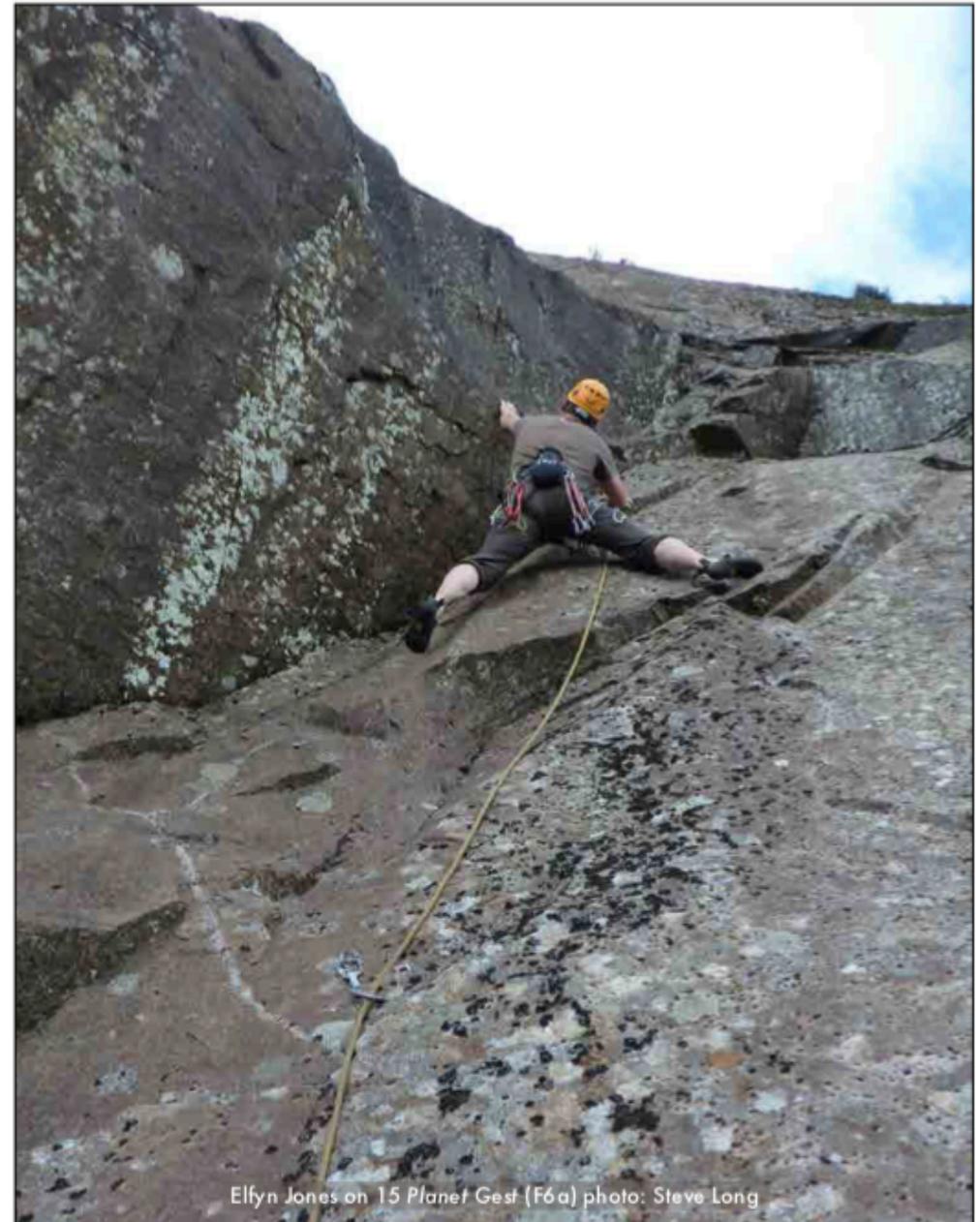


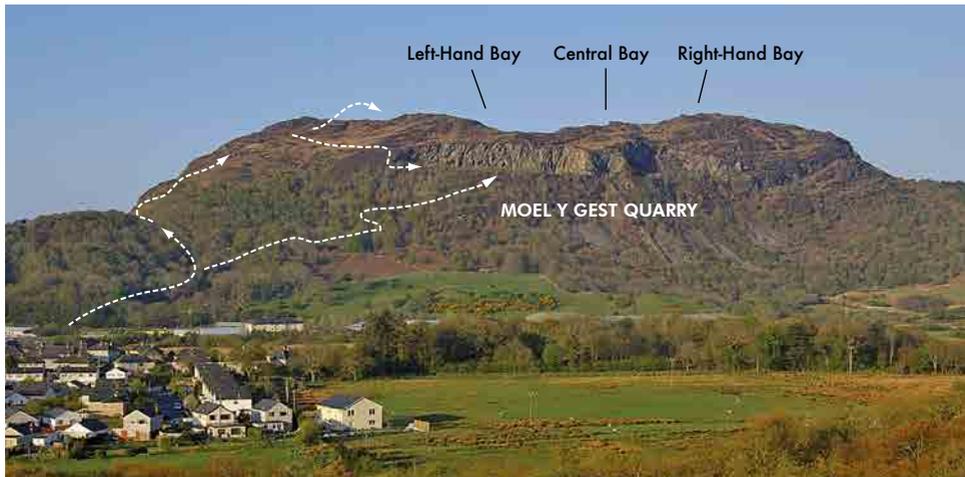
Moel y Gest Quarry Sport Climbs



A PDF download from the Climbers' Club
Terry Taylor & Pete Johnson
Artwork: Don Sargeant



Elyn Jones on 15 Planet Gest (F6a) photo: Steve Long



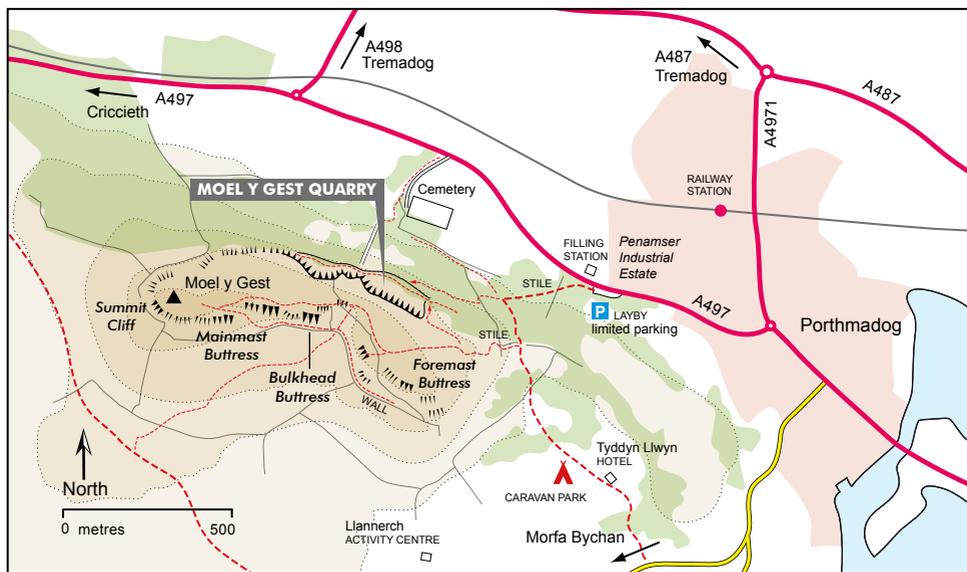
Situated high on the northern flank of Moel y Gest, this huge, dark and foreboding quarry, composed of compact dolerite, has had a notorious reputation in the past for loose and overly adventurous trad climbs. Those routes are still there but the pegs and in-situ protection they relied upon may not be!

In more recent times a number of sport routes have been established and the venue can now be enjoyed in relative safety. Many of these routes present thin, technical challenges where technique and good footwork, rather than brute strength, is required. Although the quarry is

north-facing, it does receive some morning and evening sun in the summer months and remains dry more often than its aspect might suggest.

In some years the quarry hosts protected bird species and may be subject to a bird ban from March to June. However, this is not always the case. Consult the BMC Regional Access Database.

The far right of the quarry is also home to a number of high quality (and difficult) boulder problems. These are documented at www.northwalesbouldering.com and in the definitive Ground Up guide, *North Wales Bouldering*.



Moel y Gest Quarry SH 5529 3902

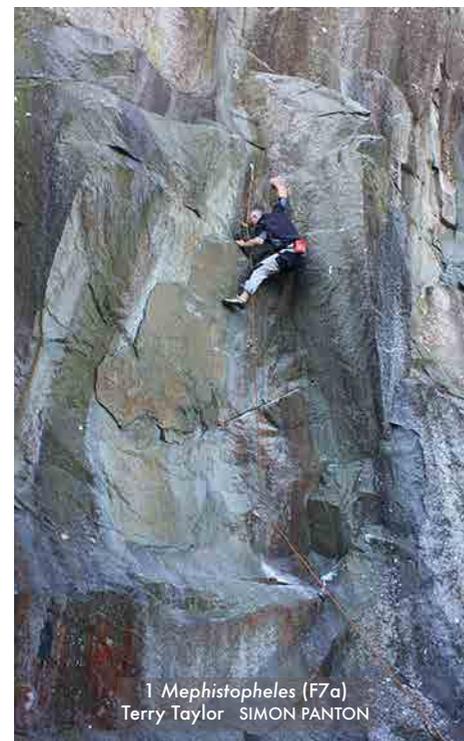
North-Facing / Altitude: 150m

Approach (20m uphill)

Park at a layby just west of the small shopping complex and opposite a petrol station on the A497 Porthmadog to Criccieth road. A signed footpath heads uphill from the parking area. Avoid the small quarry on the left near the start and bear right along the path until a fence with a footpath sign is reached. Go right here. Continue up the path, heading right where the path splits, until a stone wall is reached. Turn left here then right after 10 metres or so. Follow the faint path to eventually emerge in the first bay.

Alternatively, follow the signposted path to a col and bear rightwards toward the summit via a stile. Shortly after this bear right again, following a faint path leading to the top left of the quarry. Descend steeply down the track just short of the quarry to its base and an easy entry.

The quarry is conveniently divided into 3 bays: the left-hand bay; a central, box bay; and the right-hand, western bay.



LEFT-HAND BAY

The first bay encountered is big. Apart from the old traditional and aid lines there are 3 new bolted routes on a short wall right of centre, where the quarry face comes closest to the path.

1 Mephistopheles F7a 15m

The first bolted line in the main quarry on the white wall capped by a big ledge. Very steep, with a tricky section in the blind groove.

T Taylor, M Crook 12.10.2010

2 Persephone F6b+ 15m

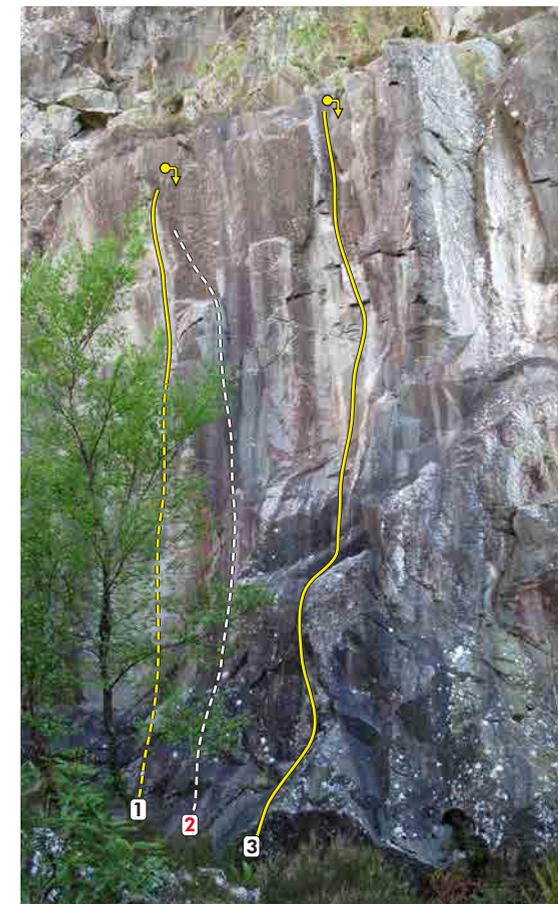
The central line to the bolt lower-off shared with Mephistopheles has a long reach for a jug at the top of the groove.

T Taylor, M Crook 03.2011

3 Dr Faustus F7a 15m

The slim groove right of Persephone saves its main challenge for the last sequence.

T Taylor 15.09.2009





4 Kiss Of The Yogini 10m F6c

Located on the left-hand side of the central box quarry behind the winding. A boulder problem start leads to easier climbing and a chain lower-off.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 04.06.2010

5 Fat Groove Slim 12m F6b

The narrow groove right of *Kiss Of The Yogini* has a hard start and a hard finish.

FA M Crook, T Taylor 11.06.2010

A few metres to the right, starting on a vegetated, raised ledge is:

6 Tantric Skull Feeder 18m F6c

A test of stamina as the angle of the face steepens near the top.

FA T Taylor, M Crook, J Leamy-Edwards 03.09.2010

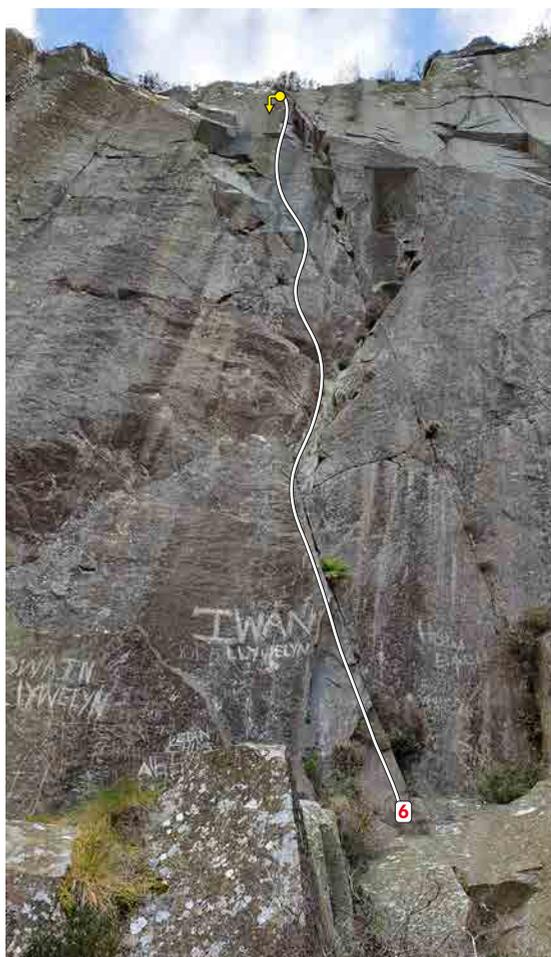
The project up the arête to the right awaits a first ascent.

CENTRAL BAY

The next routes are in the box bay to the right with an old winding house. The bolts on the first two routes are looking rather rusty.



6 Tantric Skull Feeder (F6c)
Ellyn Jones STEVE LONG



RIGHT-HAND BAY

The final quarry has the following lines.

7 Intersex Olympics 12m F6c

Intricate climbing, starting up the left edge of the first slab and finishing direct up the thin slab above to a single bolt lower-off.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 13.12.2009

8 Flaskdance 12m F6a+

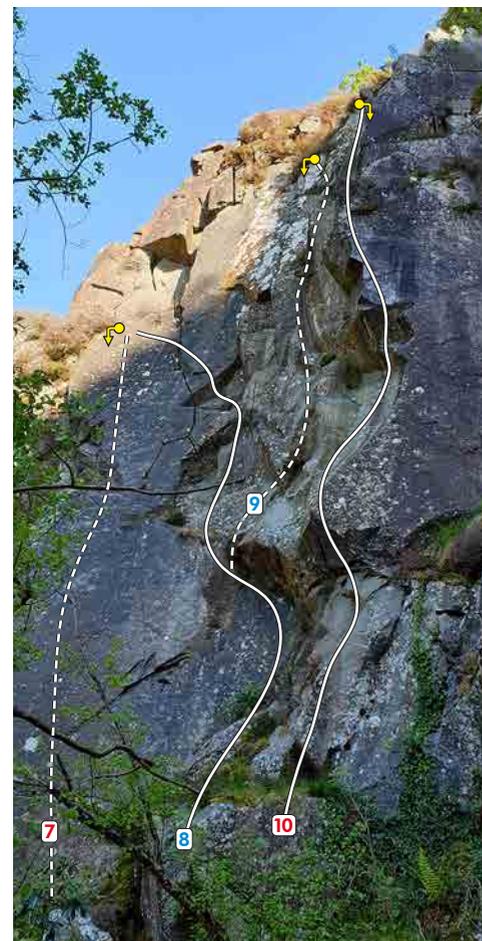
The first line in the quarry to be bolted takes the right-hand edge of the slab up the groove with a wicked step left to the lower-off shared with the previous route.

FA M Crook, T Taylor, M Griffiths 15.09.2009

9 Necrosopic Invaders 15m F6a

The longer and better groove right of *Flaskdance* shares the first 2 bolts and continues up and right for some distance.

FA M Crook 06.2010



10 Love Dolls Never Die 15m F6b+

The excellent arête right of *Flaskdance* is gained via some hard, initial moves to reach the steep, short slab.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 05.08.2010

11 Spandexerity 15m F7a

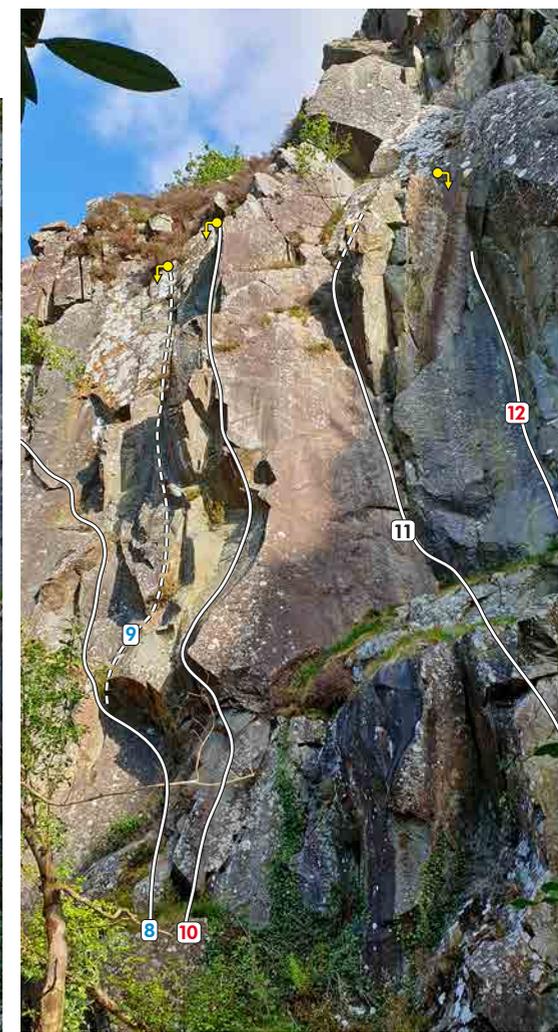
Start from the big ledge to the right, which is gained by an easy scramble. The almost holdless and blind groove is entered craftily from the right and once established gets easier above.

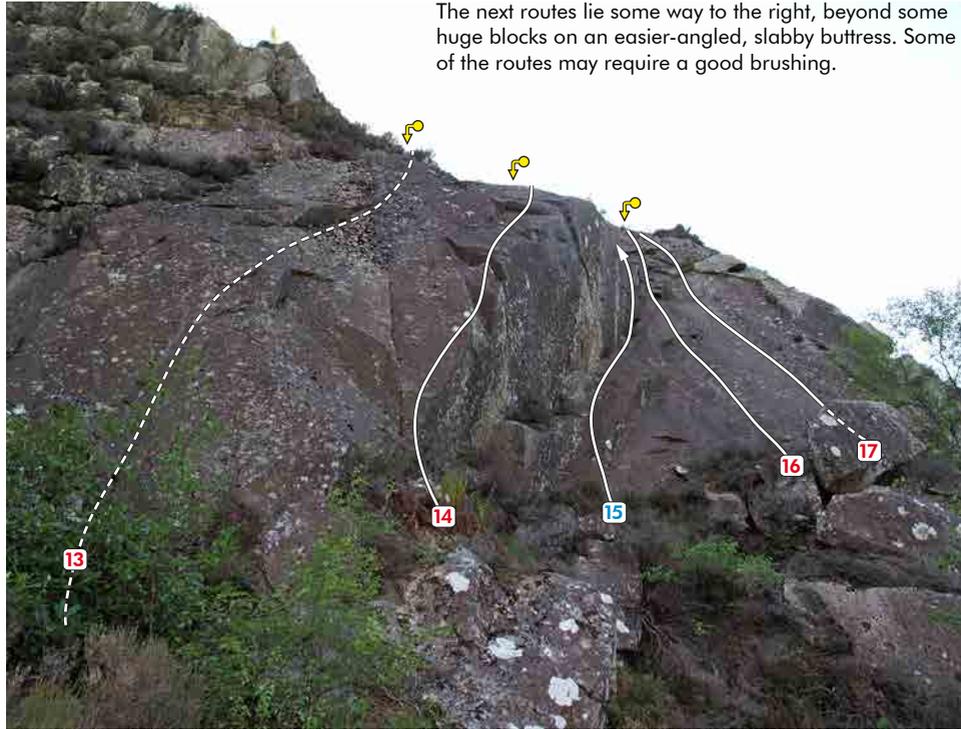
FA T Taylor, R Burwood 10.09.2010

12 Feats Don't Fail Me Now 15m F6b+

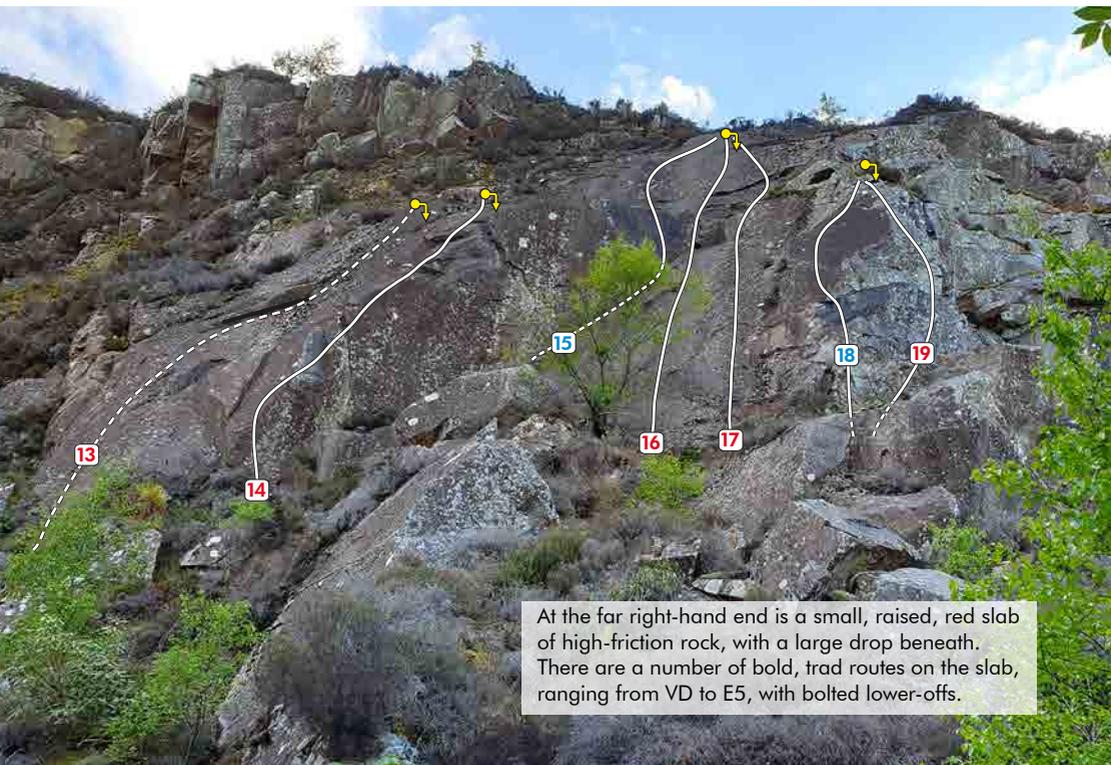
The obvious corner 10 metres right requires deft footwork to pass the first 2 bolts.

FA T Taylor, R Burwood 30.08.2010





The next routes lie some way to the right, beyond some huge blocks on an easier-angled, slabby buttress. Some of the routes may require a good brushing.



At the far right-hand end is a small, raised, red slab of high-friction rock, with a large drop beneath. There are a number of bold, trad routes on the slab, ranging from VD to E5, with bolted lower-offs.

13 The Jain Path 15m F6b

The left-hand line up a crack to gain the easy-angled slab.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 04.06.2010

14 Nirvana 13m F6b+

Next right is a groove with some tricky moves to enter after which easier slab climbing leads up and right.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 11.06.2010

15 Planet Gest 22m F6a

The original line up the central groove past the overlap curls leftwards before traversing back right to the shared lower-off.

FA M Crook, T Taylor 04.10.2009

16 Call Me Jim 22m F6b+

Climb direct to the overlap and make hard moves up the thin, slabby wall above.

FA T Taylor, M Crook, R Wood 07.2010

17 Freak On A Leash 22m F6c

To the right the climbing is even thinner, with a good series of moves leading to a ledge. Above the ledge the holds get smaller and good footwork is essential.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 04.10.2009

18 Live By The Sword 12m F6a

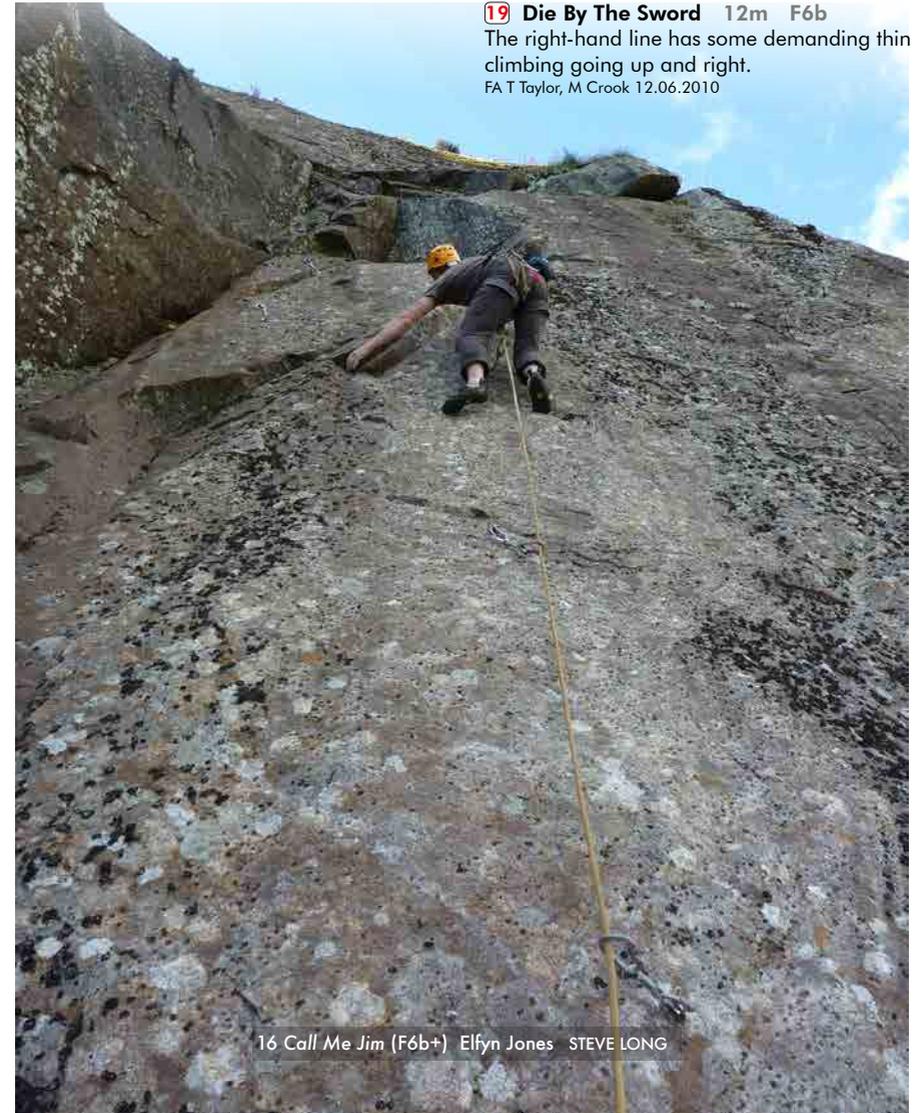
The final two routes share a start and the lower-off. The left-hand line has a distinct crux.

FA T Taylor, M Crook, A Newton 12.06.2010

19 Die By The Sword 12m F6b

The right-hand line has some demanding thin climbing going up and right.

FA T Taylor, M Crook 12.06.2010



16 Call Me Jim (F6b+) Elfyn Jones STEVE LONG



8 *Flaskdance* (F6a+)
M Griffiths TERRY TAYLOR

“A great experience awaited us and one which forever set at rest any doubt which we could have had as to the wonders so near us” Conan Doyle, The Lost World

Around half past two on a late August afternoon, Mel Griffiths and I having brewed up outside Eric’s café generally dismissing roped climbing activity (Mel was recovering from a serious biking accident; the result person nil, tarmac ten, stitches many) found ourselves toiling footpath steep in Amazonian-like forested hillsides where, if either had been felled by a blow pipe dart tipped with curare, it might not have conceded surprise.

Suddenly a toucan exited through sunlit canopy startling us to take a breather. Okay, the bird was a Jay and I should explain we were en route to Moel y Gest quarry, a largely forgotten hybrid crag blasted in amphitheatres arcing that mountain’s summit slopes. It is situated a mile or so as the jay flies, opposite Tremadog’s Craig y Castell. Reaching an overhung zenith at 60 metres on the gessimate barometer, the quarries left hand mosaic academy was strafed by the now iconic Holliwel brothers in the late 1960s. With Dave Mossman and Frank Quigley they put up around twenty rarely repeated climbs, almost all graded HVS but requiring some aid from pegs removed during first ascents. Doug Scott, perhaps mistaking Y Gest for Lhotse Shah also weighed in a similar standard route duo during this period, which along with their compadres have suffered a schizophrenic existence in various Tremadog guidebooks ever since.

Go there and the phrase ‘new blocks on the kid’ springs to mind. Still, with a flexi Friend rack and some shotcreting equipment, this yakuza sliced rock jungle might just clean up to show what a pathetic band of triple layered latte drinking fools relatively modern climbers have all become (“speak for yourself” I hear you say). There is a suspicion, however, that even those entranced by Ibogain might be found screaming for sounder Tremadog neighbours whilst immense benefit could be gained from iPods containing the Village People’s 80’s classic ‘so macho’ played on a loop throughout any forthcoming ascents.

Further right along this lost plateau, visibly compact rock (granite or rhyolite but definitely not slate) in untouched varying heights rose between crew cut heather, offering obvious sport climbing potential. Such walls were undoubtedly ripe for climbing both at extreme sustained angles practised by gibbon limbed ubermentch together with less perversely steep enclaves favoured by aspiring stick-clippers like me.

At front the landscape bore only minor graffiti, a few entombed inspection pits, a weird unroofed concrete bunker. A sparsely-ironed winding house standing forlorn as a ruined Aztec temple above its own dramatic incline tending towards chaos in a quarter mile drop. We then discovered several signs of recent activity posted on partially bush-obscured whale-size boulders sunk into the quarry’s overgrown floor. Three bouldering mats had been hidden in a kind of Plato’s cave, their owners’ philosophy written in chalk on hunchback arêtes and fierce lipped-out highball roofs above spartan landings.

We came, we saw, we walked away and despite initial enthusiasm did not return until 12th September. This time we were accompanied by mid-Wales specialist Terry Taylor and a few cordless Bosch Demons (the technical committee) ready to turn up the juice.

First Terry and Mel set about difficult rappelling to reach a slightly overhanging barrel-chested buttress, broad in width, short on crimps. With a line bolted, Terry began trying it, only to be stopped on redpoint by the final move. Tying on for a try I was in no shape for.

Steep climbing and a cameo outing to Penmaenbach tunnel crag a month previously had resulted in a disastrous pump, the routes were overhanging and I overhung but Streaky Desroy dragged me up despite being heckled by tinnie drinking cyclists, steroid big on the path. “If he falls off now, he’ll die” they had said, as I pulled over a bulge aided by Streaky’s patient tight rope. It was, however, a good day out and at least for me a few training moves between quickdraws.

Concerning training, I am reminded that a friend who spent a day confined in a Prague dungeon being used as a human coffee table in his own words, “trussed up like an old turkey” (this cost extra) reckoned it was better preparation for climbing than a Neil Gresham masterclass. But I digress. Failing low down on Terry’s line, my short-lived attempt did little to give him respite and in the end it proved a 48 hour nemesis. He eventually nailed *Dr Faustus* F7a, the inaugural y Gest sport route, a gift from the sloper gods, a Gelignite Sonata.



Between this action whilst searching for the only other route claimed hereabouts, *Space Panic* a HVS 5b corner crack put up in 1981 (not so far located) I noticed some disjointed niched grooves cutting aside a rouge coloured slab with only one quarryman's bar mark throughout its length. Scrambling to a col of unconquest overlooking these features I realised they leant slightly off vertical so abbed down to find footholds and resting ledges which must surely give succour to the stamina poor on their way to a final slate style rockover. Later Terry rewarded this find with 4 bolts and I managed a lead fuelled with fair-trade enhanced F6a confidence, adding *Flaskdance* to our repertoire. Jade Edwards made a second ascent whilst Mel burdened by a heavily bandaged hand went on top rope, suggesting "to the niche please" tactics might be required, the phrase referring to an incident years earlier where he and I literally keel hauled a man known as the human elevator over and through crux sections of *The Wasp* at Tremadog.

Thankfully, this tactic was not called for. Beyond the col of unconquest lay leaning walls sculpted in red stone and here I saw Terry bunched up on jugs before yarding on with the pump running then going again, silhouetted against the sky, extended. Spectacular, strenuous and overhanging when Terry finally succeeded on this *Tantric Skullfeeder* at F7a, we announced the win, which although not desperate by modern sport standards with a sort of 'come gentlemen let us away' approach lest we too became human elevators getting the clips back.

The following Saturday, Mel, still suffering a "gammy hand", began rap bolting some slabby buttresses at the quarries right-hand edge after enduring a lengthy stumbling bushwack to access their exit slopes. This bracken stomp was eventually relieved by fixing an *in situ* static rope which could be jugged from cliff base. Such operations take time and because further cleaning was necessary in the *Planet Gest* area, I returned midweek to put in a stint with only the Yaffingale for company.

At fifteen metres it became apparent devious abrasives had cut through sheath then severed some helix in the core. With no one to tell and uncertain what strategy instructional manuals recommend in this situation I had a go at becoming Zen like light, zipped one jumar past the killer damage and then for reasons cloaked in relief said out loud "fuck sakes woodpecker". I could not see the skull feeder from here but I'm sure it winked as normal paranoia resumed.

That night I awoke from a dream in which after buying a woodcut from Gustav Doré depicting the castle of Otranto I'd sent it to Kylie Minogue as a birthday present. You see I'd been going out with her for some months and discovered her bum was made of rhyolite before falling in love. Absurd as this was it contributed toward a certain delicacy when using rounded holds and that after planet Gest's first ascent a few days later I could claim in abstraction that it was a F6a dream climb fit for the stars.

After admitting both Mel and I had tendered bogus claims, after first impressions led us to believe that this area's finishing slabs could be "walked up hands in keks", Terry set out on a route demanding much greater technical élan and at F6c+ *Freak on a Leash* required a balance-climbing performance par excellence. Seconding on top rope it struck me similar to *Finnegans Wake*, difficult to read, hard to put down, somehow marvellous. Power Rangers gain no advantage here and even those blessed by the beanpole gene might wish to warm up their calves. By adopting an almost clandestine modus operandi, piggy backing on long deserted industrial concerns, our small exploratory cadre had now completed five new climbs, become regular punters in Lidl Porthmadog car park, developed Andean trekking skills and at times observed parties engaged on Craig y Castell uber classics across the valley from Y Gest's seclusion. It wasn't long before early winter cyclones forced a rain-soaked embargo shutting down team activity, think *Aguirre Wrath of God*, so that every anorak-hooded soul in town seemed to bear Klaus Kinski's grim countenance, marching drizzle-sodden past sadistic tabernacles through tormented streets, waiting for the raft, unconscious of the slopers at dusk.

Time to give Kylie a call.

A personal account of initial sport climbing development at Moel y Gest quarry, Snowdonia, North Wales during Autumn 2009
by Martin Crook