left-hand edge of the roof about 15m up (TEQUILA SUNRISE continues straight up the dihedral to the roof, then moves rightwards past the roof, across the blank-looking wall (2 pegs) to the left-leading crack/overlap. It climbs this, then navigates through the roof into the corner above where it rejoins P6 of SOV).
6. 40m 17 Climb up past the roof then rail right to the base of an obvious layback corner. Up this and to a large ledge on the right.

Walk about 10m right and down to the base of a short crack/groove.

7. 25m 19 Move up the crack to rail which is traversed rightwards a few metres. Climb up 3-4m to another traverse line leading right then down to a small ledge.
8. 20m 18 Move up and left until under the roof. Continue traversing leftwards until it is possible to gain a small ledge in the break.
9. 30m 20 Above are two cracks through a gnarly wall. Climb the left-hand one to a rail about 10m up, then move left, up then diagonally right to a point above the stance. Move straight up to a bivi ledge.
10. 20m 17 Traverse left to an off-width crack (mostly walking).
11. 40m 21 **Key Crack**: Climb directly up until the going gets easier. Continue to the second ledge.
12. 55m 16 Climb the crack above to a ledge 10m up. Move 5m right to the clean break, which is climbed for 5m. Move 4m right to gain the knobbly slabs above. Climb these straight up to a stance on a short square pillar.

Stay roped for the scramble to the top.

Notes:

1. The traverse on pitch 5 is very character building. Take care of the ledge below.
2. The TEQUILA SUNRISE version of pitch 5 is excellent, more direct and slightly less character building, at a similar grade.
3. The original pitch 4 started further right and climbed the left leaning break. The pitch as written up is more aesthetic and is the same grade.
4. It is possible to traverse right to LAST MOON from the end of pitch 7 at about grade 18. Careful rope management required! You'll end up on the platform with yellowwood, one pitch below the bivi cave.
5. For an account of a solo ascent of the route, read PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS in the STORIES section.

FA: Kevin Smith, Ian Slatem, Clive Curson, May 1986



George Mallory seconding out of the fire on the scary 5th (21) pitch of SOMETHING OF VALUE. TEQUILA SUNRISE takes the first corner to his right and BLUE MOON heads up the big corner left of the main arête.

Photo by Stewart Middlemiss
First published in MCSA Journal, 1988, p122. Reproduced courtesy of the MCSA

BLUE MOON

**** 25 [2B, 1P, N]

Takes a direct line, between SOV and TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC. Start 5m right of SOV below an overlap which turns into a short, right-facing corner higher up.

1. 35m 22 **The One-More-Time Pitch**. Climb 5m to the small roof, then rightwards into the overlap. Climb up to another small roof and rail right, then up the right-facing corner above. The crack pinches out here so traverse 3m right to a crack. Up this to just below where it dies, then traverse 4m back left to rejoin the original crack line. Climb this to a ledge shared with SOV.
2. 40m 18 Up then slightly left from the stance, through some steep rock, to a ledge. Traverse right to a small amphitheatre with a short corner on each side and a big roof above. Climb up to the apex of the left hand right-facing corner, layback round the small roof to under the big roof. Rail left to a ledge.
3. 40m 17 Traverse 10m left. Climb a shattered pillar to the next ledge. Head diagonally right then up to the grassy ledge.
4. 40m 20 **Rolling Stones Pitch**. There are big roofs above the right hand half of the ledge. A massive corner with three roofs breaks through to the left of the biggest roofs. Climb the recess to a ledge beneath the corner (shared with WOW FUCK). Climb the corner, railing right under the first and second roof. Just after the second roof, traverse right across the face to an outrageous foot ledge on the skyline. Climb up the prow then step back left into the corner (now above the final roof). Climb this to a good small ledge.
5. 50m 20 Step right and make thin moves up to a big rail. Traverse about 8m right to a vertical crack, up this then rail right to another vertical crack. Up again then step right to belay beneath the middle of 3 cracks (the right hand diagonal crack in a yellow wall is TBP, SOV breaks through the roofs about 20 or 30m left).
6. 35m 25 **Legoland pitch**. "This 'aint no sport route". Savour the warm-up moves in the corner until able to step left around the arête onto a slab. Climb up the small trapezoid pillar on the left then pull through the bulge to a rail. Breathe through your arse as you move up and left to a bolt. Diabolical crimps lead horizontally left to a rest beneath the next bolt. Climb up past the bolt and traverse thankfully left to juglets. Up to the big ledge. Walk left to below the large right-facing corner. TBP goes up the face with 2 bolts to the right.
7. 35m 23 **Knifblade Pitch**. Climb the corner, past a peg. Traverse right to a small ledge. Climb the crack above the left hand side of the ledge & follow the break curving up left. Traverse left until able to easily climb up to a good ledge.
8. 60m 21 Walk 5m right to a sheltered alcove. Climb left-trending thin diagonal crack until it dies. Continue diagonally left to easier ground. Traverse right and pull onto the easy slab. Up this and follow your nose until you run out of rope.
9. 30m 16 Scramble/climb to the summit.

Notes:

1. A well-protected route. Pitches 6 and 7 are bold, but safe. Bolts (60mm, M10 stainless steel, placed in 2005) and peg (BD knifblade, 2005) placed on abseil.
2. Gear: double rack of small cams, small wires on pitch 1, #3 Camalot on pitch 7.
3. Pitches 4, 6 & 7 cleaned and inspected on abseil and mostly top-roped before being led. Pitches 6, 7 & 8 opened, subsequently freed.
4. Read A BLUE MOON AT BLOUBERG in the STORIES section.

FA: Complete ascent Hector Pringle and Rushad Nanavatty 2008-12-13 to 2008-12-15. Pitches 1, 2, 3, 8 & 9 Hector Pringle and Alan Grant 2004. Pitches 4 & 5 Hector Pringle and Graham Terrell 2007.

FFA: Hector Pringle, Julia Wakeling, Tim Dunnet, 2011-07-09.



Ian Kotze on the first pitch (22) of BLUE MOON at dawn
Drimole

Photo by Hector

TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC

*** 21 [2B, N]

(See topo of moderate routes)

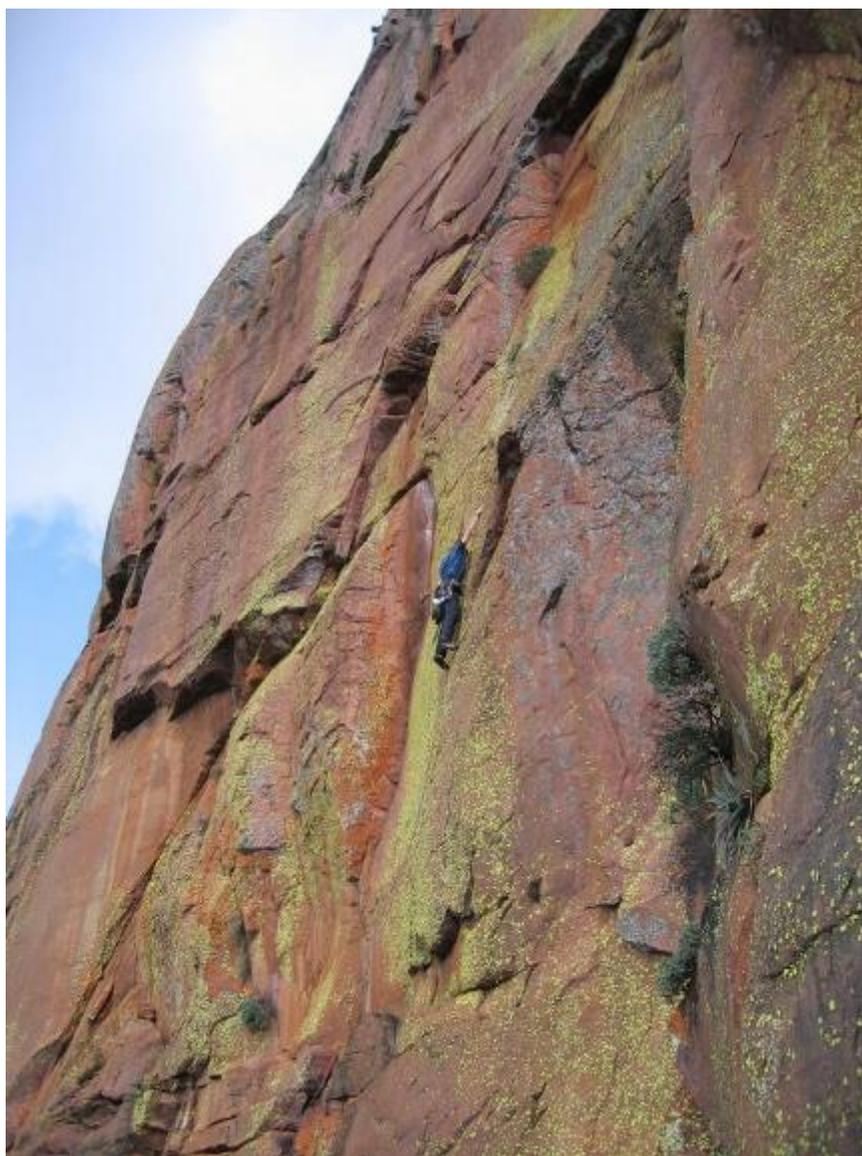
Start about 35m right of LAST MOON, below a 3m by 2m roof 15m up (as for MOONRAKER).

1. 45m 20 Climb flake to recess between flakes (MOONRAKER takes right flake). Move left and up then traverse left to (very delicate) double flakes. Up these to narrow roof, which is turned on the right to gain recess. Climb this, to a stance on the left.
2. 40m 20 Climb up and right until able to finger-rail left through top of green patch. Move up and diagonally right to reach a ledge (with 60m ropes the first pitch can be extended to here). Climb left facing corner, pull right through roof and stance.
3. 35m 16 Climb up to **Grassy Ledge**. Walk right.
4. 50m 20 Start a few metres left of pinkish-white amphitheatre, directly below the point where main roof tapers to about 1,5 metres. Climb deviously up orange face to rounded blocky buttress beneath roof. Pull through and move up to base of recess. Climb easily up to left of recess to reach a large ledge on the left.
5. 30m 17 Climb obvious recess directly above previous pitch and continue up to a stance at the base of two cracks (LAST MOON's obvious gully is to the right).
6. 30m 21 Climb the right-leaning right crack (narrow dihedral), and traverse right to a left facing corner crack, which is followed to reach the left end of a ledge (LAST MOON's **Bivi Cave** to the right).
7. 30m 20 Traverse left to big ledges – awesome!
8. 35m 21 **Precious Mettles pitch**: Starting near left end of ledge, climb face past 2 bolts, trend right, then up and left to a small ledge. Continue up to next (big) ledge at base of right facing corner.
9. 35m 15 Move left and climb up to ledges. Continue up face to right of a bushy crack and stance on ledge on right (follow your nose on this pitch).
10. 35m 15 Move right across crack, climb up and right to an easy face which is followed right to a large ledge.
11. 45m 15 Climb to the top.

Notes:

1. It is possible to make the grassy ledge in two pitches with 60m ropes.
2. Pitch 8 (Precious Mettles) was originally bolted on abseil by Mike Cartwright as a direct finish to SOMETHING OF VALUE.
3. The (very dodgy) bolts were replaced in 2005 with M10, 100mm stainless expansion.
4. Pitch 7 was first climbed by Mike Cartwright before the route was opened.
5. The remainder of the route was opened on-sight, in a day.
6. It is possible to traverse right to LAST MOON from the last part of pitch 4 and from many places on pitch 5, at about grade 18 (depending).
7. SOMETHING OF VALUE joins the big ledge at the end of pitch 7 from directly below and then traverses left.

FA: George Mallory, Stewart Middlemiss, Kevin Smith, Mike Cartwright, 1988



Hector Pringle leading the perfect 6th pitch (21) of TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC.

Photos by Chris Ziranek

(See topo of easy routes)

The route starts 50m right of LAST MOON and 15m left of NEW MOON. There are two large flakes below a roof 20m up. Right of the route is a corner facing west.

1. 25m 16 Climb up right hand flake. At the top, climb up small corner to 3m below large roof. Step right and move up to stance at base of west facing corner.
2. 40m 18 Start 2m right of corner and climb up past tricky move at 4m then rightwards over easier ground for about 5m. Climb left to top of corner. Climb up about 5m to stand on 1 m high block with cracks on both sides of it. Traverse 3m left and move (with difficulty) left around bulge. Climb up with difficulty for 6m to ledge where a 30cm block is cammed below small roof. Pull the roof and continue up ledges.
3. 45m 18 Climb up slightly diagonally right for 35m to under a roof (generally easy ground with hard move at 10m). Climb the roof at a break which is 6m right of stance below. Move left onto jugs then back right to stand on lip of roof. Climb up another 4m to stance at small tree.
4. 30m 10 Scramble up to **Grassy Ledge**.
5. 45m 18 From right end of **Grassy Ledge** climb up broken crack in a corner which faces east. At top of crack move right and crank small roof. Continue a few metres up and right to below a small roof. Strenuously through roof and continue up for another 8m to where rock steepens. Traverse right 3m and then climb up to ledge.

Walk left 20m to base of prominent west-facing open book with jam crack.

6. 45m 16 Climb open book for 3m and step left onto smooth face. Climb up to a 1m roof with jam crack. Pull roof and continue straight up to ledge. From right of ledge move right. Climb up easy ground to 2m high pinnacle. Traverse right onto grassy ledge and stance. Climb up 5m to blocky ledge behind yellowwood tree.
7. 45m 16 From right side of ledge climb up to foot rail. Use a hand rail to gain recess on the right. Move right around arête onto knobbly face. Traverse right for 20m then climb up to stance between two prominent corners/cracks which are 8m apart. The third crack splitting a yellow, lichen-covered face to the left is climbed by ROAD WARRIOR.
8. 45m 19 Climb the middle crack which curves rightwards in an undercling (crux) near the top. After the crux, move left onto knobbly face. Climb up diagonally left to eventually gain a huge ledge (common stance with LAST MOON).
9. 45m 18 From extreme left of ledge climb a big west-facing corner for 15m. At the top of the corner move right onto knobbly rock. Up 1m then back left for 3m. Straight up to the huge ledge.
10. 20m 16 Climb a finger crack directly behind the stance. Move 1m left at about 15m and climb up to the large bundu ledge.
11. 20m 16 Bash through bushes right for 10m. There are two deep chimneys 3m apart. The right chimney is the final pitch of LAST MOON. Climb the left chimney to the roof and move left then up a layback to the summit.

Notes:

1. The route was opened in a day with no aid, falls, yo-yos etc. Pitches 6, 7 and 8 were climbed two months previously with S Isabeck while off route.
2. It makes sense to climb to the **Grassy Ledge** in 3 pitches instead of 4. I.e. combine part of pitch 2 with pitch 1.
3. The route (and pitch 8) was originally graded 20.

FA: George Mallory, Steven Mallory, 1984.



Jonathan Levy following the tenth pitch (14) of NEW MOON

Photo by Paul Fatti. First published in MCSA Journal, 1997, p164.
Reproduced courtesy of the MCSA

NEW MOON

** 20 (18A2) [N]

About 50m right of the pillar marking the start to LAST MOON is a prominent overhang about 4m up, increasing in height and size towards the right. The route starts just to the left of this overhang and takes a line trending slightly to the left, to below a small line of overhangs about 60m up, which are surmounted on the right. Start at the base of a short arête, just to the left of the overhang.

1. 30m 18 Climb arête for 4m to ledge and continue up and delicately left, to resting place just below short steep 4m face right of the crack. Climb up with difficulty (crux – originally climbed with aid) to ledge, and continue up crack above for 5m. Traverse 4m right, then move up and back left to small stance in corner.
2. 30m 16 From stance, traverse 2m left, then climb steep, slightly recessed face and awkward groove above until able to traverse diagonally left to below steep crack/recess. Climb this past and continue up some dubious rock to small, exposed stance about 9m below and to the left of the small line overhangs.
3. 30m 16 Climb crack above stance for 4m, then traverse 8m right to 4m below the overhang (exposed). Climb up steeply to a crouching ledge below overhang, then traverse 3m right to where overhang narrows. Climb straight up to ledge and continue up to short, steep face above to a ledge and comfortable stance.
4. 30m 11 Climb diagonally up right past short section of loose rock. Continue diagonally rightwards to stance on ledge below short crack where rock steepens.
5. 25m 14 Climb the crack, then step delicately right at the top. Continue diagonally right to below short, steep face, then traverse right into awkward overhanging recess breaking through the face. Climb this (strenuous) and continue up and slightly left to stance in open recess, just below where it steepens again.
6. 30m 16 Step left from stance and move 6m up steep recess until able to step right onto the lip of overhang directly above stance. Traverse 3m right, then move up and right on to easier rock. Climb recess above to where it steepens and continue up with difficulty to small overhang before moving left to stance on a grassy ledge.
7. 30m 16 Climb 8m diagonally right, then straight up to a steep crack, which is climbed to a resting place on the right. Climb continuation crack till it is possible to make a spectacular move left. Move up and further left to comfortable grassy stance below imposing, steep, red face (possible bivi site for two).
8. 45m 18 Climb face above on good grips, moving right higher up and then back left past a steep section to ledge below prominent steep crack. Climb crack (strenuous towards the top) and continue diagonally up left on a steep face above, to where the angle eases. Stance in small recess.
9. 15m 7 Climb diagonally right over ledges to stance below small tree in a corner. (It is possible to traverse to the left on to LAST MOON from this point).
10. 35m 14 Traverse right on steep rock to an arête, then move up steeply to where angle eases. Make a long traverse right over knobby face to a small recess where an uncomfortable stance is made just below where the rock steepens.
11. 30m 16 Climb recess past a very steep section to where the angle eases. Continue up and slightly right to the base of crack in smooth corner leading up to overhang. Climb the crack, then traverse right to ledge to the right of the overhang. Continue diagonally up right over smooth slab to below short, awkward recess, which is climbed to large, guano-filled ledge 5m below a very steep, narrow chimney. (ANCIENT DUST OF AFRICA shares parts of this pitch).

12. 35m 20 (18A2) Climb the steep crack (4 nuts for aid) into the base of chimney and continue (very strenuous) up this to where the shortly before an overhang. Climb up the overhang, then move awkwardly out to the left on to an exposed face. Continue diagonally out to the left, then up to a stance on a big ledge below a large band of overhangs.

13. 35m 10 Walk 15m right along ledge, past the end of the overhang, then climb up and back to the left able to scramble to the top.

FA: Paul Fatti, Jonathan Levy, 1983



Mid-morning malaise – contemplating life on the ledge Photo by Hector Pringle

BIG CORNER AREA

This area extends rightwards from the end of the big grass ledge that the MOON AREA routes start off. This point is marked by a big pile of boulders that must be either climbed over or squeezed through (tight!) when walking along the bottom of the wall.

ROAD WARRIOR

** 21 [N, R]

Starts up the obvious left-leaning diagonal break about 30m left of THE RAZORS EDGE (i.e. just right of the pile of huge boulders that one has to crawl through or climb over).

1. 40m 20 Climb the break, passing two bulging to a small stance.
2. 35m 19 up the break for 8m to where it steepens. Traverse left to break in left skyline with spike. Traverse 5m left to small stance.
3. 35m 21 Move up and left a few metres to a small, vague corner and up a few metres to a roof. Up to a nail (originally aided on 3 points), then left 2m to a break. Climb up and diagonally left to a stance.
4. 40m 19 Up from stance then diagonally right to rejoin the diagonal crack at the base of the grey pillar. Climb up the left-hand side of this to a large stance.
5. 42m 21 [R] Straight up to the right-hand edge of some roofs about 15m up. Pass these on the right and climb up and right to a crack to the left of some more roofs. Climb this to a stance, passing right of an aloe and bush.
6. 40m 18 Move up and left into a corner. Up the corner and up gnarly rock to semi-hanging belay where the rock steepens.
7. 42m 19 [R] Straight up through bulge (2-3m right of thin crack). Move slightly right to a crack, up this for a few metres then diagonally left to a long grassy ledge.

Stroll 15m left to below a crack splitting a yellow, lichen covered face. This is a few metres left and below MOONRAKER's 19 (crux) pitch.

8. 48m 19 [R] Straight up the crack to top and straight up bulging wall above to join MOONRAKER for the last few metres to a stance common with LAST MOON as well.
9. 40m 17 Straight up the jug forest above the stance and move slightly right onto the slab above. Climb straight up and finish left of some aloes to a long ledge.
10. 20m 16 Climb up on the right hand side of the huge boulder to an undercling flake. Move out left and up to the bundu ledge.
11. Bash across the ledge and climb the chimney of your choice to the top.

Notes:

1. Pitches 5,7 and 8 are not abundantly well protected.
- FA: Clive Curson, Stewart Middlemiss, Mike Hislop, 1989.

THE RAZOR'S EDGE

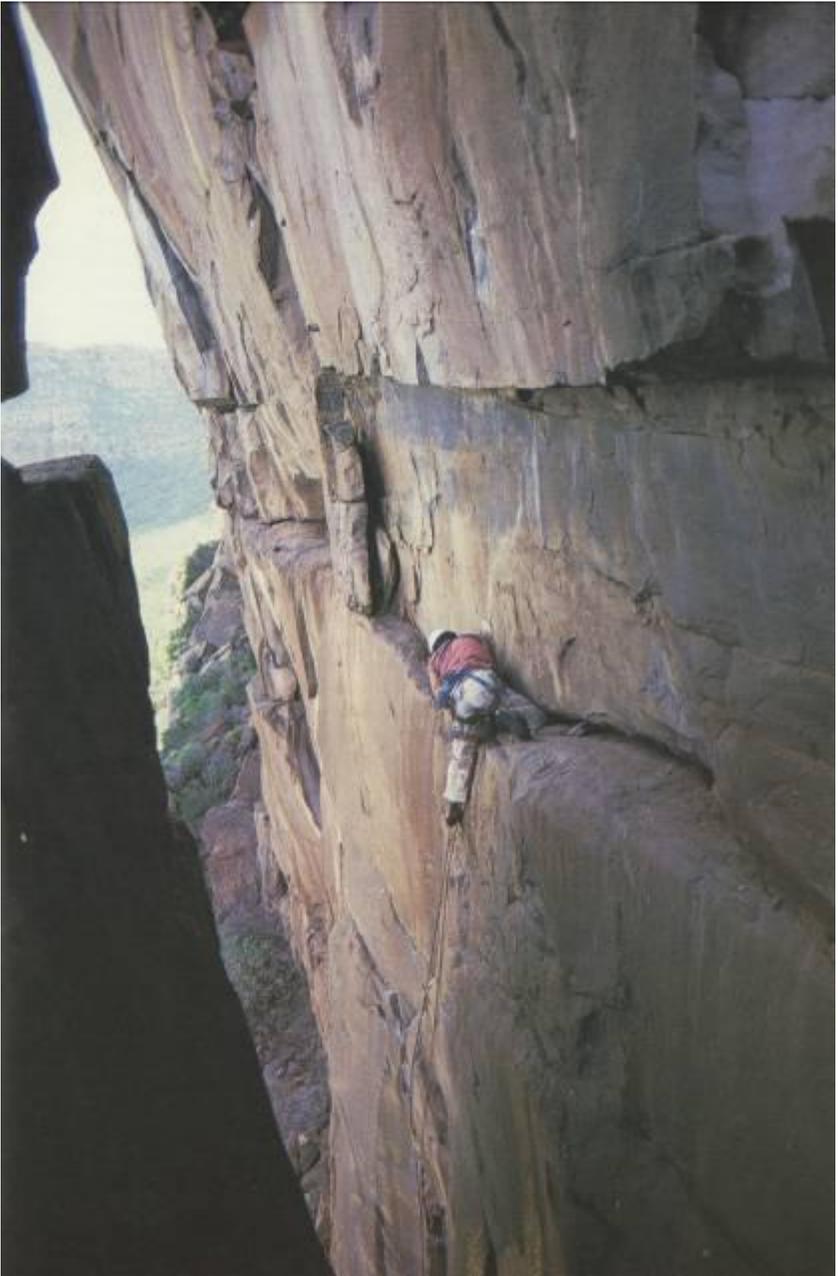
*** 23R [N]

Near the right hand side of the North Wall, to the right of the squeeze-through boulder (but to the left of BIG CORNER) is a 20m high rock pillar. Immediately left of the pillar a break extends up and slightly left, initially as a faint crackline, and after 20m as a recess.

1. 40m 21 Climb the faint crack and make thin moves right and up to gain a rail. Traverse left and climb the loose recess to reach small ledges.
2. 30m 23R **George's Horror Pitch**. Starting on the right climb up and then traverse about 10m left to a block. Move up 3m to a roof. Rail left until able to pull up rightwards to the next roof. Traverse right to an off balance ledge, step right, and climb up to a small ledge. Rail 5m to the left and move up to a long, narrow ledge. This pitch is very loose, Take care.
3. 30m 20 Traverse left and climb up via the obvious gap in the overhangs. Follow the recess and corner above until able to move right to ledges.
4. 35m 17 Climb up the right leaning break and continue up easy rock to a grassy ledge in a corner and just below a tree (ANCIENT DUST OF AFRICA crosses here).
5. 30m 13 Move around left onto a face, climb up this, move back right and continue to ledges.
6. 35m 17 Climb up leftwards and continue up just to the left of overhangs. Climb the break to reach ledges on the right.
7. 45m 19 Climb up 15m to a long narrow overhang. Traverse about 10m left, until able to climb up diagonally right to reach a small left facing corner, about 25m above the stance. Traverse right from the top of the corner and climb the ramp leading to ledge on the right.
8. 25m 18 Traverse right into the base of a huge dihedral, and climb up a few metres until able to move right to a ledge on the arête.
9. 35m 20 Traverse wildly right to a ledge.
10. 20m 17 Move right and climb the recess/crack to reach two large ledges. BIG CORNER stances to the right and climbs the obvious crack on the right.
11. 35m 21 Climb the steep crack in the left corner. Step left onto the face (above the belayer) and climb this to a rounded ledge. Traverse left and move up to a sloping ledge.
12. 50m 19 Climb up the recess and bottomless chimney. Sneak left and scramble to the top.

Notes:

1. Read THE RAZOR'S EDGE in the STORIES section for an account of the FA.
 2. A knifeblade provided protection on the crux of the 1st pitch on the FA.
- FA: Kevin Smith, George Mallory, 1984.



Kevin Smith on the FA of the first pitch (21) of THE RAZOR'S EDGE in good style

Photo by George Mallory. First published in MCSA Journal, 1984, p83.
Reproduced courtesy of the MCSA

ANCIENT DUST OF AFRICA

*** 20 [N]

The first 4 pitches climb between THE RAZORS EDGE and BIG CORNER, and the remainder of the route is located between NEW MOON and THE RAZORS EDGE. About 25m of climbing are shared with NEW MOON high up. Start 4m right of the obvious large white tree.

1. 35m 16 Climb the crack to a ledge. Continue up the left-facing dihedral, and then to the highest ledge on the right.
2. 25m 10 Traverse/walk right.
3. 35m 16 Follow the left leaning ramp until a short traverse leads along a ledge on the left.
4. 40m 14 Climb diagonally left towards a tree at the top of a right-facing corner. Stance on the ledge above and left (directly above the start of the route).
5. 50m 11 Traverse left, up, and left to belay at the grassy base of a right-facing dihedral (THE RAZOR'S EDGE crosses here).
6. 45m 16 Move left around the corner, then climb generally left and up, to stance on a good ledge in a right-facing dihedral, 5m below a roof.
7. 45m 16 Move out left beneath the roof then climb straight up the face, past an overlap, to belay 3m below and right of the apex of a large pillar/flake.
8. 30m 20 Climb up from the top of the pillar, then diagonally left. Climb the left-hand crack to a ledge on the left.
9. 45m 18 Climb up on the left, and continue through an overlap to reach easier angled rock. As for NEW MOON, traverse right and up to a steep crack which is followed to a stance on the right.
10. 35m 20 Climb the smooth V-corner, traverse right and across a smooth slab, then move up to a ledge (NEW MOON climbs the corner crack above). Traverse right until able to move up to a stance (the monster dihedral avoided by THE RAZOR'S EDGE lies below).
11. 40m 16 Climb slightly rightwards, leftwards, and then straight up to reach scrambling territory.

FA: Kevin Smith, Mike Loewe, 1990.

BIG CORNER

**** 21 (18A2) [N]

The climb is situated on the right-hand side of the face. It follows a huge pink corner starting halfway up the cliff. Start directly below this, about 100m left of MALEBOCH. Start at a large block leaning against the face to the right of a big tree.

1. 40m 14 Climb chimney on right side of block. Traverse 5m right into shallow groove. Climb groove and wide crack to ledge. Step up and traverse 3m left. Climb to top of block. Traverse 4m right into recess. Ascend this to big ledge.
2. 20m 11 Walk 10m right to end of ledge and climb a recess to base of prominent curving crack.
3. 25m 12 Climb crack for 4m and continue diagonally right around corner to ledge.
4. 20m 12 Climb recess diagonally left via short steep section to small stance and chock belay. This recess runs parallel to curving crack mentioned in pitch 2.
5. 25m 12 Step right. Climb up for 2m and traverse left around a corner. Ascend a recess to a big ledge (shared with MALEBOCH).
6. 25m 14 Climb up behind large flake and continue to the left below steep broken corner. Climb the corner via sloping face to ledge below huge open book.
7. 35m 18 Climb left-hand face for 15m and traverse right into the open book. Climb this to a small ledge. (BIG CORNER DIRECT goes straight up from here).
8. 28m 21 (18A2) Traverse left to break below recess (bivi spot further along this ledge on the corner). Straddle square recess for 5m. Step delicately left onto face and climb steeply to top of pillar. Stretch across right to thin crack. Make two layback moves to below aloe. Step left and mantle onto a ledge. Climb crack above to another ledge, step right under an aloe and move up to stance.
9. 10m 16 Climb a steep corner and exit right via an awkward sloping groove to stance below steep overhanging crack.
10. 40m 20 (18A1) Climb the crack. Continue to the left into a narrow, deep chimney and climb this to large platform.
11. 35m 20 (18A1) Climb right hand crack. Continue up steep crack rightwards, then step right to ledge and stance. Brilliant pitch!
12. 23m 16 Step onto small ledge and pull up strenuously, climbing diagonally left. Continue straight up through small overhang onto face above, using good layback holds. Move diagonally up and right across face to where the angle eases. Continue up to ledge with trees.
13. 35m 16 Climb a crack on the left and continue up sloping face past tree to a grassy ledge. Climb up steeply (hard) into base of huge chimney.
14. 20m 14 Walk up around the corner then chimney to the top (chimney common with MALEBOCH).

Notes:

1. Most people use a scrambling route to the right of the first 5 pitches, roping up for pitch 6 onwards. Continue rightwards past the start of the route until able to scramble up and then diagonally left. Scramble till scared, then rope up and follow your nose to the base of the obvious dihedral of pitch 7.
 2. PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS in the STORIES section describes a solo ascent.
 3. One of the "big push routes" see THE BIG PUSH in the STORIES section.
- FA: Romey and Eckhard Druschke, Paul Fatti, 1977.

BIG CORNER DIRECT

*** 22 [N]

8./9. 40m Blast up the BIG CORNER. At the top, move left to rejoin the original route.

FA: Clive Curson.

WHITE NIGHTS

*** 23 [N]

Climbs the front of the buttress between BIG CORNER and MALEBOCH. Scramble as for these routes, to the usual rope-up point left of a squeeze through flake. The buttress towers directly above.

1. 35m 16 Climb right and up to beneath a roof. Step right to gain the crack which is followed to a shady ledge and yellowwood tree (first pitch of MALEBOCH).
2. 35m 18 Traverse left, then continue diagonally left to the front of the buttress. Climb up and left to belay on a good ledge on the left side of the buttress, a few metres above rap chains.
3. 40m 20 Traverse right a few metres and climb the left trending crack system. Continue up the face, to belay at the chains a few metres up a left-leaning ramp.
4. 30m 23 Continue to the top of the ramp, then climb a few metres up the slab on the right. Climb the steep crack and flared groove to reach a small ledge.
5. 40m 16 Finish the short corner, then climb diagonally right to the arête, which is followed to a wide ledge.

Walk 10m left.

6. 15m 20 Climb the flared corner-crack and continuation fist crack to a ledge.
7. 25m 16 A few metres right and up is a right-facing corner-cum-chimney which is climbed to a large ledge. The easiest finish is on the left.

Notes:

1. There is a rap route in this vicinity. Exact details are sketchy, but the top rap is off the front of the buttress between the tops of MALEBOCH and BIG CORNER
FA: Mike Cartwright, Kevin Smith, 1990.

MALEBOCH

*** 20R (18A2) [N, 2B, 1P]

Walk past the Moon Area, go through the boulder squeeze, past the start of RAZORS EDGE until the face steps back. Up and left are two big open books. The smaller left hand one is BIG CORNER. The massive right hand one is MALEBOCH. Scramble up and diagonally left for a few ropelengths, as per BIG CORNER, to get to a squeeze-through flake. BIG corner heads up left from here, while MALEBOCH heads right.

1. 60m 15 Diagonally left across the rightward-sloping ramp, into the corner. Follow the corner up right to some trees. Continue past the next steep section to belay in the forest below the main corner/gulley.
2. 50m 18R Climb the corner/gulley passing some offwidth sections. Above the last offwidth move right around the overhang and belay just above this.
3. 30m 14 Climb the corner to belay below the next obvious offwidth section.
4. 45m 20R Climb the offwidth to the roof. Step right around the roof to the next bulge. Pull through the bulge, past two bolts to a small ledge. Continue straight up the offwidth above to a tree belay (no pro) or walk left to end of narrow ledge and ascend a face to the tree.
5. 30m 14 Continue up the gulley. Veer left behind the massive block and chimney up past a peg to the top (as for BIG CORNER).

Notes:

1. The bolts and pitons are dodgy and the route is spicy.
2. One of the "big push routes" see THE BIG PUSH in the STORIES section.
FA: Unknown, date unknown.

ICE NINE

* 21 [N]

Climbs a section of the wall to the right of MALEBOCH. Scramble as for MALEBOCH / BIG CORNER. Before the squeeze-through-flake marking the end of the other routes' scramble, traverse right and up across grassy rock for about 20m to a ledge.

1. 25m 21 Climb up and slightly right to a ledge. Climb the right-facing dihedral to a rail, move right, and continue up to a ledge. Climb to the top of the block on the right.
2. 40m 21 Climb up and right to the arête. Move back diagonally left and climb a short groove. Traverse right then trend left and up to a stance between two small trees.
3. 35m 17 Climb the face, steep cracks and negotiate the bulge. Continue up and right to a large ledge at the top of the right arête.
4. Scramble up the broad gully to the top.

FA: Kevin Smith, Peter Lazarus, 1990

ROUTES BY GRADE

SHORT ROUTES (Less than 150m)

GRADE	NAME	STARS	CRAG	NO. PITCHES
	OPEN PROJECT		KLOOF AREA	1
28	AVALON	****	AVALON AREA	1
26	CHOKE CHAIN	***	KLOOF AREA	1
26	AVALON VARIATION	***	AVALON AREA	1
25	THIRD WORLD CHILD	***	LOST TRIBE AREA	1 (+ 3)
24	POWER SURGE	***	BAPM AREA	1
24	DOG STAR	****	KLOOF AREA	2
23	CRAG RATS AGAINST MILEAGE	**	MAZE AREA	1
23	GETTING THERE	**	LOST TRIBE AREA	1 (+1)
23	EXODUS	***	LOST TRIBE AREA	2
23	CARAVANS	**	LOST TRIBE AREA	1
23	THE NEW STONE AGE	**	LOST TRIBE AREA	1
22	BOLTM	***	BAPM AREA	2
21	BAPM	***	BAPM AREA	4
21	INSPIRATIONAL EXCHANGE	***	AVALON AREA	1
21	SOUNDTRACK	***	AVALON AREA	1
21	THE LAYER THEORY	**	MAZE AREA	1
21	LOOK SHARP	***	LOST TRIBE AREA	6
21	THE JOURNEY	**	LOST TRIBE AREA	1
21	LOST TRIBE	***	LOST TRIBE AREA	5
20	THE MISSING LINK	***	VALLEY AREA	1
19	STORMCHASER	***	AVALON AREA	1
18	ALL THE SMALL THINGS	**	VALLEY AREA	1
17	WALK OF SHAME	***	AVALON AREA	1
16	VROOM	**	BAPM AREA	1
16	GRAND ILLUSION	***	AVALON AREA	1

LONG ROUTES (More than 150m)

GRADE	NAME	STARS	CRAG	NO. PITCHES
30A0 R	DOG OF THUNDER	****	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	12
27	WOW FUCK	***	MOON AREA	11
26	DREAM OF WHITE DOGS	***	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	11
25	ANOTHER DAY IN HELL	***	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	9
25A3	DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER	***	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	11
25	A DOG DAY IN HEAVEN	****	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	9
25	BLUE MOON	****	MOON AREA	9
25	TEQUILA SUNRISE	****	MOON AREA	9
24A3	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	***	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	10
24	YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE (FREE)	***	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	12
24	EIGHT MILES HIGH	*****	MOON AREA	11
23A2	FUTURE SHOCK	***	MOONLIGHT AREA	8
23R	THE RAZOR'S EDGE	***	BIG CORNER AREA	12
23	PROJECT THREE	***	MOON AREA	8
23	WHITE NIGHTS	***	BIG CORNER AREA	7
22	THE SHEILD	**	E FACE OF S DONJON	5
22	BURN THE DOG	**	LEFT FACE AREA	7
22	PSYCHO REPTILE	****	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	
22	MOONLIGHT DIRECT	***	MOONLIGHT AREA	9
22	CRACK OF ADVENTURE	**	MOONLIGHT AREA	7
22A3	ROAD TO NOWHERE	***	MOONLIGHT AREA	7
22	ADVENTURE TIME	**	MOON AREA	9
22A2	SOLAR ECLIPSE	***	MOON AREA	10
22	SCATTERLINGS	****	MOON AREA	10
22	BIG CORNER DIRECT	***	BIG CORNER AREA	2 (+7)
21	DARE TO BE DIFFERENT	**	LEFT OF THE RAMP	9
21	REBEL YELL	**	MOON AREA	11
21	SOMETHING OF VALUE	****	MOON AREA	12
21	TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC	***	MOON AREA	11
21	ROAD WARRIOR	**	BIG CORNER AREA	11

GRADE	NAME	STARS	CRAG	NO. PITCHES
21	BIG CORNER	****	BIG CORNER AREA	14
21	ICE NINE	*	BIG CORNER AREA	4
20	DOWNWARD BOUND	*	LEFT FACE AREA	7
20	SKIN THE CAT	**	LEFT FACE AREA	7
20A3	AFTERGLOW	**	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	7
20A2	YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE (ORIGINAL)	***	WALL OF WHITE LIGHT	13
20	HEY JUDE	****	MOON AREA	11
20	BUSH PIG	***	MOON AREA	8
20	NEW MOON	**	MOON AREA	13
20	ANCIENT DUST OF AFRICA	***	BIG CORNER AREA	11
20	MALEBOCH	***	BIG CORNER AREA	7
19	LAST MOON	****	MOON AREA	13
19	MOONRAKER	***	MOON AREA	11
18	MOONLIGHT	*	MOONLIGHT AREA	6
18	HALFMOON	**	MOON AREA	17
18	MOONSHADOW	****	MOON AREA	10
18	LEFT FACE	**	LEFT FACE AREA	7
17	NO MOON	*	N FACE OF N DONJON	7
16	FISLAYJAM	*	E FACE OF S DONJON	6
15	GULLEY CORNER	**	LEFT FACE AREA	2+
13	GREAT GULLEY	**	LEFT FACE AREA	11

STORIES

INTRODUCTION

Many trips to Blouberg end up with a lot of time being spent in **The Cave** or on some small ledge waiting for conditions to improve (the condition of your arms, psych or ego for instance). Its great to have some bedtime reading on these occasions to take your mind off the strange howling from down in the valley (don't stress- its only the donkeys). The stories and accounts that follow add some life to many of the classic routes, and are highly recommended to get an idea of what to expect. The thing with the trad climbing experience is that it is seldom just a sequence, a tick and a number. A classic or an epic can play in your mind for weeks, and afterwards you always wonder "what next?" So the stuff that follows has already been done. What's next? 6 routes in a day...

Most of the stories have been taken from MCSA journals and are reprinted here courtesy of the Mountain Club. The Club has been instrumental over the years in pushing route development on Blouberg and in many other places, and particularly in recording the climbing exploits of its members. Most of the information in this guide would have been lost if not for the MCSA.



Ian and Hector after a mini-epic on Psycho Reptile

Photo by Hector Pringle

BLOUBERG NORTH WALL FRONTAL ROUTE

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST ASCENT OF MOONLIGHT

Taken from *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 1966 edition, pp111-113, courtesy of the MCSA.

Article by A.G. Chinery

In 1965 I made my first visit to Blouberg, which lies in the Northern Transvaal, approximately 300 miles from Johannesburg. I had been told of the awe-inspiring scenery and 1,200-foot cliff faces of good rock providing a paradise for the rock enthusiast.

The mountain lies in the centre of a Bantu Reserve and the countryside alongside the road leading through the reserve to the mountain looked like a desert. Where once there were green pastures with tall grass and green, stately mielie fields, there was now hard, barren rocky soil with the occasional thornbush protruding like a skeleton. The flowing river of yester-year was now only a brown sandy scar on the face of the land. My first impression was not favourable as the area seemed one of the hardest hit by the drought that had stricken the Transvaal for many years. We parked our cars at a small kraal situated at the bottom of "The Glade" and were immediately besieged by a rather large group of Bantu children only too keen to scrounge some delicacy to eat, or to volunteer for the price of 50 cents to carry a rucksack to the campsite which lies on the top of the mountain, four hours of strenuous walking away.

I entered into conversation with one of the better-looking young lads whom I judged to be at least 12 years old. When I asked him when last it had rained I was shocked to hear that he could not recall having ever seen rain in his life.

"The Glade" is a tree-engulfed gulley running down between the main massif and a long shoulder extending to the east. The local population still managed to get sufficient water for survival from pools in the upper reaches of the stream that had not yet dried out. We were assured, however, that there was always water emerging from a spring high on the mountain where the campsite lies. The mountain was not as parched as the vlakte below. After ascending the initial 1,000 feet, the surroundings started to change to a deep shade of green typical of the Transvaal during good times. This made us all feel at home again.

My first glimpse of the rock faces of Blouberg left me with an enduring memory of a rockclimber's paradise. Sheer vertical faces of clean rock stretch out for some two miles, and range in height from 600 to 1,000 feet. The campsite is marked on the map opposite page 132 in the 1960 *Journal*. The small spring supplied sufficient water for our needs. As a matter of fact some of the pools were deep enough to bath in. Access to the bottom of the rock faces is provided by a ramp down which one can walk. After a climb it is no great distance back to the high-level camp.

A section of the topography resembles a labyrinth that can cause the unwary hours of frustration if not negotiated correctly. One enters this maze of bushy passages

winding through the 20 to 30 foot bollards well within sight of camp, thinking that, at the most, ten minutes separates one from tea or cold beer. Alas, the ten minutes can easily become much longer if the route is lost.

The central section of Blouberg North Wall was still considered “unclimbable”, or “I have looked at it and it does not seem very hopeful”. My first impression coincided with the latter, although I had spotted a break that could be worked on should one have plenty of time to waste and plenty of nerve reserves to draw on.

During a subsequent Transvaal Section Meet in mid-April 1966 I fell to discussing this wall with Tony Shaw while we were planning to climb one of Bob Davies’ numerous classic routes. During the conversation we called Bob into our little pow-wow in an effort to extract more information about his route. At the same time we mentioned that we had our eye on the Central Wall. Bob immediately declared that the line I had mentioned had been attempted before, many years back, and that although the party had not ventured very far off the ground, they had not retreated due to the rock being unclimbable.

This was all the encouragement that we needed, so we immediately set about planning an attempt on the following day. Our plan to spend one day on the rock stretched out in practice to two days, mainly because of route-finding difficulties. After pitch No. 10, we noted several potential easier alternatives veering off from our original line of ascent which never looked inviting at the best of times. But alas, on attempting them we found that they all petered out into holdless faces or overhangs, causing us to retreat to pitch No. 10 each time. We ended up having to spend a bitterly cold and sleepless night on a large, grass ledge about 60 feet to the right of the stance above pitch No. 10 (Ed: this grassy ledge is the stance at the end of pitch 2 in the modern RD).

The following morning at sun-up we were at it again, this time on our original route, and after spending the morning negotiating the next five severe pitches we decided to retreat due to sheer exhaustion, heat and lack of food and water. We had gained some 750 feet and it took the whole afternoon to abseil off. We could not abseil directly downwards without ending up dangling under some overhang or other, so this led to quite a few complications. We arrived back in camp just before dark to find a group of rescuers discussing a plan for “retrieving the bodies” so to speak.

The route haunted Tony and me, so a date was fixed for the long weekend in July. Unfortunately Tony Shaw fell ill just before the intended trip, and with his blessing Paul Fatti, John Anderson Jnr. and Mat. Makowsky were persuaded to give it another “tonk” with me.

We started on the face at sun-up and after negotiating the first five pitches, the second and third of which had certainly not become any easier in the meantime, John and Mat. decided to retreat as they were not equipped for a bivouac which again seemed inevitable. Paul and I ploughed on until the thirteenth pitch where I developed very severe cramp in my right hand and arm. We continued on, but after the fifteenth pitch I had to relinquish my share of the leading as the cramp was now occurring at regular intervals.

Darkness forced us to bivouac at the top of the eighteenth pitch on a small shelf, sheltered from the wind, that just accommodated both of us. The cold Transvaal winter night kept us awake for most of the time and it was two very stiff and frozen individuals who glanced at the rock above the following morning.

The cramps in m arm had ceased after I had kept myself entertained for most of the night with physical jerks (Ed: interesting...). After giving the sun half an hour to remove the chill from the rock and defrost our bodies, which were somewhat below normal running temperature, we once again got busy with the task before us.

The results of our efforts are described below.

(Ed: The original description of the crux pitch (pitch 18) is reproduced here)

18. 110 feet "G" and 'A1': Climb up in the corner over some very bad rock to a piton about 30 feet up. Holding onto a sling on the piton, move up into a chimney position and continue chimneying up (strenuous) to the roof of the overhang where the chimney narrows and knee-jamming is necessary. When it is impossible to move up any further in the chimney, a small handhold high up on the left hand wall can just be reached. Traverse out to the left (very strenuous knee-jamming) at this level, until the crack opens up and the grade eases of. Climb up the crack for a further 25 feet to a platform stance with a piton in it.

Note:

The route had its second ascent on April 8, 1967, by M. Prior and P. Fatti who climbed it in one day.

THE RAZOR'S EDGE

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST ASCENT

Taken from *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 1984 edition, pp111-113, courtesy of the MCSA.

Article by George Mallory

Technical descriptions of big routes leave so much unsaid. To many climbers, the style is the ascent, and route descriptions seldom give an accurate picture of what happened on the first ascent. Here is an account of our trip to Blouberg where we climbed THE RAZOR'S EDGE.

The journey to Blouberg was ridiculous. Mike, Kevin and I left Pretoria at 10h30 pm, slept for two hours next to the road and arrived at Frans' Kraal at 05h30 on Saturday morning. It takes lots of enthusiasm to walk up Blouberg in under two hours; alternatively, some masochistic tendencies will do. Mike and I relied on the latter.

From the base of the 300m wall we spent several hours looking for a new line and when we decided where to start, an elaborate three-way spin gave Mike the first lead. I immediately scrambled up a pillar to take photographs and so Kevin took over the lead when Mike asked for help. He took two hours to lead the pitch which required a peg for protection below the crux. From my position on the pillar the crux looked berserk and the photographs taken from there certainly did the situation justice.

My turn on the sharp end lasted the next four hours during which time Kevin "talked" me up the "horror pitch". From the stance a delicate traverse on bad rock led to a strenuous section on worse rock which ended on an off-balance ledge.

The sequence from the ledge was tricky and the lack of good protection made working it out very scary.

A few meters above the ledge, when the stance was in sight over easy ground, a foothold broke and I fell eight meters. After picking up the pieces of my shattered nerve I climbed up to the stance. Kevin joined me, then we rappelled to the ground, leaving the ropes fixed to our high point. We scrambled back to the campsite in the moonlight.

Ascending our free-hanging fixed ropes the following morning was not without incident. I was already on the stance when Kevin, who was ten metres below me, pointed out that the rope he was jumaring up was badly chafed a few meters above him. I looked down and was alarmed to see that only a few strands of perlon prevented him making a fatally swift descent to the deck. As Kevin gingerly slid his top jumar above the frayed section, we both felt very relieved. At this stage Mike decided not to join us on the route.

The third pitch was much easier but too hard for me to follow with the day-sack which was stuffed with spare hardware, water, food and some light bivy gear.

Several mild pitches took us to the base of an enormous open book which we had seen from the base of the wall. After a closer look we decided that we would probably have to use aid to climb it. The alternative was to traverse right and hope to find a free exit to the top. This sounded like a good idea since it was Kevin's turn to lead.

At this stage it was late afternoon and I was feeling very drowsy. Kevin's occasional grumbles about "pushing the boat out" fell on deaf ears because I was feeding rope mostly in my sleep. Seconding the traverse was a rude awakening. The moves were hard and the protection barely adequate. Our efforts were, however, well rewarded because the ledge at the far end was custom built for a two-man bivouac. Our delight was soon blown away by a chilly wind and we shivered violently throughout the night.

By sunrise on Monday we had climbed an easy pitch to the jumbo stance on BIG CORNER. The jam crack on the left looked desperate but the only other line was the crux pitch of BIG CORNER which, naturally, we wanted to avoid. Kevin flashed the fierce crack then moved left onto a smooth face before disappearing from view. Following the crack proved it to be as strenuous as it looked and after struggling up it I needed ten minutes to recover before I could tackle the smooth face. The face looked so improbable that I wondered if Kevin hadn't secretly used an aid point. Eventually I cranked right up and found a minute hold at full stretch which provided the key to the sequence. To complete the pitch required some sophisticated footwork on an exposed traverse which was poorly protected but exhilarating climbing.

The final pitch was much easier. A tricky take-off into a jam crack, which widened to a chimney at the top, was pleasant way to finish THE RAZOR'S EDGE.

PRIVATE INVESTIGATIONS

AN ASCENT OF SOMETHING OF VALUE

Taken from the *Southern Rock Blouberg Guide Book 1st edition*, pp72-78, courtesy of Mike Cartwright.

Article by Mike Cartwright

Mike and I had been wanting to go to the Little Blue Mountain for a quiet weekend for some time now. None of the varsity crowd were keen because of the time of the year and the Smith clique had been there two weeks before to catch the full moon. Like I said, it was going to be a quiet weekend. We planned to leave Joburg at noon on Thursday and return by late Monday night. Mike and I completed our "Big-wall" rack by borrowing a couple of friends and crabs. We ended up with 45 crab and 12 friends. (We superstitiously left a friend 4 behind to drop the number from 13 friends!) On Wednesday evening we realised to our distress that we didn't have any water bottles so I went and visited a mate at Res. It took a bit of explaining as to why I wanted 5 two litre bottles in the middle of the week, but he lent them to me anyway. We even borrowed a car (from a rental company) to get there.

An uneventful trip brought us to Frans' Kraal. Frans was distressed at the size of our party. For some strange reason, still unknown to me, he seemed to think that a small party would be in great danger wandering around in the mountains. Mike convinced him that we would be quite alright and at that we set off up the long hill that makes up the first third of the walk-in. With 37 kilos of gear between us and Walkman blaring we made an easy killing of it and pushed through to stop for the first time at the clearing before the forest. That's where the camera started giving shit. Mike took a photo of me in a collapsed, sweaty state, sitting against a rock and ready to puke from over exertion! Thank Christ it never came out. I sat and watched the last trickles of twilight being soaked up by The Dark listening to Juluka trying to explain to me that my body was a bus. I suggested to Mike that we stay right there and camp for the night. Mike started what turned out to be a long on-going con job on why we should get to the cave by 9pm. "You'll be really chuffed when you're snug in your sleeping bag in the cave", he said, "just put your mind in neutral and walk."

Climbing in under our sacks, we set off again at full tilt straight into the mind-enclosing pitch black forest. Eyes fixed to the puddle of light shed by my Petzl, I trundled on in "neutral" as he put it but I couldn't help noticing the Boggie monster following me, the Predator monster on my right and the Aliens monster on my left. The Dark was getting the better of me. Basically I shat myself. Clegg kept telling me things like:

"Takes all my courage to look down that long road,
I'm going to Giyani with such a heavy load.
I've got to:

Shintsa (Change)
Qina (Strengthen Myself)
Quingel 'Isibindi (Take Courage)
And Don't Give Up."

So I left my troubles behind me and after a brief stop at the spring for water, we found ourselves up on the plain, two thirds of the way there and it was only 7.30pm. I walked in front from now on because Mike said he usually got lost on this part. Anyway, we free-wheeled from there up to the lower campsite and pools in just over twenty minutes. (You might notice from the tone that I had perked up a lot since the clearing. Wrong. I simply threw Jaluka out and switched to The Pretenders). Bending over a pool to fill a water bottle in the pitch dark without the comfort of a sack on your back as a rear-guard against the evils lurking in The Dark behind you can only be described as "Chill-factor to the bone". Here we had our first little bickering session. We could either add eight litres of water to our sacks and slog the last bit up to the cave, or leave the day sack and make a trip back down to get it later. I wanted to leave the water because I knew I could con Mike into coming back to fetch it on his own. Mike wanted to get it over with so we brought our combined load up to 45 kilos and spent the next forty minutes slogging it up to the cave. I nearly tripped over a cairn that some tit had built right in the middle of the path. I did mankind a service and kicked it into the bushes. Mike was right about being chuffed about getting to the cave before 9 pm. I was grateful that he had pushed me so hard and kept me going against my will for the last two hours. We even made up and said we would still be friends. And here's where you find out about all the crap we dragged up. Mike made tea in the small billy over on the Cadac Handy Cooker. "Handy" has nothing to do with size (huge) or weight (3.5 kilos). Its simply "Handy". You put it down anywhere and it sits there. None of this wobbling crap. It has a fine tuned volume control which, when on max, will bring a big billy to the boil in a fraction of the time that lesser cookers could. Yes folks, this is one mean cooker. I started buttering bread rolls and plastering them with honey., biltong cheese spread or bacon cheese spread. We each forced down six of these in the name of "carbo-loading". We then ploughed our way through one of those Sea-King meal-in-a-bag-jobs that's meant to feed two. Well, it's a good thing we had the rolls. Mike sorted the rack and I packed the munchens and crunchens for the next day's climbing. (It may seem at first that munchens and crunchens played a major role in this trip ... they did!) We packed it all into a Boulder sack, set the alarm clock for 6 am and hit our gaper mats.

6 am and all hell breaks loose. If we didn't have a real alarm clock I don't know what would have pulled Mike out of bed to make that first vital brew. Without hot tea there is just no way that I'll get up before 9.30 am! We didn't have much breakfast because we were still suffering from our gluttonous behaviour the night before. By 7 we were well on our way down the ramp and after a deceptively long walk along the base of the wall, we finally arrived at the bottom of the scramble start to BIG CORNER. As usual I got the short end of the stick and ended up with the sack for the 400 ft scramble. We would have taken a day pack but then it would have been one hell of a schlep to carry 6 kg of gear for this one hour little hike. That's why we opted to throw it all into a decent sack.

We decided to lead full rope length pitches at all costs because Mike had done the route before and knew it well enough to break it down to five roped pitches. I lead the first F2 pitch into the corner with no sweat and carried on halfway up the next G1 pitch. When I ran out of rope I stanced on a small ledge and brought Mike up. He experienced the joy of climbing with a full size sack although it weighed almost

nothing without the climbing gear in it. Mike took the next lead and combined the rest of my G1 pitch with the next G1 pitch. We originally wanted to combine these two with the next short F3 pitch too but had to stance before this because ropes are only so long. I followed with the sack and took mega strain. Ever tried just sticking your arms straight up into the air wearing a Boulder? Just think how much fun following G1 with it could be. I was trashed by the time I got to Mike so he quickly led the F3 bit and stanced about three metres up the G2 off-width at a fairly reasonable rest spot. I followed again with the pack, this time a lot smoother. After a short rest, some water and Tarzan bar I lead the rest of the off-width. Mike had thoughtfully used the friend 4 and one of the friend 3.5's in his belay. The crack took anything from a 2.5 to a 4 leaving me with four pieces to choose from, but I shat on him anyway! I led through the grovel chimney and fired straight on up the next G2 pitch, the Dihedral pitch, to a stance. Mike followed stopping every now and then to haul the sack. The G2 bit was definitely the most enjoyable part of the route for both of us. One more roped pitch and Mike got to the end of the serious stuff. He brought me up, once again climbing with the sack, and we coiled the ropes. I wasn't entirely at ease with this solo idea of his but he assured me that he'd been there before and it was fairly basic from then on. Guess who ended up with the sack for the next two pitches: E and F1!

Well, we topped out at 3 pm and pigged ourselves until 4 pm on Provita and Cheese Spread, Granola Bars, Mini Bar-Ones and all sorts of other nice things to eat. We took our time and strolled back to the cave by 5.30 pm. I conned Mike into making a quick water trip and he fetched eight litres from a nearby stagnant pool using the day sack. We also had the big billy full of water from the day before. The next two hours were spent playing a tricky game of musical chairs with the water containers. Fresh water, stagnant pool water, filtered water, filtered and boiled water...the net result was four full water bottles of reasonably healthy water. (By the way, those water purification tablets suck!) Once again we pigged ourselves on a mega supper of rice, tuna and a savoury sauce not to mention the Ultramel and canned peaches for dessert. I also put down a one litre tea transfusion. By 9 pm I had run out of things to keep my mind busy. The Boggie monsters and other fun loving creatures were lurking in The Dark just outside the cave and the Gerbils were scaring the shit out of us every time one of them scampered by. We set the alarm for 3 am and chickened out of facing reality by falling asleep.

Mike forced me out of my sleeping bag just after 3 with a cup of hot tea. We tucked into a couple of Oatsas (Yeuk!), packed our sleeping bags into the sack along with the rack, ropes, six litres of the magic liquid and a huge amount of bivvy gear and tons of other rubbish including lank munchens and crunchens. True to form, the sack weighed in at 26kg of which only 12kg was climbing gear ("How do you know how much it weighed?" you may ask. I planned this to the nearest 100g back in a little flat in Braamfontein silly!) On the ramp in The Dark by 4 and at the base of SOMETHING OF VALUE by 5.30 just in time to watch the sunrise. After a quick shit (the wall always seems to do this to me at first) and a gear sort I took the first lead, forty meters of F3 (18) to the stance. Mike followed with the sack (14kg) and was totally bugged by the time he crawled onto the stance. So, I got to lead the next pitch, 40 more meters of roofish F3 (17) to the next stance. Things were running slowly and Mike repeated his performance. I explained to him that he had to climb faster if we wanted to top out in this life. He growled, grabbed the rack and led off on

the next 40 meters of F3 (17). I followed this with Eric (the sack finally had some form of identity) and realised why Mike was so stuffed. I panted a gasped onto the mega grass ledge at about 10 am. Mike had a huge grin on his face. The sun was determined to make life difficult and bake us to death. We left Eric outside and went to hide in the Adele's hole under the big boulder. I lay there for half an hour eating Tarzan bars, sweets and drowning myself in magic liquid. I studied the RD and worked out how much we needed to climb to make it to the bivi ledge before dark. Only three more pitches! With eight hours of daylight left, at the slug speed of to hours per pitch, we could even fix the G2 pitch after the bivi ledge and ab back down to kip. No problem. I started on the G1 (19) ramp pitch at 10.30 am feeling like a new man. Neither Mike nor I found this pitch particularly difficult although we did haul Eric. We gave it a grade of F3 (17).

Here's the RD for pitch 5:

20m 21 Climb the brown face to a rail leading left to the base of an obvious dihedral, which is climbed to beneath a roof. Traverse about 10m left across the face to a stance.

The 10m traverse is a touch bleak as far as pro goes. Its protected by a sideways RP1 at about 5m. Get it? Twenty meter pitch...ten meter traverse...belay ledge below...great potential for hitting the deck, enhanced even more by the fact that the crux is just after the RP and that Mike's back-belay system left plenty to be desired.

Oh well, he handled it ok and needless to say we hauled Eric. Following was even more fun because you face the same deck potential, only with the RP pulling the wrong way. There were some tense moments but what we kept on forgetting was that we're actually fairly good climbers, climbing below our grade. This fact is one of the things that's very difficult to explain to your little brain while you're trying to put it back together under extreme stress conditions. The next 40 m of F3 including a 15m traverse was tame compared to what we'd just been through. It was my turn to lead and Mike followed with Eric. We both felt that this pitch was more like F2 although the last little corner was a bit tricky. Anyway, this very pleasant pitch ends at The Five Star Bivi Ledge. We wandered around our bedroom in the sky and introduced ourselves to the locals (hundreds of swallows in little nooks and crannies all over the ledge). Mike built a nice flat platform out of huge flat rock flakes to kip on, with a surrounding wall of rocks to keep the breeze out. After a good munch and some more magic liquid Mike suggested that I lead a hard pitch for a change so I fixed the next G2 (20) pitch and reversed it in the dark on my Petzl shunt.

"And far from flying high on clear blue skies, I am spiralling down to the hole in the ground where I hide..."

I emptied Eric out into a corner of my villa and was boggled at the amount of munchens that we still had left so I proceeded to rectify the situation. Empty Eric made a nice padded mat to kip on so I snuggled up on it in my sleeping bag and to the sound of Floyd we fell asleep. (The Dark couldn't get to me high up on my little ledge.)

The next morning we slothed until 6.30 and then woke up to a good solid breakfast of Yogi-Crunch with powder milk and Cheese Rolls with Honey. I did what I've

always wanted to do on a big-wall bivi: drop my blessing on a flat rock and Frisbee it into the valley below. I think I took out a donkey. We followed pitch 7 hauling Eric, who was by now down to about 8kg I guess, through the crux. We both found it a touch desperate for F3 and decided that we must have over-eaten. Anyway, it was definitely harder than the G1 ramp pitch. I then lead the Double Crax G2 (20) pitch and traversed left too low like a real clutz and made life really difficult for myself, not to mention airy and scary. Mike followed the conventional line at the conventional grade wearing the unconventional Eric. We stopped in the shade before the next easy traverse pitch for an early but drawn-out lunch break. I led the F3 (17) to give Mike a chance to follow a traverse with Eric for a change. We both found this pitch fairly basic. The same cannot be said about the first sequence of moves on the next G2 (21) off-width pitch. Mike and I spent just over two whole hours fathoming the first few moves out and putting our minds back in their respective little boxes. The problem lay somewhere between the belay ledge and the four meters of rope one needed to clip the first runner on back-belay. When Mike finally got the runner out and clipped he blew his bracket and other gaskets. His mind simply packed it in and he was forced to take a poofy fall onto the runner and lower off to the ledge. I led through on his gear and he followed. Eric got a free ride through the overhanging first six meters and then hopped on Mike's back for the rest of the pitch. These may not technically have been the hardest moves on the route but it definitely was the crux pitch as far as we were concerned.

Another hour of trivial climbing brought us to the start of the scrambling. After a rope coiling ceremony we took turns with Eric and topped out in no time. After much shaking of hands – Mike and I, Mike and Eric, Eric and I – and all the other strange things one normally does on topping out such as letting go of loads of yells of triumph, drinking all the excess magic liquid and noshing all the leftover munchens and crunchens (and believe me, this was no small task!), we headed for the cave at full tilt to the sound of, what else, Floyd. Forty minutes later we were watching a brew in the making.

The Dark moved in and the sky turned evil. Lighting raked the heavens and thunder shook the foundations of the earth. Then it started pissing down. By 9pm it hadn't stopped and I needed water! Stark naked, armed only with a coke bottle and a Petzl headlamp I went off in the quest for the magic liquid. Rain has this habit of being wet without being easy to catch. Anyway, I found a full rock pool, filled my bottle and then tossed the Petzl aside to have a much needed bath.

I had challenged The Dark and I had won.

EIGHT MILES HIGH

AN ACCOUNT OF THE FIRST ASCENT

Taken from *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 1988 edition, pp118-120, courtesy of the MCSA.

Article by Stewart Middlemiss

On a midwinter's afternoon at 4h30 pm with one hour of daylight left, halfway up the North Wall of Blouberg, your options are very limited; abseil, bivy or climb very fast. We elected to do the latter and traversed off onto HEY JUDE, which provided an easy escape conduit for those willing to "boat" it a little. Climbing alpine style (one person leading, placing occasional runners and the other two following at the end of the rope) enabled us to do six pitches before dark and have only the final bushy gully to do without any light. We had taken the headtorch with us, and as George had led the last section, this resulted in him stumbling up the potholed, but nearly level, gully like a blind man; which cost him some skin and bruising and no doubt contributed to his good humour on the walk down. Three people, one headtorch, no moon and the slog across plus the maze ensures that its at least three hour after dark before you get back to the cave.

The previous day Mike Cartwright and I had abseiled about two rope lengths down the area to the right of YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE. It didn't take long to decide that it looked pretty good territory for an aid route (see PSYCHO REPTILE), or as Mike put it "A library route – bookcases of loose rock". We also both got scared enough to put an end to any thoughts of establishing any route from the top down. You are not in the right frame of mind to deal with intimidating rock and the problems it poses. At the same time Dominic and Grant had gone to climb LAST MOON, while Kevin and George had made a start on a new route, completing four pitches before abseiling off.

On Saturday Mike was still keen to do some more inspection from above, but in a different area, so I teamed up with Kevin and George for another push at their route. I ended up leading the crux pitch off the grass ledge and appreciated the blade peg that Kevin had given me to place; he had led it the previous day with a nut scratcher slid into a crack for protection! A lot of trying of various alternatives saw us getting nowhere. The most feasible alternative looked like it needed a bolt, so with just over an hour of daylight left we climbed SOMETHING OF VALUE'S traverse pitch and traversed onto HEY JUDE.

Sunday dawned cold and wet (until 10.30 am), so we all enjoyed a rare laid-back day – Dominic and Grant apart. They had experienced a character-building bivy on LAST MOON, so Mike and George went to look for them while Kev and I packed up. When the miserable pair arrived with their would-be rescuers we left for home. A good natured race developed, starting as a brisk walk and escalating into a sprint. Kevin got to the front and tried to shake us off with a burst of speed. Such was the scene that greeted Adam Roff and Duncan Elliot staggering up through the forest on their first visit to Blouberg. Three maniacs, with packs, hell-bent on suicide, crashing down the path, or in its vicinity, at full tilt! brief yelled greeting and we were gone.

Smith, without stopping, made Frans' Kraal in 43 minutes from the top campsite. We lesser beings took a bit longer.

The next weekend saw Kev and me back on the great road north (George couldn't make it). It was new moon, but the walk-in in the dark isn't too bad if you've done it before. We met Mike at Frans' Kraal – he had spent the week at Blouberg along with Adam and Duncan (who did LAST MOON over three days but that's another story).

Early the next morning the three of us climbed “our route” / HEY JUDE / SOMETHING OF VALUE combination to our high point. The pitch that “needed a bolt” went fairly easily with a little commitment followed by two more excellent pitches, then one that required a little gardening. Possibly one of the reasons why it took such a long time to open the route was the unanimous yet unvoiced feeling that with pitches this good, mixed climbing would be out of place. This most cracks were dug out with nut picks and brushed clean (on lead) as were a few ledges, a time-consuming process calculated not to make you feel good 'n clean 'n fresh.

Mike had a severe attack of sloth the next morning so Kev and I set off to do battle with the rock again. Up HEY JUDE, by now almost a well-worn highway, and then a rising traverse to gain our high point. More excellent climbing took us to “the best stance on the hill”. A small ledge, one meter by three meters, surrounded by steep rock and directly above the start A stone dropped from here cleared the base of the route by a few meters. The next pitch looked intimidating, a steep protectionless corner which I climbed up and down a few times – eventually getting two meters off the ledge.

Kevin took over the sharp end and got one meter higher before deciding this was not on – bathooking was not part of the game even if we did have them. Inspiration took charge when a possible crack-line was seen seven meters to the right with a steep wall in between. “Looks like a 5.13 face at Smith Rocks!”

A nut and a friend were placed and Kevin did a very airy pendulum to a good crack which took us to the stance below the SOMETHING OF VALUE off width. There are two lines to the left of the off width. The first is blank at the start and the second is blind higher up. Solution: start on the far left crack and traverse across the bulge to the right on “*emmlets*”, (the English diminutive of *emmer* or bucket). Although a bit run-out, it gave positive climbing to gain a good crack. A long (55 m) pitch in semi darkness followed. This brought us to the SOMETHING OF VALUE scramble and yet another after dark descent. Now all we had to do was climb it all in one push!

THE BIG PUSH

FIVE ROUTES IN A DAY

Taken from *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 1990 edition, pp88-92, courtesy of the MCSA.

Article by George Mallory

Blouberg, which is situated in the Northern Transvaal, approximately 450km from Johannesburg, has a 300m high north wall. When I first visited the mountain in 1982, I really enjoyed climbing there, but it seemed such a pity that the logistics of the place confined climbing there to long weekend trips: day one to drive up and walk up, day two for the route and day three to walk down and drive home.

When I left WITS my appetite for climbing soon outstripped the supply of long weekends. In 1984, my brother and I realised that long weekend trips had to be possible. We left work early one Friday afternoon, drove to Frans' Kraal, walked up in the moonlight and started our route on the Saturday morning. In those days, standard practice for doing a route in a day called for an alpine start. Because we started late, we bivouacked on the route and topped out on Sunday. This was the first time that a route on Blouberg was climbed in a two-day weekend trip. It opened the door to an unlimited supply of climbing at Blouberg.

When I returned to the Transvaal after a year of depravity in the Free State, Kevin Smith and I started talking about Blouberg. We decided that we would like to climb two routes in a day. We felt that this was possible. When the day came in December 1986, things went so well that we actually did three routes: HEY JUDE (G2, 20), LAST MOON (G1, 18) and BIG CORNER (G2, 20).

Naturally we were thrilled with this achievement but in the back of our minds a question lurked: "Is it possible to do more than three routes in a day?" After all, we hadn't practiced the routes and we had finished with more than an hour of daylight to spare and we could definitely have been fitter. I couldn't see how we could squeeze a fourth route into one day because, on average, we had taken five hours per route and there aren't 20 daylight hours in a day. But Kevin was less inhibited in his thinking and, in June 1987, over a good bottle of wine he suggested that, by climbing at night with head torches, we might be able to climb five routes in 24 hours. The concept astounded me. Imagine climbing at night with head torches! How fit would I have to be to keep climbing for 24 hours? We resolved to go to Blouberg every full moon weekend to prepare for "the big push" as we called the project.

There was plenty of preparation to be done. Firstly we needed to decide which five routes we would climb. Neither of us had ever climbed HALFMOON (G1, 19) or MALEBOCH (G2, 20) so we did the routes and found them to be suitable "big push" material. Secondly we needed to explore the western end of the wall. I thought we might find a descent ramp there which would hopefully reduce the time required to walk back down to the base of the wall between routes. Reducing our walking down time was in fact essential. When we did three routes in a day it took us about three

hours to climb each route and about two hours to walk down to the base, i.e. a total time per route of about five hours.

Five hours times five routes gives 25 hours which is obviously longer than a day. However we did find a descent ramp at the western end of the wall and with hindsight, using this ramp made the project possible. Thirdly, we needed to learn the technique of big wall climbing by torch-light. It still seems ludicrous now, but one moonless weekend we drove to Frans' Kraal on Friday night, walked up to the cave, arrived there at 11h30pm and set off to climb HEY JUDE half an hour later, at midnight. My head torch batteries didn't last the distance so I got some unexpected practice at climbing in the dark. We topped out at first light, slept for a couple of hours and went on to climb another route.

By the end of 198 we were ready to attempt the "big push", but Kevin went to London over the December full moon weekend and when he returned he caught hepatitis. Consequently we had to shelve the idea for the time being.

In 1988 we concentrated our efforts on more conventional projects. We opened SCATTERLINGS, EIGHT MILES HIGH and TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC. To add spice to the weekends the walk up to the cave became a highly competitive activity. My previous personal best time of 1h50 was whittled down to 1h24 (at night). Kevin slashed his previous best of 1h23 to 1h15. Schemes were devised and deals negotiated to reduce pack weight and hence time. I know one lunatic who even trained specifically for the event by walking up to his 17th floor office every morning. The all Africa record (without a pack and in daylight) now stands at 58 minutes.

As the summer of 88/89 approached, "big push" fever broke out again. Clive Curson and I were the first victims. We wanted to do two routes in a one day trip from Johannesburg. We set off from Johannesburg at midnight one Friday, drove to Frans' Kraal, walked up at dawn, climbed HEY JUDE and BIG CORNER, ran down to the car, drove back to Johannesburg, and even managed to get to a party by 10h30pm. On Christmas eve, Kevin and I climbed EIGHT MILES HIGH (22, 11 pitches) and THE RAZORS' EDGE (21, 12 pitches) in 16 hours. This project, to climb two long hard routes in a day, was the product of "big push" mentality. In retrospect, climbing two hard routes quickly was a better quality experience than doing vast quantities of easy mileage.

We thought that January would be the best month for the "big push" because the days are long and the wall is shaded in the afternoon. However, Kevin went to London in January and we both went to an important wedding over the February full moon weekend. The "big push" had to be postponed to the March 1989 full moon weekend. The days are shorter than in January which is an obvious disadvantage and the sun shines on the wall all day, which can be murder on a hot day but despite these disadvantages we decided that the project could not wait till the next summer.

Michele, Kevin and I drove to Frans' Kraal on Friday night, walked up by torch-light, and got to sleep at 2h00am. On Saturday we walked down to the base of the wall and stashed water and food at the base of each route. We returned to the cave via the western ramp (memorising the route in the process) and also made a cache at

the top of this ramp. We then hoped and prayed for favourable weather conditions. A ten-minute downpour in the afternoon didn't exactly inspire confidence. Furthermore, an experienced party told us that they were forced to aid the twin cracks pitch on HEY JUDE earlier that day because it was wet.

We woke at 11h15 after what felt like (and was) far too little sleep. The night was warm, so at exactly midnight we set off clad only in T-shirts and cotton longs. HEY JUDE went like a dream. We topped out an hour ahead of our planned schedule then walked down to the base of HALFMOON. At that stage we were forced to wait a quarter of an hour for first light as we hadn't planned to take head torches on that route.

HALFMOON didn't go quite so well. went off route on the third pitch and when we topped out we were only half an hour ahead of schedule. LAST MOON was next on the list. As we started, Michele appeared at the base and encouraged us. By 1h00pm we had done three routes and had two to go. It was hot and a piece of dirt in my eye was hampering my vision. At the base of BIG CORNER Michele fed us cheese and tuna rolls. At that stage the pressure was on us because we needed to get back down to the base of MALEBOCH with enough time to scramble the first few pitches in the light. We combined pitches on BIG CORNER in such a way that I had a full rope length of drag on the crux. I really battled with the move and that psyched me out. While Kevin led the last pitch I prepared my resignation speech: "We've already improved on our previous best and in my exhausted state, climbing MALEBOCH in the dark simply can't be justified." But when I joined him on top I didn't have the heart to deliver my speech. Kevin encouraged me and we descended the western ramp for the fourth time that day.

Michele was still at the base. We ate and drank as quickly as we could and then, in the last light, scrambled up the start of MALEBOCH. The timing was looking good. We had five hours for six pitches and then a walk back to the cave. I made a deal with Kevin: I would lead the "fighting pitch of G1 standard" (which he found very difficult) if he led all the other pitches. It is difficult to describe our ascent. I kept falling asleep on the stances while belaying Kevin and he did the same to me. While actually climbing I felt fine but we seemed to be wasting so much time and there was so much at stake. Eventually I was woken by Kevin's shout of "belay ff" at the top of the crux pitch. We had first free climbed this pitch 18 months earlier and had graded it 20. In the dark, after nearly 1500m of climbing I resorted to standing on a peg at the crux (embarrassing as it is to admit it).

We walked back to the cave and arrived there at seven minutes to midnight. We had done nearly 1500m of climbing and 1500m of descending in a single day. We were exhausted.

I was too tired to become philosophical then and even now I can't explain why we did it. Perhaps my grandfather had the answer: "what we get from this adventure is just sheer joy. And joy is after all the end of life. We do not live to eat and make money. We eat and make money to be able to enjoy life. This is what life means and what life is for."

Notes by Kevin Smith

Timetable:

0000	Leave cave
0050	Start HEY JUDE
0350	Top out HEY JUDE
0515	Base HALFMOON – still dark!
0530	Start HALFMOON
0900	Top out HALFMOON
1000	Start LAST MOON
1300	Top out LAST MOON
1410	Base BIG CORNER
1430	Start BIG CORNER scramble
1715	Top out BIG CORNER
1815	Base MALEBOCH
1830	Start MALEBOCH scramble
2250	Top out MALEBOCH
2353	Reach cave

Pitches:

HEY JUDE	8 roped pitches (usually 9)
HALFMOON	9 roped pitches (usually 9)
LAST MOON	8 roped pitches (usually 11)
BIG CORNER	4 roped pitches (usually 6+)
MALEBOCH	6 roped pitches (usually 6+)

Food:

Water and Game at each start, 4 litres Game and 4 litres water at top stash. Cheese spread and tuna rolls, tomatoes, dried peaches, zoo and chocolate digestive biscuits and sweets at starts. Chocolate bars (7 in total) and sweets at top stash.

Gear:

Headlamps and helmets on first and last routes.

Longs used and shirts – nothing else.

Rack – 4 slings, 6 jalobes, Rocks 1-7, Friends 0, 0.5 1, 1.5, Camalots 1, 2, 3, Hex 8, each with krab, 2 spare krabs, 1 bandolier, 2 scratchers, 2 belay devices. All krabs lightweight, Friends technical i.e. wired.

No pack, takkies carried on harness, water only at start and top.

Weather:

Clear at night, misty and windy pre-dawn to mid-morning, hottish midday to mid-afternoon, cool in evening.

BLOUBERG: MY BACKYARD

STORIES AND ADVENTURES AT BLOUBERG

Taken from *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 1997 edition, pp164-169, courtesy of the MCSA.

Article by Charles Edelstein

To climb at Blouberg is to touch the soul of rock climbing. The impressive 400 meter high north face of Blouberg towers above the plains of the Northern Province. It overlooks in the distance the Limpopo Valley, which can be an arid orange-red desert one year or a luscious green savannah dotted with trees in another year. To the north-east lies the Soutpansberg. If you ever wanted to get to grips with the “This is Africa” vibe, Blouberg is the epitome.

The north face is guarded by thousands upon thousands of alpine swifts. They feed on the aerial plankton in the early morning and the late evening. If you are unfamiliar with climbing on the north face it is wise to be well-established on a route before the swifts appear in the morning and off the face in the evening before they re-emerge. It is a wonderful sight to see them racing around at great speed with their shrill chirps. Three or four of them will peel off from the main formation and dive after a small stone tossed from a high point on the face.

Throughout the day the rock martins lazily flit around interspersed with noisy groups of red-winged starlings. Pigeons abound and later in the afternoon you will be visited by the Cape vultures with their languid flight along the upper reaches of the face. Beware of the pesky black ravens who will annihilate any article which may resemble a food container – even a chalk bag has been carried off!

My first visit to Blouberg took place in 1978 with Kevin Smith. We were on a mission to explore and conquer. Very few routes had been established by our predecessors, such as Paul Fatti. However, even today, and despite improved roads, a visit to Blouberg is an adventure of epic proportions unless you are accompanied by a “regular”. This trip was no exception. El Nino, which wasn’t known about at the time, was doing its thing and besides getting stuck in the then sand (but now concrete) drift, and taking the long way around, we eventually managed to top out after a four- or five-hour walk. Ronnie van Dijk, who travelled on his own and was to meet us, got hopelessly lost and dehydrated. Kevin and I spent a very wet night under a pathetic overhang at the upper rock pools, and the next day we went careering down the kloof on our imaginary motor bikes. “BAPM, BAPM!”, we went. When Ronnie eventually found us, the look of utter joy on his face was a sight to behold. He had spent the night slightly drier than us, but all on his own in this wild place. We spent that weekend bouldering and opened a route on the lower campsite buttress which we called BAPM, which is still good for its grade at 21 free.

Over the next few years Blouberg was to become my passion: even Yosemite Valley took second place because of its crowds and commercialism. It started with Margaret Milne and I losing the path on the walk-in and bivying in the forest. Then we spent an uncomfortable night bivying on a tiny ledge on LAST MOON, somehow

not finding the five-star site further up. Fortunately Blouberg graced us with a mild night and we were not cold even though it was mid-June. However, our final night was spent at one of the many wonderful sites under the trees next to one of the crystal-clear rock pools – an experience which cemented our relationship, which is still fantastic up to this day.

In the 1980's Blouberg became very popular with the so-called "regulars"; the stashes grew and the routes were conquered. The ritual evolved to sneak off from work on Friday afternoon and race to Pietersburg, risking life and limb. This meant being subjected to more than one "NDE" (Near Death Experience)! We would descend on the Spur restaurant to gorge ourselves on salads and coffee, followed by the drive to Dendron and Frans' Kraal. Frans was always there to greet us, surrounded by hordes of children with their bright eyes and their cries for sweets. Then came the race up to the cave in the moonlight. George Mallory defined the ultimate "PB" (personal best) – an hour from Frans' Kraal to the cave.

The 1980's and early 1990's saw the HEY JUDE area developed to produce fine routes such as EIGHT MILES HIGH and SCATTERLINGS. Also, the Wall of White Light section of the face developed and delivered world-standard big-wall routes such as WALL OF WHITE LIGHT, YOU ONLY LIVE TWICE, PSYCHO REPTILE and THE DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER. Meanwhile, an amazing feat of endurance, "The Big Push" (five routes in under 24 hours by Kevin Smith and George Mallory) was accomplished. Bolting, fortunately judicious, occurred, resulting in routes such as ANOTHER DAY IN HELL (25), being free climbed. On the minor rock faces some short routes appeared and some testing trad problems emerged including POWER SURGE (24) and DOG STAR (24), which still requires a repeat ascent. Mike "Rat" Cartwright hauled a generator, a drill and 90m of cable up to the top of the main face and installed rappel routes in the HEY JUDE and BIG CORNER areas. These proved invaluable to me as I have preferred to camp next to the HEY JUDE pools over the last few years to evade the theft which has become rife at Blouberg. The rappel route allows for an exposed 90 minute descent to the base.

Fringe lunatics have also had their day: George Mallory on one occasion parapented off the BAPM buttress, and a group of BASE-jumpers hurled themselves off the Wall of White Light in front of television cameras.

More recently I started paying more attention to the routes in the Wall of White Light area. Mike Cartwright and Cathy O'Dowd had finished THE DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER, which, like THE WALL OF WHITE LIGHT wanders somewhat around that part of the face. The two routes cross each other about half way up, and unfortunately the lines of both are rather broken. To the left is a vast amount of unclimbed rock. Kevin and I completed ANOTHER DAY ON HELL in 1990, so named because of the intense heat we had to endure during our various attempts. Towards the end of 1995 I envisaged pushing a line straight through the middle of the face left of THE WALL OF WHITE LIGHT and THE DELICATE SOUND OF THUNDER.

However, the mid-1990's saw the "regulars" disappearing and experienced climbing partners were becoming difficult to find for such a venture. Matt Murrison was

introduced to me and we set off in November 1996 to establish what I thought would be a serious aid route. Armed with all the aid toys and the experience I had gained a few months previously on ZODIAC in Yosemite, we embarked on the project. We completed six pitches – all of the pitches having very little aid. It was almost a year later that I returned with Eric Maguire to finish off the route. In the meanwhile Matt had returned and had finished off a version of the route, taking a different line to the one I had envisaged. 1997 delivered DOG DAY IN HEAVEN (24, A2). George Mallory visited South Africa in December and we hauled a Hilti drill up the route. I placed a bolt on the “Bottle Pitch” (pitch 5) and bolted the final dihedral. In the dihedral I managed to free all but the last move (which was obstructed by the haul bag), and I have no doubt that it will go free at grade 24 or 25. This takes a virtually straight line and is one of the more consistently hard routes at Blouberg.

On the same trip George and I placed rap hangars at the top of BAPM and placed three carefully positioned bolts on the route just to the left of it. Some years ago Dion van Zyl and I had failed at the last move to complete this route, which George and I now climbed. It is of a similar quality to BAPM and we thought that BOLTM was an appropriate name.

The drive home from Blouberg must be done in the late afternoon. The road to Pietersburg is a veritable bonus for bird-watchers. All the bushveld birds: lilac-breasted and racket-tailed rollers adorn the branches of the thorn trees and the telephone line; crimson-breasted and all manner of other shrikes and hornbills abound; on virtually every telephone pole is perched a raptor (mostly brown snake eagles). Then comes the long haul back to Johannesburg, fortified by multitudinous cups of death-defying coffee at the Spur. And finally surviving Monday at work.

Blouberg is an amazing rock climbing and trekking venue. If you respect it, it delivers the most friendly big-wall climbing in South Africa: the rock is good to excellent; the protection on all the trade routes is good; the weather is not capricious (morning mist should not deter you from setting off as it burns off quickly) and it is an all-year venue. There is still endless potential to establish rock routes. Several of the routes have yet to have second attempts.

As I wrote to a fellow climber recently, “Blouberg is like my backyard. It is a mountain that has provoked other guys like Kevin Smith and George Mallory to undertake dramatic feats of endurance and bold climbing.” Blouberg gives meaning to words like “serene”, “ethics”, “camaraderie”, “trad” and “soul”. A visit will redefine your value system and give a new meaning to your concept of rock climbing. If someone wants to know why I climb, I suggest they undertake a trip to Blouberg. In the Ahwanhnee Hotel in Yosemite, there is a definition of climbing: “Maximum effort to achieve absolutely nothing”. To me Blouberg represents maximum effort to achieve total contentment.

BROKEN ON BLOUBERG

AN ACCOUNT OF AN EPIC ON EIGHT MILES HIGH

Taken from *The Journal of the Mountain Club of South Africa*, 2003 edition, pp135-139, courtesy of the MCSA.

Article by Andrew Pedley

The piece was shocking, but the climbing demon in my head said “Go, you’ll be ok, caution to the wind; like the thousand times before, you’ll be pumped and grinning in a few moments time”. He’s always right, all those years trading he’s never failed me. Without that reckless little fiend in my head I’d have never made it up so many classics from sea-cliff to spire; he’s been there every time, on that “bold move” or “necky pitch”, those decisions that really pay. Those are the mind-bending moments that make trading what it is to all who love it, that heady feeling that accompanies all the best ascents, the one thing that really sets us on high and pulls us free from the tennis of sport climbing. There is a risk though, of that little fiend becoming too strong for a moment; the leash we keep him on stretches a little bit and he pulls too hard. The knack of good trading is keeping that leash just right, letting it out a little when necessary to the very edge in the finest of times; the full experience will never be gained if you haven’t.

For about six seconds on that fourth pitch I just let him run away. That’s all he needed, just six seconds in fourteen years of climbing, the first time I’d really done that, I went totally freeform. Next thing I was stressing, then greasing out of baggy jams, then I kind of caught an edge, kind of swung a leg over the rope, yelled something and then, off. I saw but didn’t feel the nut rip and the ledge cam with a smack and a roll and I was looking up at Hector, my partner. I was calm for a second. I even thought about getting up and trying again.

Like in a vacuum, everything suddenly rushes in, implosion-like, onto all my senses at once, but mainly the pain screaming in my leg and arm. “Why is my foot angled like that?” So I try to lift it but it just hangs there like it’s not connected. The bottom half of my leg is at forty-five degrees to the rest of it and the pain is hammering into my toes with each pulse like someone riving a spade into them. My elbow is smashed, my hand furled into a ball, the nerves mashed.

I don’t remember Hector untying me, just a nasty haziness and through spinning eyes I looked up to see my pitch, and I realised what had happened, lying upside-down amongst rocks on the Grassy Ledge. I remember the sun warming my face and the familiar sound of bells from cows grazing in the forest below, nice things, soothing sounds colliding with the swarming pain and the taste of blood in my mouth. I’d knocked my head but was ok and my back was fine. You just know right away what’s hurt and what’s not. So Hector moved me around into a better position, head up and floppy limbs supported with all manner of socks and grassy tussocks, just so long as my bones weren’t grating.

So there we were, 120 meters off the ground, three pitches up EIGHT MILES HIGH, a classic 24 on Blouberg. “What a damn shame” I remember thinking, “I really

wanted to climb this and I've fucked-it-all-up". The climb is one of the greats at Blouberg, 11 steep and long pitches with beautiful handrails and traverses working you up the wall, and with hardly any ledges except for the one I lay upon. We'd spent the first two pitches shivering in a low morning mist, but minutes earlier this had burst open, giving us a perfect day for a perfect climb. It had been awesome and I had been so excited. Lying there, looking up, I was gutted not to be up there, swinging out through roofs, busting hard moves. I had failed, a poor decision, my fault entirely and I hated that as much as the injuries.

Thank God for my three year old cellphone with batteries that never go flat, for the Mountain Rescue who grouped immediately for the job in hand, and for the Air Force who were able to divert an Oryx and fly north.

Waiting on that ledge was a strange time, the pain became bearable and I enjoyed the views over the western Soutpansberg, the pleasant shifts from sun to shade, as perfect uniformly spaced cumulus clouds moved across the sky. Its real Africa up there, endless veld spreading away pretty much unspoilt in all directions. How silly I felt, one minute on top of the world in that great place, the next so out of place, risking my neck for a kick while the locals struggle to have a life at all.

I talked a bit with Hector, who was so solid throughout, and I focused on staying calm. There was no shock or wailing pain, just a steady throb counting down the minutes, while my thoughts circled. The team had left Pretoria and was on its way, and as I dozed I thought of them flying a beeline to our mountain, crossing the Waterberg then perhaps gaining their first view of Blouberg. Four hours lying in amongst those boulders on that sloping ledge, waiting, pain, more waiting. Midday passed and the afternoon became more chilly. Then at last, over the rustle of the space blanket there came the heavy chop of the Oryx from behind the mountain to the south. Minutes past and the sound burst upon us as the helicopter rounded the mountain to our right, a fat green speck, nose down to inspect the scene awaiting. It came in close to look at our position. I realised there was no chance of its landing on our ledge or even hovering above it and at about that time the pilot must have realised the same; with a renewed chop of the blades the helicopter was up over the top of the mountain and out of sight.

The rescue was incredible. Every member of the team was confident and rehearsed and despite the difficulty there appeared never to be a moment's doubt. It took three hours to make the 210 meter abseil down to my narrow ledge with all the kit. By now the pain had become a deep throbbing ache and my leg and arm were massively swollen and misshapen, but with heavy doses of morphine it didn't seem so bad, though I was worried; bones can join but nerves may not. Thoughts of a spastic hand plagued me.

A sunset, with very little daylight remaining, a 180 meter rope was lowered to my stretcher from the helicopter hovering way above. I remember lots of noise, instructions and confirmations firing from person to person, ropes being clipped and slings equalised.

The lift rope was too short by about 20 meters! The sand bag swung against the cliff about a pitch above us, threatening to catch on a block or roof. With no other option

except leaving us, the pilot brought the craft down lower, moving in close to the rock face way above, until finally, in a flurry of action, the doctor was able to catch the rope and clip me and himself in. Seconds later I felt the rope come tight and the lift, and the faces of the team on the ledge. Weird and remarkably scary. We spun through the air, with the massive dark rock face of the mountain still towering above and the high pitched whirr of our lifeline arcing up from us to the helicopter in the wind. "This", I thought, "is a real epic". From there on I remember very little, a packed helicopter, injections, x-rays, lots of arms lifting me about, then waking up after surgery surrounded by friends bearing armfuls of sweets and biltong.

After six months I am now recovered, went climbing for the first time on a top-rope at Boven. I will be one hundred percent and I have decided that I will go eight miles again. I've thought about it a lot, those few moments when it all went terribly wrong. It was not a case of "accidents happen" or "bad luck", but a lapse in my ability to keep controlled that most powerful of climbing aids, that demon who spurs us on when we most need it, whose name would probably be Recklessness. He made me believe that my piece was good and that "it doesn't matter anyway as I'll never fall". He lied, as he always does, and this time I got smashed. I'll never let it happen again.

I would like to thank every member of the Gauteng sections of the Mountain Search and Rescue team for their incredible work that day. I cannot express enough admiration and thanks to the crew of the South African Air Force, who made the rescue possible by mobilising so quickly and operating the helicopter with such skill and bravery. Finally I would like to thank Hector for being so cool on the ledge, and Hein and Sarel for lugging all my kit down the mountain!

A BLUE MOON AT BLOUBERG

By Hector Pringle

I'm sitting on a small ledge, a pitch and a half below our high point. It's the first time I've felt fresh and strong so high up the route. Rushad is somewhere above me, approaching the stance below the crux pitch. For once I'm actually looking forward to trying it. Looking down I can see two climbers on the second pitch of the Last Moon. It's nice to have company on the wall, even if they are four pitches away. Earlier, as I'd followed Rushad around the huge roofs above the grassy ledge they had shouted up in reply to my whoops. I'm exactly where I want to be, and this time we're going to do it. Nothing can stop us now...

I had started the route we were on way back in 2004 with Al Grant. With the optimism of ignorance we had cast off onto the wall with three days food and water and a mountain of superfluous gear. We pried an absolute gem of a first pitch out of the rock with two devious traverses and a bit of rope tension, then rail hauled the next two easier pitches to collapse on the grassy ledge. The next day we attacked a steep black corner through the roofs above the ledge, only to be beaten back by a loose javelin of rock halfway up. After a hasty and undignified retreat, we took stock and decided to head up Last Moon to have a look at the upper part of the wall. After a traverse onto Teddy Bears' Picnic, we climbed a desperate corner with some more rope trickery, then cleaned out some brilliant tramlines above, opening the way to the summit scramble. After strategising on the abseil back down, we came up with a plan: we had a beginning and an end, we just needed the bit in the middle.

And so the next trip saw us slogging up to the summit with a drill, batteries and other paraphernalia. We hammered a piton into the desperate corner and dubbed it the *Knifeblade Pitch* and then carried on down to try and top-rope the preceding pitch. It was immaculate. We could get up most of it with some hanging around, except for a traverse in the middle that we couldn't protect on top-rope. We sunk two well-positioned bolts, with obligatory hard climbing to get to them. It's no sport crag up there so we called it the *Legoland Pitch*. On the next trip I climbed Something of Value with Mark Millar. He lowered me down the steep corner pitch above the grassy ledge, and I pitched the javelin of rock into the void, creating the *Rolling Stones Pitch*. The last obstacle had been cleared and Al and I were confident of a send on the next attempt. But Blouberg had other plans.

I have seen and been through everything on the route – illness, torrential downpours, cramping arms, rescues. On one memorable trip we didn't even make the grassy ledge because my partner Ian took a massive whipper and skinned both his hands. It was on that trip that he coined the bitter name that finally stuck: Blue Moon. This attempt is the seventh in four years and Rushad is the fourth partner to rope up with me.

For once I am high on the route, feeling strong. The weather is cool and it's early in the day. Everything is perfect. I take another look down. The leader is struggling, trying to claw onto a small grassy ledge. He seems to be off route. I see him scrabbling, then he pitches backwards, framed for an instant by the forest and wall.

He rolls backwards “*come on rope, catch*” I mutter. Too late, he slams into a ledge sideways, bounces off, keeps falling. Finally he gets brought up short by the rope, hanging upside down, unconscious and swinging gently. I see the belayer’s head pop out. “Andy, you OK?” No response. Andy is sprawled in a hopelessly awkward position; his pelvis thrust forward and his arms and legs splayed out. Within ten seconds of the fall I call Search and Rescue – its obvious that they’ll need to retrieve either a body or a patient: “Graham, I’m on Blouberg. Someone’s fallen on pitch two of Last Moon. Its bad. Send the chopper.” I lean back on the stance and scream my lungs out. 120m below me, Lester, Andy’s belayer does the same. We’re trying to get some sign of life out of the unconscious climber. Finally Andy groans and moves. Lester starts yelling for him to drop the bag he’s wearing – it’s pulling his torso down. Finally he understands and manages to turf it. Lester realises Andy can’t stay where he is and lowers him to a small ledge where he can at least sit more or less upright. Somewhere above me Rushad is abseiling down. We’re abandoning our attempt. I bite back the disappointment and focus on getting down safely. The current situation feels all-too familiar. The mountain seems to have a way of getting people to commit to things they wouldn’t try in the kloofs or at other more accessible crags.

The first rescue

In 2002 Al and I were high on Last Moon when Shaun, a friend of ours, phoned to say his partner, Rory, had fallen at the base of Hey Jude and he needed help. We abseiled down and found Rory with his pants soaked in blood to the cuffs. He and Shaun had backed off, and Rory had toppled off a boulder while pulling the ropes. He’d landed rear end first on a pointy rock. We weren’t sure of the extent of his injuries and we were none too keen to investigate, so we called the cavalry and spent a chilly and miserable night while they hiked in. The aging and overweight Cuban doctor who arrived the next morning barely looked at Rory before summoning the chopper. Even if Rory were able to walk down there was no way the doctor would make it! Rory turned out to have fairly minor injuries and made a full recovery. But for me the incident was a serious wake up call to the consequences of mistakes in the mountains.

After three long abseils Rushad reaches Andy first. While Rushad checks out Andy’s injuries and relays them to Search and Rescue I abseil down to join him and set up a stance to lower Andy. Fortunately the ropes just reach the ground. In our preliminary, unprofessional assessment Andy has a good few broken ribs and probably a broken pelvis. His lungs and other organs could be damaged as well. His head injury seems superficial, although his helmet probably saved his life. On the positive side he is conscious and becoming more lucid. As he grits his teeth and forces himself to roll off his small pedestal onto the rope so that I can lower him, I am reminded of similar determination shown two pitches higher up and 5 years earlier.

The second rescue

I was on Blouberg with Andrew Pedley. We made a strong team and had a good shot at sending Eight Miles High, THE classic hard route at Blouberg. This masterpiece was put up by the Blouberg demigods of Smith, Mallory and Middlemiss way back in 1988. We raced up the first three relatively easy pitches in

freezing weather to the grassy ledge. As the clouds started to lift Andrew cast off onto the upper part of the wall where the real climbing starts. He got all of 5m. Over-confidence combined with hard moves and tricky gear placements led to a crushing ground fall onto the grassy ledge. At first I thought he was dead, then he groaned and came to. His injuries were obvious: a pulverised elbow and cleanly snapped shin. For the second time I summoned the troops. This was becoming a habit.

Andrew didn't complain once. He gritted his teeth and suffered silently, as the now-fluffy clouds drifted over us. It was surreal up there waiting for the chopper. There was nothing to do, just wait, look at the view and occasionally exchange a few words. Then the rescuers arrived in a flurry of activity as they rigged the 120m drop-line, which they used to pluck Andrew right off the ledge. It was spectacular. I joined the team on the flight back to Pretoria and sat dreamlike, alone and quiet in the hospital foyer, still wearing my harness, waiting for my parents to come. Andrew made a full recovery and nowadays uses his determination to open 32's at God No!, 'Boven. One of these days I'll persuade him to head up Blouberg with me again...

The third rescue

This time the rescue is short and sweet. The team is in and out, slick, professional and safe. Very impressive. The first rescue had taken more than 12 hours, the second took about 9, and this one is down to about 6 hours from the first call to landing at the hospital. In the wake of the rescue we are determined not to waste the day and a half we still have left, so Rushad and I climb back up to the grassy ledge in the dusk to give the new route another go. Rushad wants this route as bad as I do. The next morning Lester calls us. The X-rays more or less confirm our assessment: Andy has 5 broken ribs, two fracture vertebrae and a punctured lung, plus other more superficial injuries. Fortunately his pelvis is not fractured. The prognosis: a full recovery. This raises our spirits and we feel fresh and strong as we swing up through the roofs of the *Rolling Stones Pitch* again.

As I stand at the base of the crux *Legoland Pitch*, chalking up, I try to shut out all the failures. I gun it to my previous high point – a fixed wire 3m below the first bolt. I peel off on my first attempt at the crux moves but get it second go and clip the bolt. The next traverse I have not tried before. After a few attempts I figure out the sequence and totter across to the rest, a couple of meters below the second bolt. After the clip I'm broken. The last few moves to easy ground are probably 21 but I just can't do them. I fall and fall and am almost ready to give up. But a stern internal conversation and some shouts of encouragement from Rushad put things right and I crimp and claw and then stagger onto the ledge. This pitch has been my nemesis for four years, and is finally put to bed.

The *Knifeblade* corner above succumbs with one rest. Despite my hazy memory sandbagging him, Rushad fires the tramlines above that, also with a rest. By this stage it is getting late and the massive clouds roiling over the nearest Donjon, combined with fatigue, encourage us to sacrifice style for speed. As we top out the black maelstrom pours over the Donjon and reaches us in less than three minutes. A hurried summit shot, a gulp of water from the pools and then we scurry down the gully to the chains.

We abseil the rap route in the dark in a howling gale, ropes flying horizontal. Our luck holds and the ropes don't get stuck. We pick up our sleeping gear on the ledge and then spiral down and collapse grinning on the ground. We pig out on leftovers and then head for home. For once the slog up the ramp is not the Walk of Shame. Back at camp as we make a brew and feast on pasta and chocolate the gale blows itself out, leaving a thick, softening blanket of mist over the mountain. Looking up I can almost see the rim of a blue moon straining through the fog. It is done.

EIGHT MILES ABOVE BLOUBERG

By Hector Pringle

Note: Mr Porter and Mr Pedley are not gangsters from Reservoir Dogs. They are, in fact, climbers who share the same first name of Andrew. I've given them the honourific to avoid confusion!

I reach up for an insecure left pinch and bump my right to a small crimp. I walk my feet up bad slopers until I can bear down on the crimp and reach up for a flaring finger lock with my left. It doesn't set. I try again, torquing my fingers into the crack. It's still not solid and I'm pumping out fast. I look down. Six meters below me Mr Porter belays attentively on the ledge. A vicious shard of quartzite juts out from the base of the rock near his knees. Eight years previously I'd stood in that same spot, belaying Mr Pedley as he'd set and reset the baggy finger jam. He'd made the same call then that I was about to make - crank hard even though it feels marginal. It hadn't worked then. He'd greased out of the jam and plunged six short meters, ripping two pieces of gear. He'd caught his right leg behind the flake, snapping his tibia clean in half. As he flipped over he'd pulverised his left elbow into another boulder. It doesn't work now either. As I let go of the crimp with my right I feel my fingers slip out of the jam. I try to reset and then I'm off...



Eight Miles High. 11 pitches, grade 24

Of the many playgrounds in the northern part of the country Blouberg is far and away the most alluring. It is wild, big and aesthetic with excellent rock and a vibrant climbing history. If Blouberg is the playground then Eight Miles High is the jungle

gym every kid wants to play on. With pitch after sustained pitch directly up the famous skyline it has attained test-piece status. It has also proved to be my biggest climbing nemesis.

In hindsight I was hopelessly underprepared on that first attempt. I had climbed most of the easier classics by then and thought I was the man. To increase my chances I teamed up with Mr Pedley who had climbed everything everywhere and clearly knew what he was about. We made a trip of it, climbing some shorter routes on the first day and generally easing into the wildness of the place. An alpine start on day two saw me leading the first 21 at sunrise. It's an immaculate finger crack up a slab, with mostly good feet. The crux is 3m of blankness and big cranks on finger locks. My inexperience showed as I thrashed and scrabbled with my feet, eventually falling off. I dogged through and brought Andrew up. This was not going well. The next two easier pitches put us on the grassy ledge where the real climbing starts. Despite its relatively low grade of 22, pitch four is no giveaway. The wall overhangs gently for 6m, broken by a discontinuous, thin crack. After a bulging lip the wall slabs back slightly into an immaculate dihedral. It was here that my first attempt would be brought to an abrupt halt. Misjudging the severity of the pitch, Mr Pedley ran it out when he couldn't afford to. The result was a chopper ride home and months in a wheelchair.



And now, eight year later, I'm the one flying through the air. The ledge rushes up to meet me. I manage a half-shout before the rope pulls tight, yanking me hard into the

wall. The cam holds! Mr Porter lowers me and without a word I untie and pull the ropes.

The trip did not begin well. We'd been caught in an epic traffic jam meaning we'd only collapsed in our sleeping bags at around 2am. We wake at 7, very late for Blouberg.



Douw starting out on P1 (21)

As we're racking up, Kevin Smith and Stewart Middlemiss stroll over. These two, together with George Mallory, had opened Eight Miles way back in 1988. They are in South Africa on a climbing visit and the previous day they'd climbed their creation for old-time's sake. "What're you guys going to do?" Kevin asks. "Eight Mile" is the cocky response. "Bit late aren't you? Its bloody hard." he fires back. Great. Just the pep talk we need. As Mr Porter and I descend the ramp we debate changing plans. But we're both too worked up about this route to bail now. As we get to the base of the wall we're surprised to see two mates, Douw and Willem, on the first pitch of "our" route. They had started out at 4am with the same route in mind, but bad beta had seen them thrashing away in the bushes for 3 hours instead of climbing. For us it means even more delays as we have to wait for them to get a pitch ahead of us.

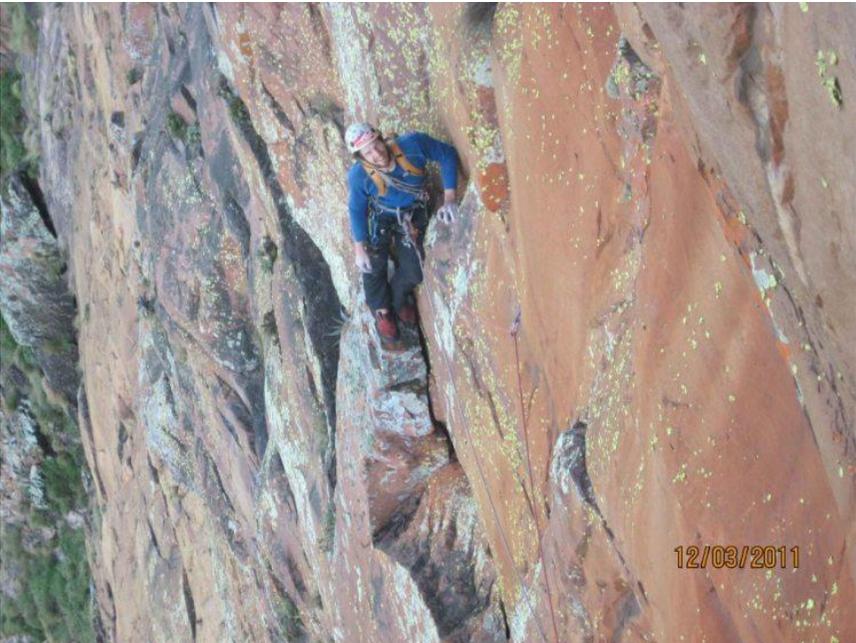
As I belay Mr Porter up the first pitch I think back to my last attempt at the route. Back then I'd launched up into the head-case fourth pitch only to find myself whimpering and sagging on gear. I'd managed the moves but was nowhere close to sending. I'd finished the pitch off in reasonable style but had been stopped dead by the next pitch - cryptically named the "circle-arrow". Years later I would discover this referred to the symbol the first ascensionists had used to mark the bolt required to make the pitch safe. They never did place that bolt, and the result is a potential factor two fall off the crux of the pitch. The lesson - the fourth and fifth pitches would have to be linked.

Mr Porter styles up the first pitch behind Willem and Douw and links it into the second. We are very late and have a lot of ground to cover so we plan to link pitches wherever possible. Despite the nervous jitters I climb straight through and race up the easy pitch to the grassy ledge. We rest on the ledge while Douw puts in a massive effort to onsight the fourth pitch and link it into the fifth. It feels strange to reach up for chalked-up holds at Blouberg, but it is an undeniable advantage. I climb. I fall. I lower back to the ledge. I tie in again and climb straight back up. Now the crimp feels big and the finger lock is solid. The next layback edge is crisp and then I'm sinking my fingers into the locker just over the bulge. The rest of the pitch floats past. The circle-arrow move is committing but I know about the sneaky alien placement just a bit higher. As I rail left to the stance the relief is palpable.

Long routes are all about strategy: When will the wall get shade? Where do we run it out to save time? Where do we pay attention to a nasty fall? Is there loose rock? Which pitches do we link? When Mr Porter and I had planned this trip our idea was to gun it through the first 8 pitches as fast as possible, and then have the leisure of time to figure out the crux - a thin, crimpy slab traverse of grade 24. The late start means we still have to gun it, but we've resigned ourselves to a possible bivi. And so we're pleasantly surprised when we make it to the aptly named "*Stance of the Eagles*" by 3pm. The crux looms immediately ahead but we feel strong and we at least know we'll top out in daylight. Most importantly, the wall has been in the shade for two hours and the warm rock is cooling fast. Optimal. We rest and eat while Douw and Willem pendulum across the crux. Once they are out of sight it's my turn.



Mr Porter following the spicy P4 (22)



Looking down from the Stance of the Eagles at P8 (19)

"Climb a few metres up the narrow dihedral until able to pendulum to the base of a corner further right, or simply traverse right across the face." is the bland instruction from the RD. Like all good RD's this belies the tenuous contortions required to reach the good fixed wire. It gives no inkling of the marginal maneuvers needed to reverse back down to the ledge. And finally, it imparts no knowledge whatsoever of the 3 microscopic credit cards one is clearly expected to yard across the slab on. Needless to say there are screams and shouts all round once I make it unscathed to the deliciously hand-sized corner crack just over there. As I lace up the last few meters of the pitch I realise we've done it. We're Eight Miles High and the view is grand!



Summit!

