

High Rocks

OS Ref TQ 559 383

As the name implies these are the highest rocks in the area but, although their steepness gives an impression of even greater height, they never exceed 12 metres at any point. The rocks comprise a main wall some 400 metres long mainly facing north, and several isolated boulders, two of which reach to the full height of the crag. The rocks extend beyond the fence to the east but are less continuous and of poorer quality (see High Rocks Continuation Wall). In the past, there have been disputes over the boundary at the left-hand end of the outcrop, and the position of the fence has moved over the years.

In the recent past the rocks have been heavily shaded by vegetation; this, and the fact that much of the outcrop faces north, meant that most of the routes were rarely in condition. However, a recent initiative by local climbers has led to the removal of much vegetation, particularly non-indigenous species, and has returned High Rocks to the open vistas of the 1850s.

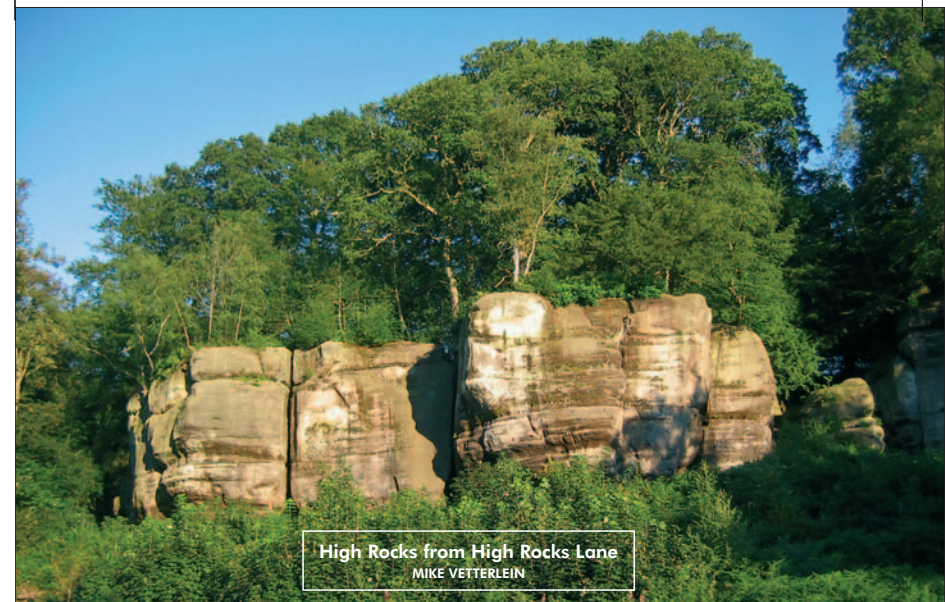
High Rocks is the best outcrop for high-grade climbing. The climbs are generally longer and more sustained than those at other outcrops, and there is a high proportion of routes at 5c or above. These offer the expert a superb range of climbs unequalled in the South-East for their character and purity of line. Middle-grade climbers should not be discouraged, however, as there are sufficient good-quality climbs in their category – on the isolated boulders, and up the numerous chimneys and cracks. There is also more high-quality bouldering here than at any other outcrop.

High Rocks is situated opposite *The High Rocks*, a former hotel but now a large restaurant and banqueting complex, 2 miles west of Tunbridge Wells and 2½ miles east of Groombridge. From the centre of Tunbridge Wells take the Lewes road (A26); turn right at the second mini-roundabout and then first left. After about a mile the road makes a sharp S-bend over a railway bridge; immediately beyond this is the entrance to the rocks on the left, with a large car park just beyond. From Groombridge head south past the railway station and continue as the road bends round to the north-east. After about a mile a left fork leads to *The High Rocks* and the rocks.

The Spa Valley Railway, aka the Tunbridge Wells and Eridge Railway Preservation Society (TWERPS), has a station below and to the back of the Inn. At present, trains run only between Groombridge and Tunbridge Wells West, and the service is seasonal. (For more details see page 12.)

The outcrop lies within a fenced pleasure garden belonging to High Grades Limited. It is open to the public for a fee of £2.00. The charge for climbing is currently £5.00. Day tickets are available from the downstairs bar, and advance notice (24 hours) should be given to the manager of *The High Rocks*, who can be contacted on 01892 515532. (At the time of writing this requirement is being relaxed, but it may be enforced at some future date.) These arrangements were introduced in 2004 as a result of poor behaviour by some climbers. For regular users, a season ticket is available for £35.00; this gives free admittance for 12 months from date of purchase. All climbers must sign in at the downstairs bar on arrival. If climbers are found in the grounds without the correct ticket the owner may enforce a complete ban. Also, please be aware that you are in close contact with the public here; do not use strong language and keep chalk use to a minimum. The future of climbing here is dependent on your good conduct.

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High Rocks is designated as a geological SSSI as a key geomorphological site for sandstone weathering on the highest cliffs in the Weald. Of particular interest are its passages/chimneys (gullies) and its honeycombing and polygonal weathering features.

At one time English Nature (as was) saw a climbing ban as one way of tackling environmental damage, particularly on the isolated boulders and where rope grooves were destroying features such as polygonal markings. Currently, they are satisfied with the existing arrangements to avoid damaging the rock. Particular care should be taken in the area above *Infidel* (90).

The rocks are also home to a number of rare mosses and other plants, so please do not destroy any flora unnecessarily.

Except on Hut Boulder, there are no bolts above the climbs. This means that a long static sling (or a second rope) is needed to set up most belays.

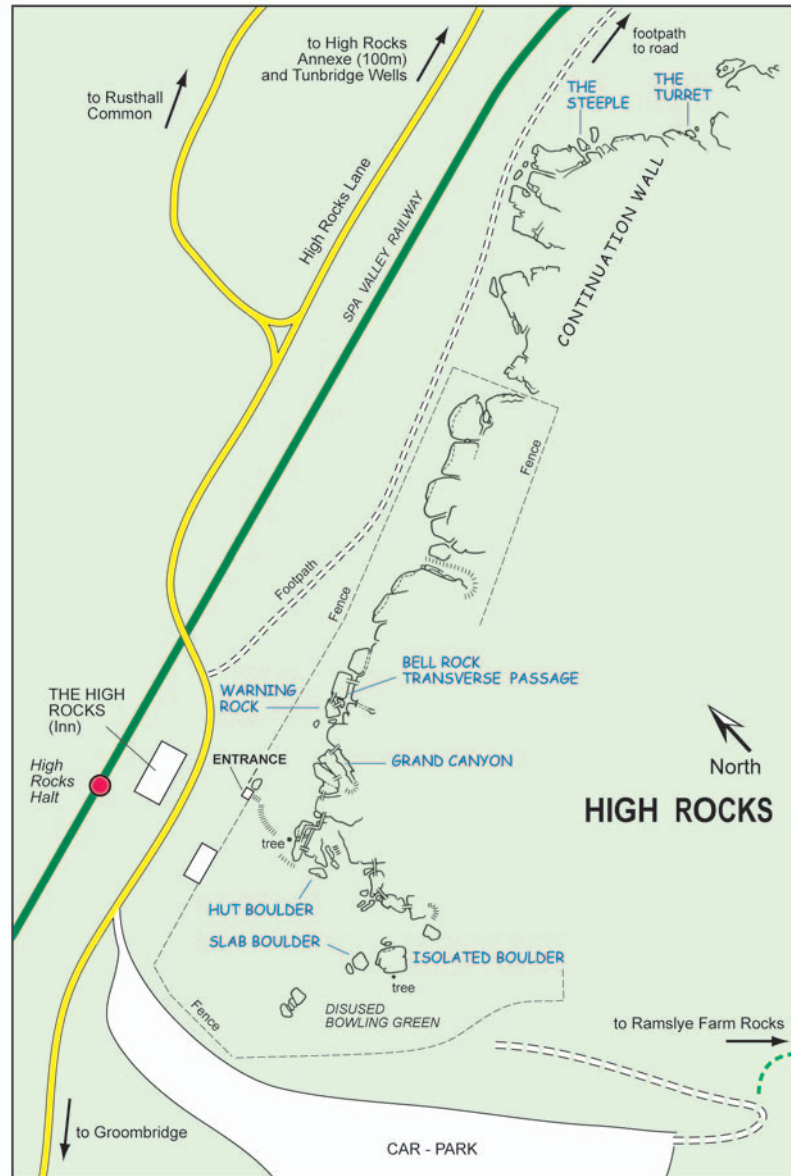
High Rocks is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, having been a Neolithic Settlement and an Iron Age Fort. The rocks, which form part of the grounds of *The High Rocks*, have a long history as a pleasure ground, being first popularized in 1670 by James II, when Duke of York.

It has been under its present ownership since 1989. The High Rocks Restoration Project was undertaken in the winter of 2004/05 by the Sandstone Volunteers Group.

To minimize damage to the rock caused by moving and stretching ropes, it is essential, when top-roping, to use a non-stretch belay sling and to position the karabiner over the edge of the crag. If you see these instructions being ignored please make polite or stronger suggestions as to the correct practice.

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High Rocks c. 1900 UNKNOWN



The High Rocks Gatehouse
then: UNKNOWN & now: BOB MOULTON

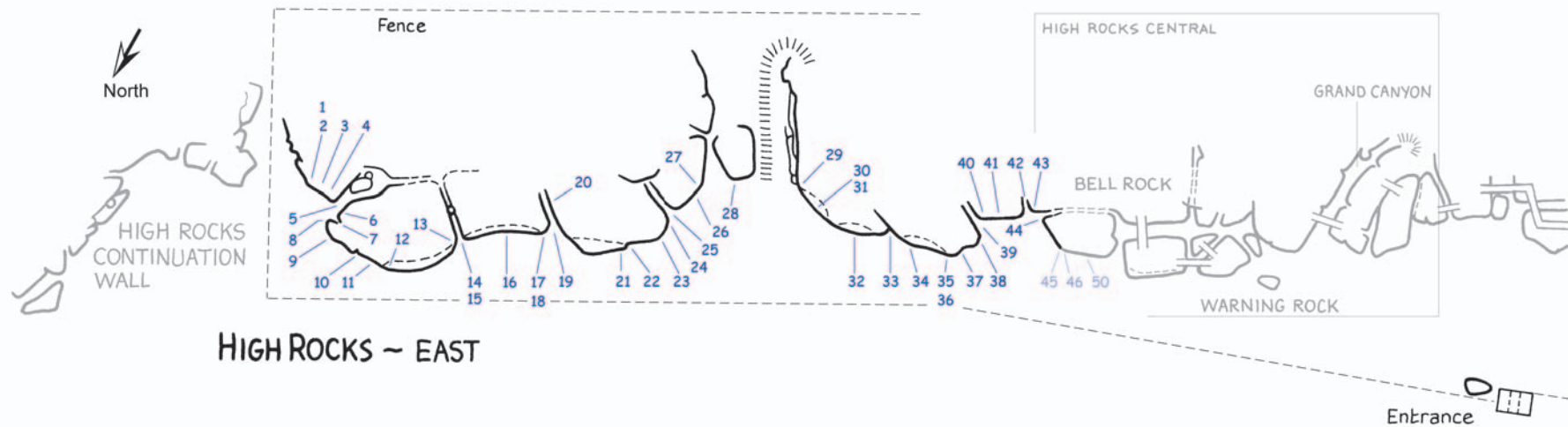


The entrance to the rocks is through a turnstile directly opposite *The High Rocks*. Turn right at the top of the steps, go past a decrepit garden bench, and climb two further flights of steps. Ahead of you is the impressive arête of *Unforgettable* (156), framed by two large oaks.

Five metres right of the current position of the boundary fence, at the left-hand end of the outcrop, is an arête with a minuscule ramp at ground level to its left. The arête provides the first route.

1 Pure Arête 5b (31.5.58)
The finishing holds often need to be dug out.

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HIGH ROCKS ~ EAST

2 Peace on Earth 5c NS (1969-1981)
 Start as for *Pure Arête* but hand-traverse right at about two-thirds height towards the centre of the block. Go straight up when it feels right.

3 The Purvee 6b NS (15.7.90)
 A direct line up the centre of the wall. Leaving the ground is deceptively difficult.

★ **4 Lady of the Light-bulb** 5c (16.2.92)
 The right-hand arête. A long reach is needed at the top.

5 Orion Chimney 2a (14.12.97)
 The wide chimney.

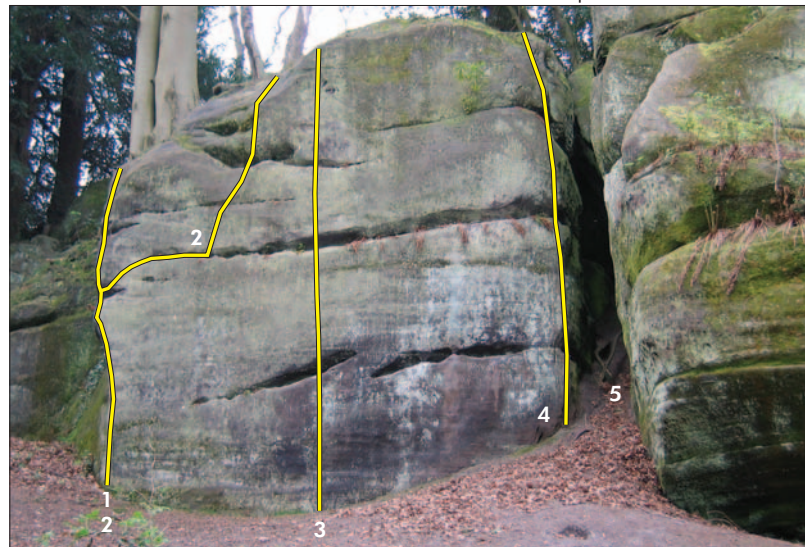
6 Orion Arête 5c (8.2.76)
 The arête a metre right of *Orion Chimney*, and immediately left of *Orion Crack*.

★ **7 Orion Crack** 4c (Pre-1943)
 ★ Follow the shallow crack to a platform, and finish up the shallow groove in the wall above.

★ **8 Brian Arête** 5b (1998)
 The blunt arête 2 metres right of *Orion Crack*. Start on the left-hand side of the arête. At the second break move round to the right-hand side of the arête and onto the slab. Climb up to the ledge and move right to finish on flakes and the right arête.

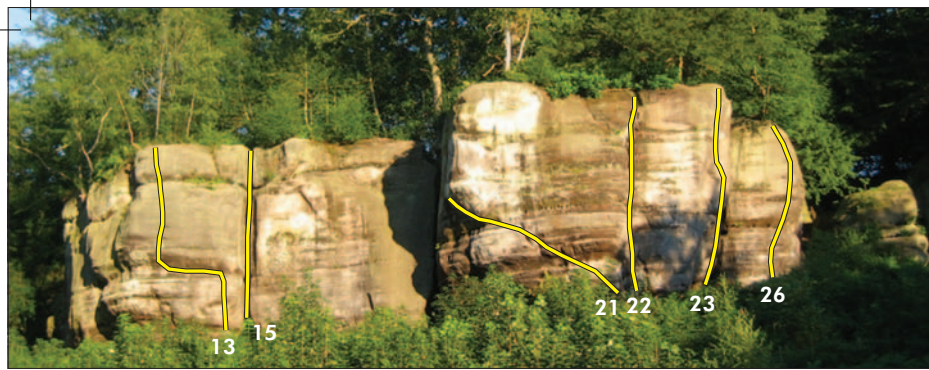
9 Scimitar 6a (1956-1963)
 Start at the steep crack 3 metres right of the preceding route and go straight up. Although the initial moves are usually greasy, this is a good climb when in condition.

10 Tubby Hayes Is a Fats Waller 6b NS (12.8.90)
 The obvious line 2 metres right of *Scimitar*. The mossy groove at the top is avoided by an excursion rightwards onto the headwall.



Anaconda Corner (5b) Graham Adcock ROBIN MAZINKE





★ **11 The First Crack** 6b NS (1956-1963)
 ★ Usually has the last laugh. The fine imposing crack about 10 metres right of *Scimitar*. The first section, the crux, is a fiendishly hard jamming crack – best left to connoisseurs with large rolls of sticky tape. The middle section is slightly easier and leads to a finish straight up the steep headwall.

📌 **12 Clown's Pocket**
 Font 7b/7b+ [6c] (2005)
 A huge dyno for the large pocket 2 metres right of *The First Crack*; finish at the break.

★ **13 Missing Link** 6b NS (6.82)
 ★ Impressive and perhaps not possible for the short. Climb the arête just left of *Anaconda Chimney* to the break at 4 metres. Traverse left to the next arête and pull over the bulge to gain the upper wall; continue straight up.

★ **14 Anaconda Corner** 5b NS (1926)
 ★ The fine open chimney at the front of *Anaconda Chimney*, best climbed facing left. Start at the entrance to the chimney. A tight thrutch gains the break at 4 metres (do not use the vertical crack just inside). Climb the wider chimney with more technical moves to the break just below the top; finish on jugs on the arête.

★ **15 Anaconda Chimney** 4b (1926)
 ★ A relatively pleasant chimney climb. The bottom section is best climbed facing left using the short vertical crack. After the ledge at 4 metres the difficulties ease and it can be climbed anywhere; heading gradually inwards seems to be the easiest option.

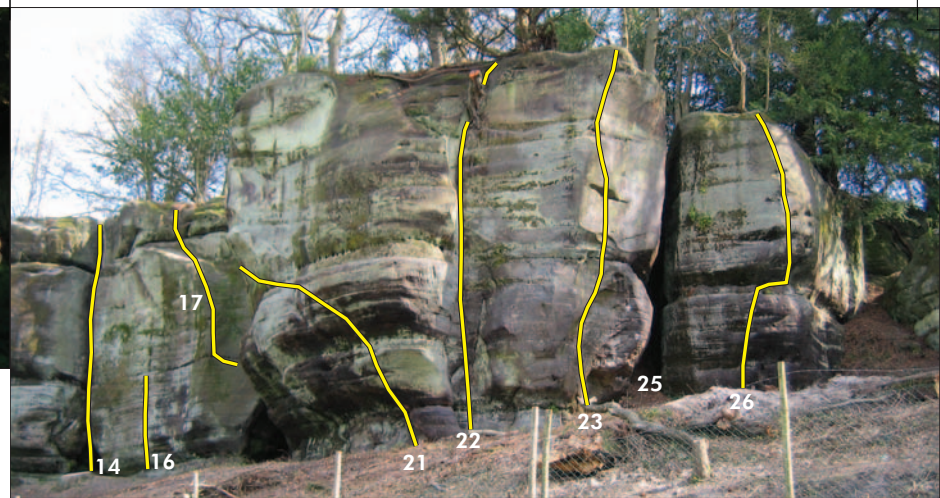
📌 **16 Bolt Route** Font 6c [6b] (1963-1969)
 The wall between the chimneys. A possible free climb so do not destroy the rock any further by aid climbing. This has been done as far as the first break as a boulder problem.

🌟 **17 Fungal Smear** 6b NS † (15.7.90)
 Start as for *Boa-Constrictor Chimney*. At the first break move left and climb the obvious ramp. A good climb when dry. The wall round to the left has been climbed, using the slots, as a boulder problem as far as the first break at Font 7b/7b+ [6c]. This could be used as a start to *Fungal Smear*, creating a completely independent route, but this has yet to be done.

📌 **18 Rattlesnake II** 6b NS (26.7.86)
 An eliminate but good climbing nonetheless. Start as for *Boa-Constrictor Chimney* but at the first break swing onto the left arête. Layback up this to a tricky finish.

🌟 **19 Boa-Constrictor Chimney**
 5a (1938-1941)
 Start just inside, and go up the narrow front portion facing left. At the top, traverse inwards across the wide part and exit on the right.

📌 **20 Boa by the Back** 4a (1942-1946)
 Climb straight up from the back of the chimney.
 Five metres right of *Boa-Constrictor Chimney* is *Venom* (1956-1958), an impressive crack, which has only been climbed as an aid route.



The next two routes start beside an odd-looking hole, the Needle's Eye.

📌 **21 Bone Machine** 6c NS † (25.7.93)
 Move diagonally left up the absurdly overhanging wall; traverse left along the first break, and then finish up *Venom*. Finishing up the arête looks feasible but has yet to be done.

★ **22 Adder** 6a NS (1956-1959)
 ★ Follow the impressive thin crack just right of the Needle's Eye.

The rocks now open up to form an amphitheatre, at the back of which is a flight of steps leading to the top. Here are some of the most impressive and difficult climbs in the South-East.

🌟 **23 The Second Generation**
 6c NS (1969-1981)
 ★ A stupendous route that climbs the improbable-looking wall between *Adder* and *Cobra Chimney*. Start 2 metres right of *Adder*. Follow the holds and finish up the square-cut arête on the left.

📌 **24 Pammy** Font 7a+ [6c] (2002-2003)
 The blunt arête to the right, at the entrance to *Cobra Chimney*; it has a sit-start and finishes at the first break.

📌 **25 Cobra Chimney** 4a (1938-1941)
 Wherever (if ever?) you climb this, it is too wide for comfort.

🌟 **26 Renaissance** 6b NS (14.7.90)
 ★ An excellent route that takes the rounded arête 3 metres right of *Cobra Chimney*. Start up the centre of the wall left of the arête and move onto the arête at the first break. Strenuous and sustained with the crux just below the top. The initial wall to the first break is a Font 6c [6b] boulder problem.

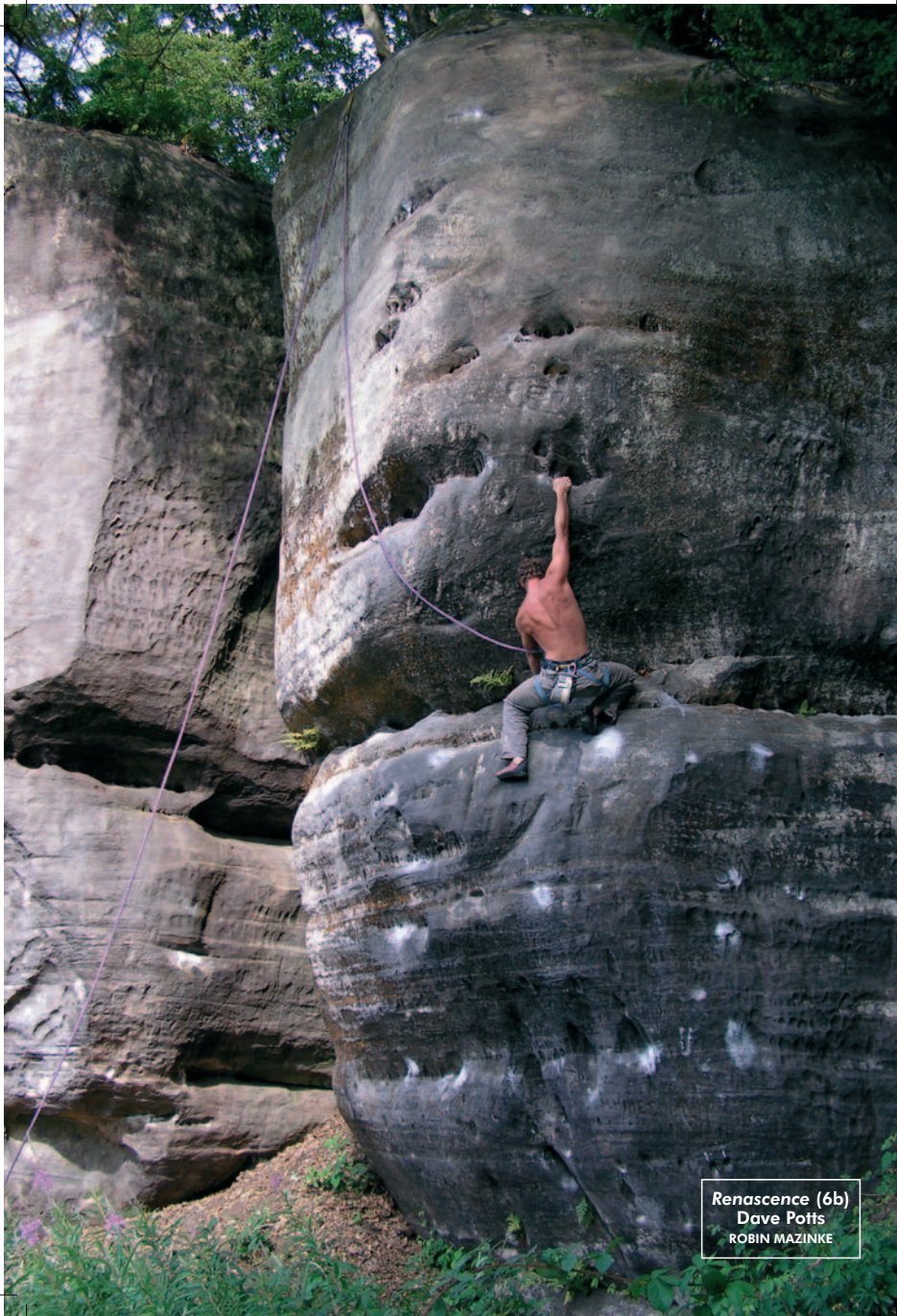
📌 **27 Resurrection** Font 7c [7a] (2005)
 A boulder-problem direct start to *Renaissance*. One of the hardest straight-up boulder problems at High Rocks.

The short arête 8 metres right of *Renaissance* gives a 5b boulder problem with a mantelshelf finish on the left. Next is an easy gully. The easy-angled arête up to the yew tree is 2a. The buttress to the right of the descending root provides a couple of 4a problems.

On the small block immediately left of the steps is:

📌 **28 Sorrow** 5b (1979)
 Climb straight up the front of the defaced buttress on good holds; mantelshelf to finish.

The left-hand end of the wall above the steps is 4a. The wall above the wide step, level with the end of the small block, is **Lunatic** (6a NS 17.7.05); climb straight up via a small pocket, some ledges, and a short slab.

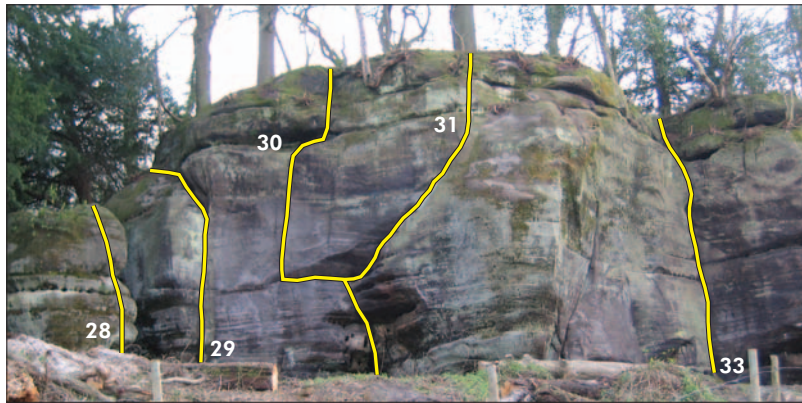


Renascence (6b)
Dave Potts
ROBIN MAZINKE



Chimaera (7a)
Tony Musselbrook
MARK ALDERSON

High Rocks



★ **29 Steps Crack 5b** (1926)

The fine-looking crack. Exit left at the top. An early classic, which still demands respect. A direct finish has been done at 6a **NS**.

★ **30 Chimaera 7a NS** (14.7.90)

Start in a cave right of *Steps Crack* and go strenuously up to the horizontal break. Hand-traverse left to the foot of a bottomless square-cut groove. Climb this by a series of strenuous contortions. The hardest route in the South-East.

★ **31 Moving Staircase 6b NS** (6.86)

Start as for *Chimaera* but at the first break move right onto the obvious ramp and follow this with escalating difficulty to finish up the steep slab above its end.

There is a 6b **NS** direct start to *Moving Staircase* that starts 2½ metres right of the ordinary route and joins it on the ramp.

Round the corner is a large concave wall bounded on the right by a chimney. This wall has no routes on its main face except for:

★ **32 Pegasus 6b NS** (27.5.90)

Climb the short crack in the centre of the buttress, and then traverse right along the obvious stalactites. Finish up the arête.

★ **33 Chockstone Chimney 2b** (1938-1941)

Facing right, climb a crack in the right wall; go outside the chockstone and into the recess in the right wall. Go up this and then step onto the second chockstone. Finish up the short earthy wall on the left. The chimney can be climbed close to its entrance at 3a.

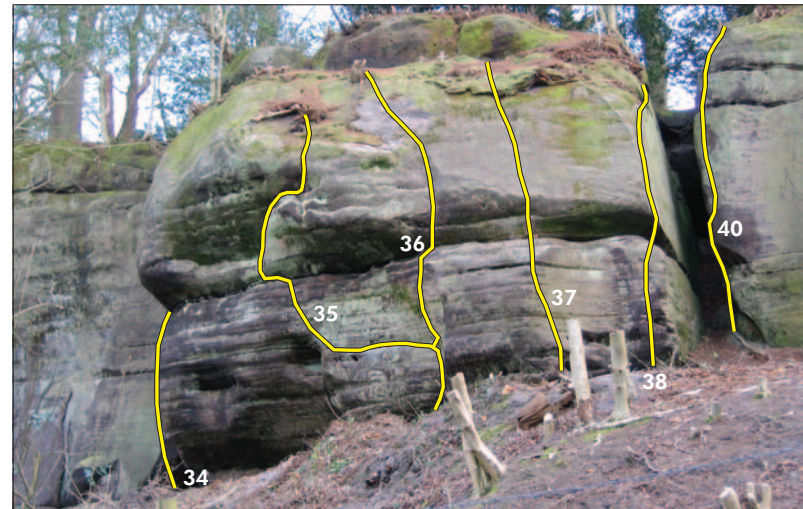
★ **34 Vandal Font 7b+ [7a]** (2003)

The seriously overhanging arête to the right provides a boulder problem which currently finishes when standing on the small ledge on the lip of the overhang, but a proper finish above appears possible for the talented.

★ **35 Judy 6b NS** (6.82)

The centre of the massive overhanging wall. A desperate boulder-problem start on the right leads to a line of stalactites. Traverse leftwards on these to a niche at the top of an overhanging finger crack. Exit up and then left to a semi-rest on a large flake. Hand-traverse right and finish up the wide crack in the overhang. The most direct start up the overhanging crack has yet to be climbed, and is on quite soft rock. However, **Superman** (Font 7a [6c] † 2004-2005) is a direct start that has been done as a boulder problem 1 metre right of the crack; jump for two crimps and campus on these to gain the line of stalactites just right of the niche.

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★ **36 Punch 6c NS** (6.8.95)

Start as for *Judy* but continue straight up – very reachy. From the break, struggle awkwardly up the flared crack. The climb has been done as a boulder problem as far as the break (Font 7a [6c]).

★ **37 Telegram Sam 6b NS** (24.7.90)

Climb the blunt arête 2 metres right of the start of *Judy* to the horizontal break. Finish up the slab above using the thin bottomless crack.

★ **38 Rag Trade 6b NS** (6.80)

The arête down and left of *Eft Chimney*. It is possible, and perhaps more enjoyable, to avoid the hard start by a short traverse from the right (6a **NS**).

There are two short climbs on the left wall of *Eft Chimney*, **Malcolm's Codpiece** (6b **NS** † 14.6.92), which starts 4 metres inside the chimney with a hard move to gain the sloping shelf, and **Geoff's Bald Patch** (5b 14.6.92) a metre further in and just left of an easy crack.

★ **39 Eft Chimney 3a** (1938-1941)

Similar to *Cobra Chimney* but somewhat shorter.

An easy descent route is to be found at the back of the chimney.

★ **40 Designer Label 6b** (23.4.87)

A technically interesting climb but more of a soiled second than catwalk material. Climb the right arête of *Eft Chimney* on its left side to start with and then on the front.

★ **41 Morpho 6c NS †** (2005)

The scooped ramp in the centre of the back wall has a very long reach from the first break.

★ **42 Recess Wall 3a** (1938-1941)

Start at the right-hand end of the back wall of the bay, where there is a pair of chimneys. Climb the left-hand chimney, and then traverse the wall leftwards along a broad ledge. Exit at the far end with an exposed step.

★ **43 Onions 5c** (7.6.05)

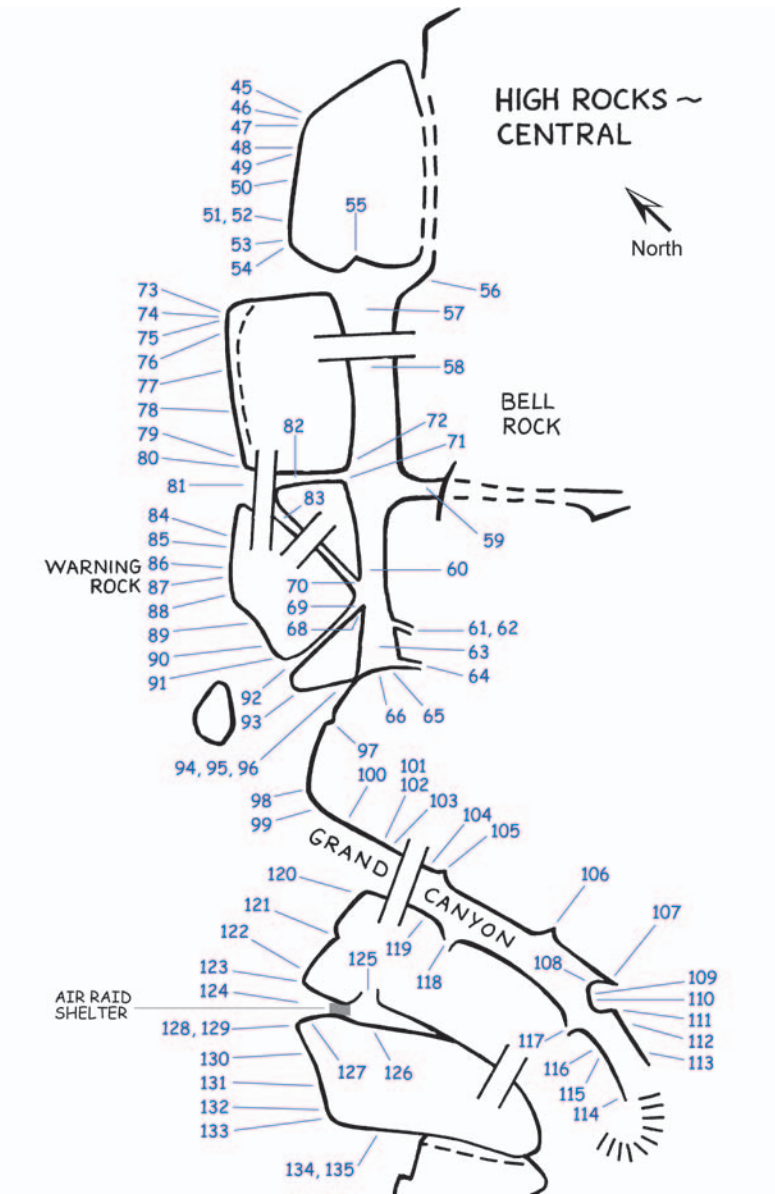
A boulder problem on the arête between the two chimneys, moving right to finish.

The right-hand chimney is **Clipboard Chimney** (3a 14.1.06).

★ **44 Sunzilla 5c** (7.6.05)

The right arête of the right-hand chimney.

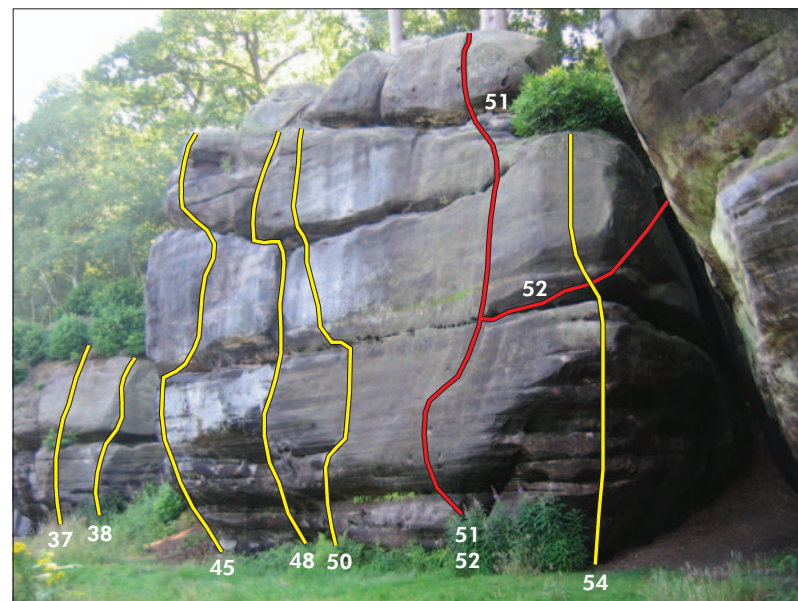
High Rocks



Pet Cemetery (Font 7b+) Ian Stronghill IAN HUFTON



Salad Days (6b)
Robin Mazinke
IAN SMITH



Back by the path is:

★ **45 Salad Days 6b NS** (21.7.82)
★ Climb the front face of the left arête of the buttress. At the first break move right and climb the long thin flake. Move back left at the next break to a loose and sandy finish.

46 Dogtown Font 7c [7a] † (2005)
Climb the wall between the starts of *Salad Days* and *Pet Cemetery*, using a small undercut pocket and a small slot. Finish on the break.

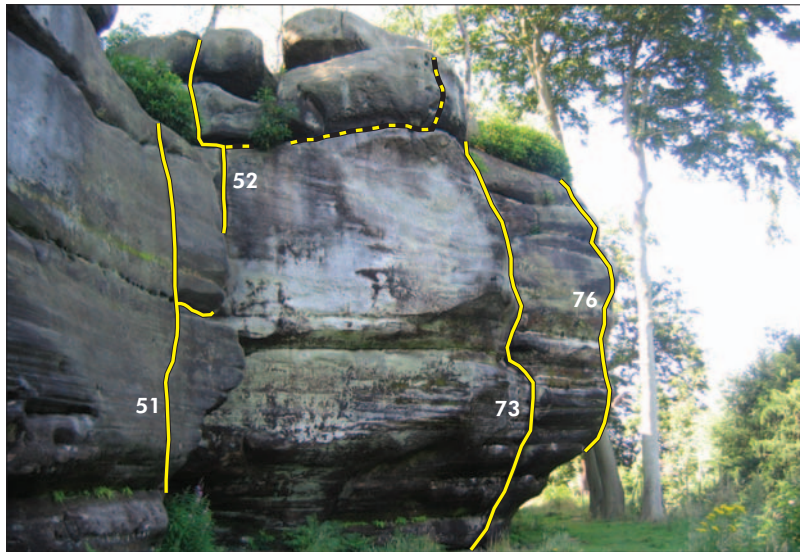
47 Pet Cemetery 7a NS (28.8.95)
A direct start to the flake of *Salad Days*. Start a metre left of *Leglock*. A dynamic move to gain the pinch on the lip is followed by another dyno to get the break. Join the parent route at the flake. It is now more likely to be attempted as a Font 7b+ boulder problem, finishing with both hands on the break.

★ **48 Leglock 6b NS** (14.9.54)
The crack 3 metres right of *Salad Days*. Start on the right and gain the crack with difficulty. Follow it to near the top, where a move leftwards leads to the wide finishing crack. One may avoid the start by not doing the route, or by traversing in from *Cut Steps Crack* along a line of stalactites; this will lower the grade to 6a NS.

49 The Real Slim Shady
Font 7a [6c] † (2005)
A boulder problem through the bulges a metre or so right of *Leglock*, finishing, currently, at the first break.

50 Crossing the Rubicon
6b NS (19.7.90)
Start 3 metres right of *Leglock*. Using the small circular hold, gain the line of stalactites. Move left onto a good ledge, and finish up the steep wall keeping just right of *Leglock*.

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★ **51 Too Tall for Tim** 6a NS (1984)

Right of *Crossing the Rubicon* is a vertical line of cut holds, which are gradually wearing into slopers. Follow these to the first break, and continue straight up with an impossibly long reach for excessively short people. Finish up the top block via the short bottomless crack.

★ **52 Cut Steps Crack** 6a NS (1969-1981)

Start as for the preceding route (crux) but at the first break hand-traverse right onto the nose. Lean across the wide passage, and climb the crack in the opposite wall (bridging is not allowed). Move left and climb the centre of the final block. Two ropes are needed to belay this 'adventurous route'. To up the route to three stars take the **Fresh Air Finish** (6a NS 10.7.05); from the top of the crack hand-traverse right along the break for 5 metres and finish up the arête.

53 **Atomic Mushroom**

Font 7a [6c] (2005)

A boulder problem through the bulge between the starts of *Cut Steps Crack* and *Too Hard for Dave*, and finishing at the break.

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★ **54 Too Hard for Dave** 6b NS (14.7.90)

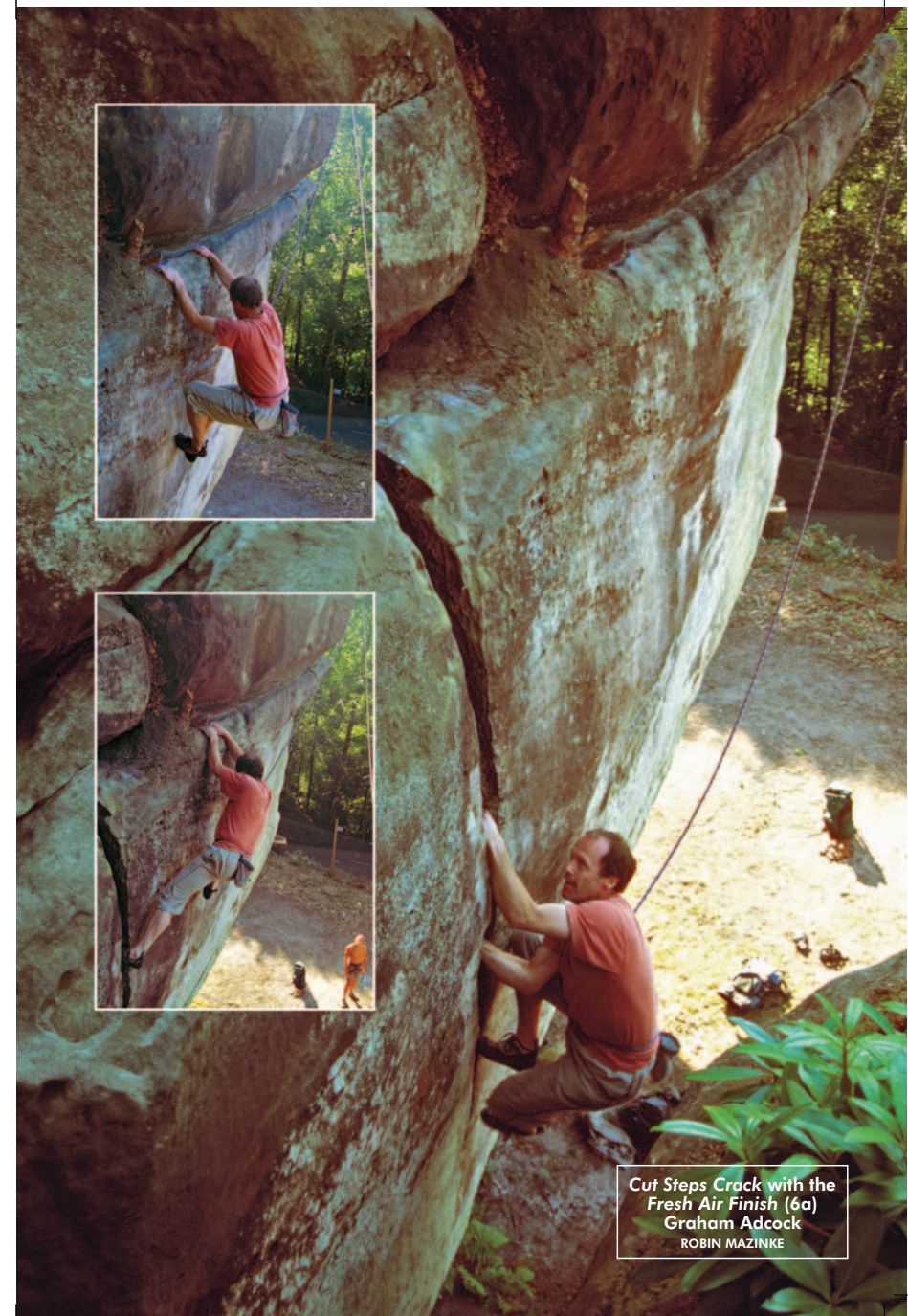
The blunt arête right of *Too Tall for Tim* has a dynamic start and a finish, which is far too hard – for Dave.

Right of *Too Hard for Dave* is the eastern entrance to *Bell Rock Transverse Passage*. The next routes are to be found here – up the passage itself, on its walls, and in the numerous subsidiary chimneys and cracks. For those not wishing to sample its dank delights the next route on the front of the crag is *Krankenkopf Crack* (73).

Bell Rock itself is the block between *Deadwood Chimney* and *Bell Rock Passage*. The claim that 'its sound, when well struck, could be heard in Tunbridge Wells' has never been demonstrated.

★ **55 Strangler** 5a (1977)

The short crack left of the slanting chimney. Climb this, and then either move left to continue up the wide chimney or step right into the slanting chimney. It is possible – but unpleasant – to finish direct via the thin crack and earth bank at 6b NS †.



Cut Steps Crack with the Fresh Air Finish (6a) Graham Adcock
ROBIN MAZINKE

High Rocks

56 Deadwood Chimney 2b (1938-1941)
Climb the slanting chimney making use of a crack in the right wall about 3 metres in. Traverse outwards at the top and finish either by an earthy exit on the left or by stepping across to the right, followed by a stomach-traverse leftwards on the chockstone (a bit pointless). The whole chimney can also be climbed at the back.

57 Outer Limits 5c NS (2005)
Climb the passage about 4 metres east of the bridge, where the island side of the passage is at an angle. The grade depends on the height of the climber and how far out it is done.

★ **58 Bell Rock Transverse Passage Route 1** 5a (1938-1941)
Chimney straight up the passage to finish on the bridge. There are two rest ledges on this impressive-looking route.

59 Bell Rock Passage 4a (1938-1941)
A subsidiary chimney, the left wall of which is the famous Bell Rock. Climb straight up close to the Transverse Passage to a ledge on the left wall. Finish either as a through route, or on the outside.

★ **60 Bell Rock Transverse Passage Route 2** 4c (18.4.43)
Chimney straight up the passage halfway between *Bell Rock Passage* and *Spider's Chimney*. Similar to *Route 1* but narrower.

61 Spider's Chimney 3b (1938-1941)
The next subsidiary chimney. This is best done facing left.

★ **62 Crown of Thorns 4a** (11.97)
An entertaining expedition. Climb *Spider's Chimney* until you are a couple of metres or so from the top. Traverse into the depths for about 5 metres, and emerge into daylight through a small hole in the ground.

63 Bell Rock Transverse Passage Route 3 4c (1942-1946)
Climb the passage a metre right of *Spider's Chimney*. Avoid the capping block at the top.

The next route finishes on the large two-tiered ledge that caps the western entrance to Bell Rock Transverse Passage: the Balcony.

64 Giant's Stride 3b (1938-1941)
Climb the next subsidiary chimney, and then step across to a ledge high up on the south-facing wall of the Transverse Passage. Step right to emerge on the back of the Balcony. Finish up the easy slab.

65 Another One up the Back Passage 6a NS (2005)
Climb the right arête of *Giant's Stride*. Finish up the easy gully.

66 The Chute 5a (1942)
Climb the sandy and slimy slanting crack. Stretch a hand across the Transverse Passage and chimney up to an easy finish.

67 Labyrinth (1947-1956)
An amazing route? Between *Deadwood Chimney* and the Balcony all the chimneys and passages have a more or less continuous ledge some 2 to 3 metres from the top. The route traverses this ledge and can be started and finished anywhere. The grade is dependent on the parts that are climbed. It is 5a NS if you start at the top of *Deadwood Chimney* and traverse the entire length of the Transverse Passage to finish on the Balcony. The only tricky sections are at the beginning and towards the end, where the passage is too wide to bridge. It is entertaining to lead this using pre-placed slings.

At the western end of the south-facing wall of Bell Rock Transverse Passage is a narrow passage.

68 Senile Walk 6b NS (25.7.92)
The sharp arête left of the passage. Exit left under the capping block.

69 Warning Rock Chimney 2a (1938-1941)
Walk up the passage to the highest point of the floor. Climb straight to the topmost ledge of the Balcony. It is possible to squeeze through the chimney and emerge alongside *Henry the Ninth*.



69A Mish Bell 7a NS (3.10.07)
The tapering wall to the right of *Warning Rock Chimney*, using the arêtes as required. A hard route that is rarely in condition.

★ **70 One of Our Chimneys Is Missing** 2b (19.6.94)
Climb the chimney right of *Warning Rock Chimney* at the Transverse Passage end. It is possible to walk through the chimney and emerge at the front of the crag via *Smooth Chimney* and *Wye Chimney*.

71 Insinuation Crack 2b (1938-1941)
The next chimney to the right. By squeezing through the chimney one can pass through *Slab Chimney* and *Wye Chimney* and emerge at the front of the crag.

★ **72 Hidden Arête 5b NS** (9.88)
The right arête of *Insinuation Crack*. Follow the arête to a ledge, move slightly right and finish with a hard mantelshelf.

Back on the main face is:

★ **73 Krankenkopf Crack 5b** (18.7.54)
The crack 8 metres right of the eastern entrance to Bell Rock Transverse Passage. Strenuous kranken on excellent jams in the steep crack leads quickly (or not at all) to the niche and a much easier wide crack to finish. This was one of Martin Boysen's 'Desert Island Climbs' so it must be good. There is a Font 6a [6a] boulder problem through the bulges just left of the start.

74 Spanked Font 7a [6b] (12.7.05)
This is a hard, reachy direct start to the blunt arête of *Kraken*. Start just right of *Krankenkopf Crack* with a sit-start. The original route (without the sit-start) is **Kranked** (6b 28.7.95).

75 Superfly Font 7a+ [6c] (12.7.05)
Right again is another, harder, boulder problem start to *Kraken*, again with a sit-start. It is Font 7a for a standing start. The good ledge at the start of *Kraken* is off-limits.