



The crags, quarries and bluffs of Cheshire and Merseyside sandstone have a charm and beautiful variety all their own. From the heights of Helsby to the pits of Pex, from Frogsmouth sport to Frodsham solos, it's all here.

Many magical sandstone experiences lie within easy reach of the great cities of Liverpool and Manchester: a spring evening, soloing on Frodsham as the low sun warms through still-bare trees. Padding up bold slabs or battling with roof cracks at Helsby, the calm estuary and the wide world below you. Highballing at Harmers, the area's secret gem, as the wind heaves through the trees. Battling with sandstone slopers on big burly sport routes on the mighty walls of Frogsmouth Quarry. Finger ripping and toe tickling technicality on Pex Hill's unforgiving micro-holds. Steely crimping on the colourful walls of The Breck, the wickedest walls in the Wirral. Away-from-it-all obscurity in South Cheshire, the crowning glory of local esoterica. Are you experienced?

Here is a book that lays the delights of sandstone open for all to see. Written by the area's foremost activists it gives an unparalleled depth of knowledge combined with the deepest fondness for the area.



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Helsby  
Frodsham  
Pex Hill

Harmers Wood  
Frogsmouth Quarry

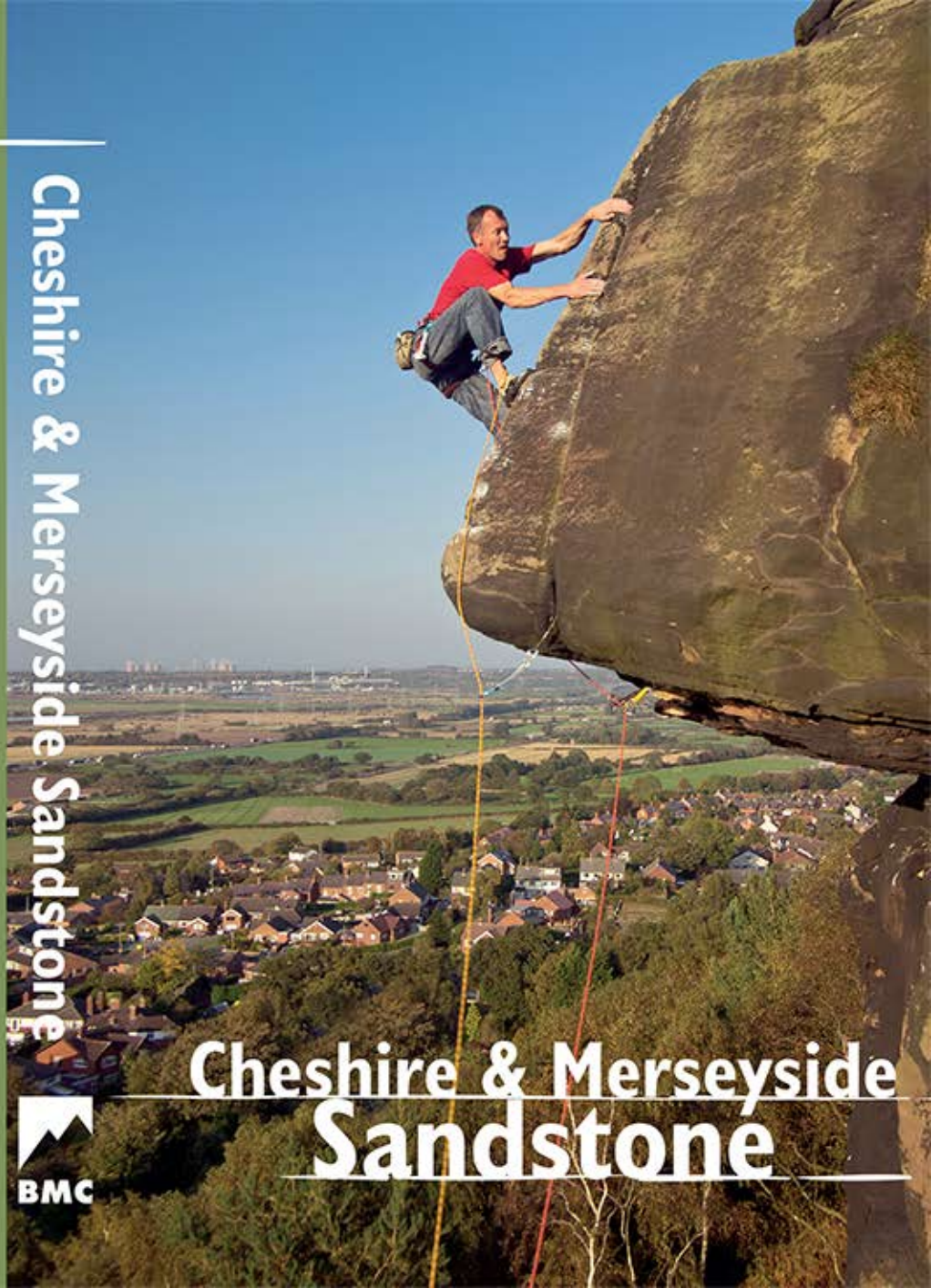
The Breck  
Irby Quarry

Parbold  
South Cheshire

Cheshire & Merseyside Sandstone



Cheshire & Merseyside  
Sandstone

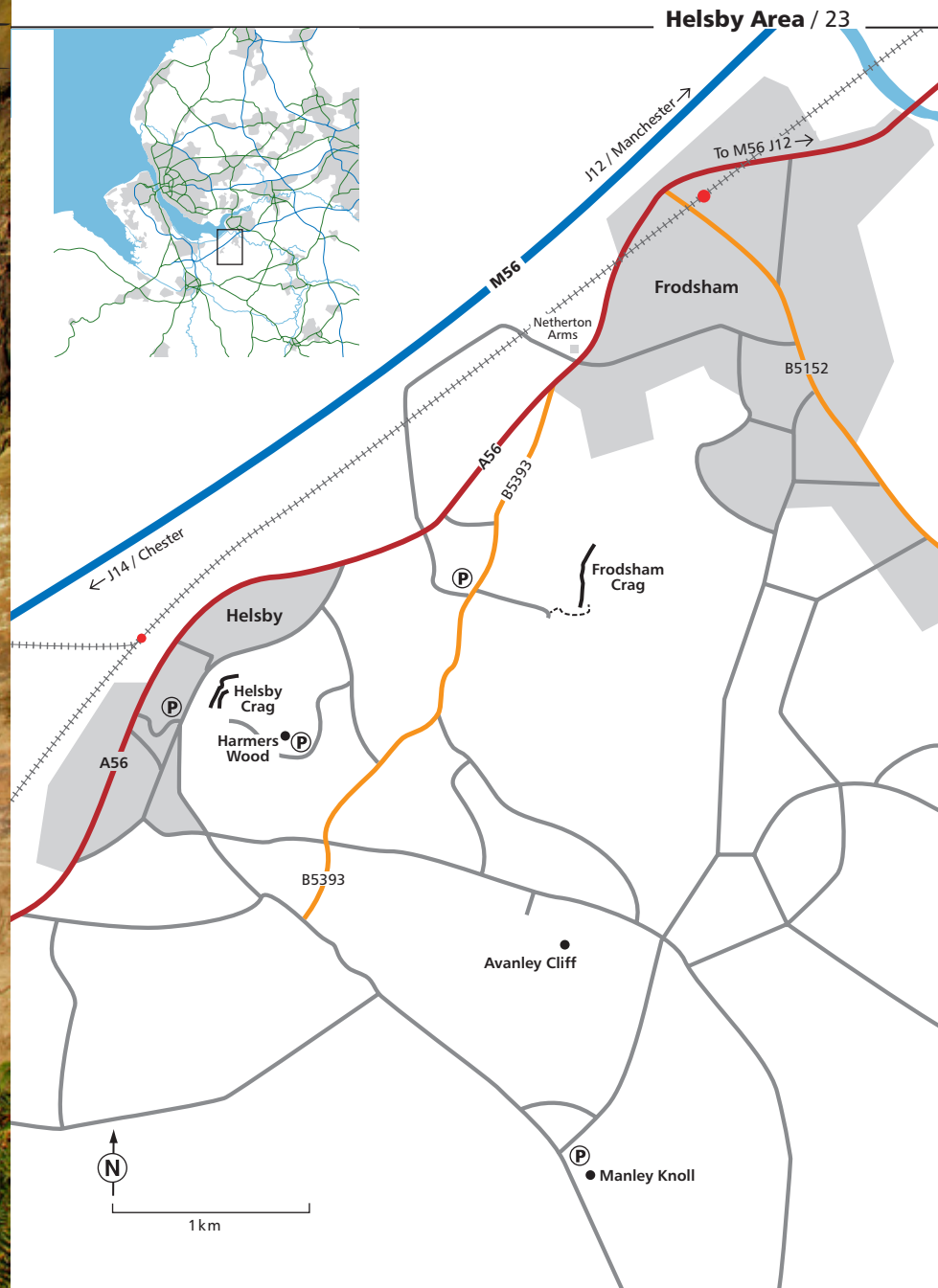




# HELSBY AREA



Jon Read enjoying the afternoon sunshine on The West Buttress climbing **Agag** VS 4c (route 88). Photo Sarah Clough.







# HELSBY

**Grid Reference:** SJ 492755

**Altitude:** 140m

**Aspect:** North / North-West

**M – E8**

by Andy Popp

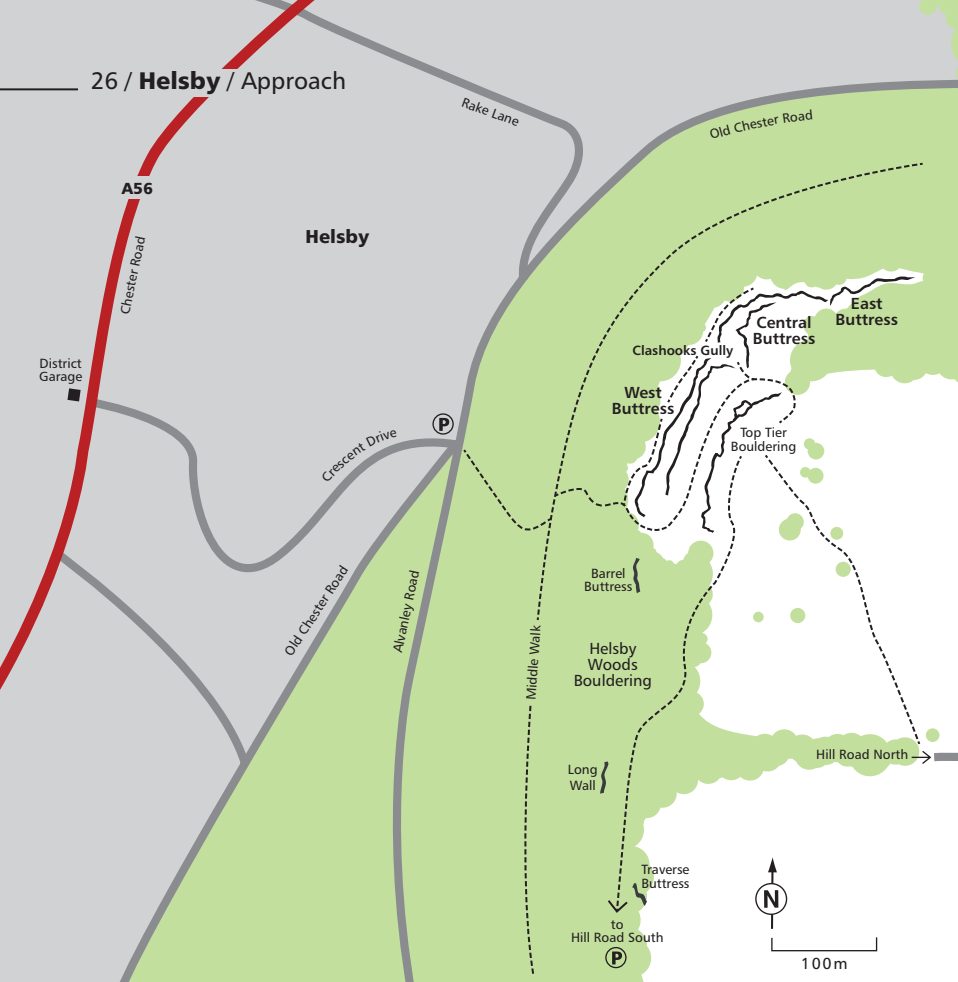
Helsby is the largest and most important of Cheshire's sandstone crags. Standing proud and tall above the town of the same name its long and rich climbing history lends it an evocative and enthralling atmosphere that is matched by a varied, ever-fascinating array of climbs. The crag is composed of fine-grained, un-quarried sandstone that provides just about every style of climbing. Locals delight in its easy accessibility, returning time and again to re-climb favourite routes and share good times with friends. Visitors will find a crag quite unlike any other where they can measure themselves against the pioneers of the past on a series of venerable testpieces, from *Overhanging Crack* to *The Beatnik* and beyond. Though semi-urban the environment is appealing, almost bucolic; delightful, quiet woods lie below and ravens and peregrines wheel through the skies above. It's been said before, but next time you are speeding westward on the teeming M56, do not ignore the siren call from above; you won't regret it.

## The Climbing

So varied are the routes at Helsby that it is impossible to categorise them as falling into one particular style. The crag has everything in spades: blank, smeary slabs, fingery walls, delicious flakes and equally brutal cracks, jug laced roofs looming blackly overhead. The majority of routes demand confidence or even a measured dose of boldness. Protection can be sparse and, even when present, is not always to be trusted. As is probably true of all sandstone crags in England rock quality varies, from superb to downright weak. Foot-holds can sometimes feel insecure, especially to the first time visitor. But persistence and careful acclimatization are well rewarded. Besides the sheer quality of much of the actual climbing, further appeal is added by the dramatic exposure of many climbs, created by the tiered structure of the crag and the steeply sloping hillside beneath.

Left: Emily Huzzard on **Eliminate 1** E1 5b (route 136). Increasingly bold climbing leads away from the sling runner to a rounded top out. Photo: Paul Evans.





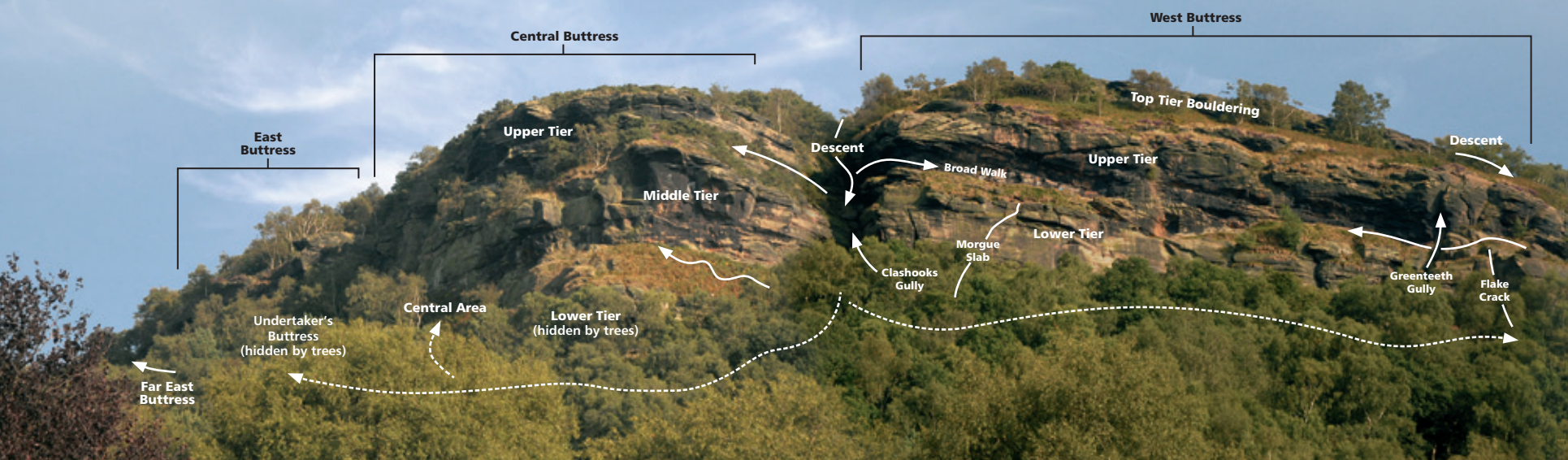
### Approach

The M56 Motorway provides easy access whether approaching from East or West. Leave the motorway at Junction 12 (approaching from the east) or Junction 14 (from the west) and gain the A56 Chester Road running through the centre of Helsby. Opposite the garage in the centre of town, turn up Crescent Drive and find ample parking at the junction of Crescent Drive, Old Chester Road, and Alvanley Road. An obvious entry into the woods gains paths threading their way up the hill to gain the west end of the crag. Alternatively, follow Alvanley Road further south to a car park on the right. Either walk a little way back down the hill to Middle Walk, contouring the hill under the crag, or take Hill Road South (opposite the car park) and its continuation path to the top of the hill.

Right: Is there a more exposed VD in Britain? Andy Popp attempts to push the crag apart at the top of **The Notch** VD (route 165). Photo: Ian Parnell.







### Conditions and Aspect

Helsby is notorious for its unappealing green appearance when seen from the M56. But this is deceptive and the crag is often in much better condition than might be assumed, particularly on the most popular sections of the West Buttress. It is true, however, that large sections of the Central and East Buttresses have become green and overgrown in recent years. Facing north to north-west, much of the crag enjoys afternoon sunshine. Year round climbing is possible but summer evenings are perhaps best. The crag never seems to get as sweaty (or as midgy) as the grit and the elevated position, capturing every last second of the dying sunlight, permits very long evenings. There are few things better in English outcrop climbing than ambling back down through darkening, peaceful woods, the crag an unearthly orange above, the body tired from climbing, and a pint beckoning. Elevation also gives a tremendous outlook over the Mersey estuary and Liverpool, over dramatic industrial hinterlands, and west to the promised lands of Wales. The only drawback is constant noise from the motorway.

### Grades and Protection

As befits a crag with such a long and distinguished history the 'traditional' British grading system is used. The crag has in the past had a tradition of top-roping and many routes have first been recorded as 'Not Led' (NL), in the style of the Kentish sandstone outcrops – indeed a few of these remain and are still recorded here in line with that tradition. Most though have now had lead or solo ascents and it is hoped that this guide will encourage newcomers to view Helsby as a 'normal' crag, i.e. one at which it is possible to simply turn up and lead routes on-sight as one

would at Stanage or in the Pass. However, a word to the wise; always exercise extra precaution about protection here. Apparently-sound placements can explode, disintegrate, erode, or otherwise fail. Grades, once notoriously harsh (though not, thank god, as harsh as at nearby Pex Hill) have been adjusted to try and take account of this factor. If that means you come away with a few soft-touches, well, we all deserve some of them now and again.

### Crag Layout

Though easily divided into three major buttresses, West, Central, and East, Helsby is actually quite a complex crag. In particular, a tiered structure means some routes and sectors are best approached from underlying routes, from the side, or even above. Most approaches to the foot of the rocks deposit the climber at the western end of West Buttress. From here the greatest concentration of highest quality climbs are easily accessible. The left-hand end of West Buttress is demarcated by rocky Clashooks Gully, which provides access to much of the Upper Tier of West Buttress and the Middle and Upper Tiers of Central Buttress. To access the Lower Tier of Central Buttress and its eastern extension, drop down and round from the foot of Clashooks. Increasingly arduous slopes then lead round to *Marshall's Climb* at the far left-hand end of Central Buttress and eventually the ragged ramparts of East Buttress. Some of the very first climbs on East Buttress are best accessed from the cliff-top path. Climbs (and buttresses) are described from left to right.



A photograph of a climber on a large rock face at Frodsham. The climber is positioned on the left side of the frame, reaching up to a hold on a dark, overhanging rock face. The rock face is composed of large, horizontal layers of sandstone. To the left of the rock face, there are several bare trees with thin branches. The ground at the base of the rock face is covered in dirt and some green vegetation. The overall scene is set in a wooded area with a mix of bare and leafy trees.

# FRODSHAM

**Grid Reference:** SJ 511761

**Altitude:** 110m

**Aspect:** West

**V0 - V8**

by Ben Farley

## The Climbing

This is biceps and brawn country. Overhanging, juggy and fierce, a quick and confident approach is the key to success here. Though you will find the odd technical move requiring steel fingers and crafty footwork, the ability to pull hard will pay dividends. Many of the climbs are quite high and because you will often be horizontal under a roof, a pad and a spotter are certainly recommended. To compensate for the steep nature of the climbing, most problems are well endowed with large holds throughout.

## Conditions and Aspect

Frodsham can provide wonderful bouldering at almost any time of year, but you do need to get the conditions right. The many small buttresses that make up the crag are spread along the edge of a west facing ridge and are almost completely shrouded in trees. The trees provide excellent shelter and a good breeze will dry the crag quickly during winter but during summer the thick foliage does have a tendency to keep the crag damp after rain. Local climbers generally agree that perfect Frodsham conditions are found during spring and autumn evenings when the sun shines on the crag, the leaves are not too claustrophobic and the temperatures are cool.

Although some of the more overhanging buttresses do provide a small amount of wet weather bouldering, it is worth noting that damp or wet holds should never be used. Holds have been damaged in the past by people attempting to pull on damp rock and the sandy nature of the rock means that climbers should always be wary of any suspicious looking holds.

## Grades

For the purposes of this guide, every climb at Frodsham has been given a bouldering grade, rather than an E grade. However, some of the climbs are certainly pushing the boundaries of what would normally be considered a boulder problem, indeed some of the buttresses are up to 8 metres high.

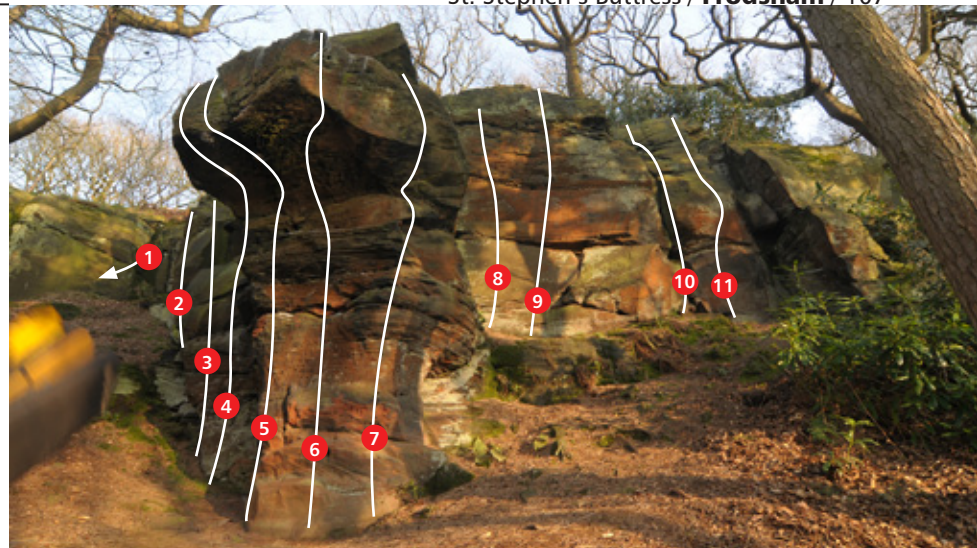
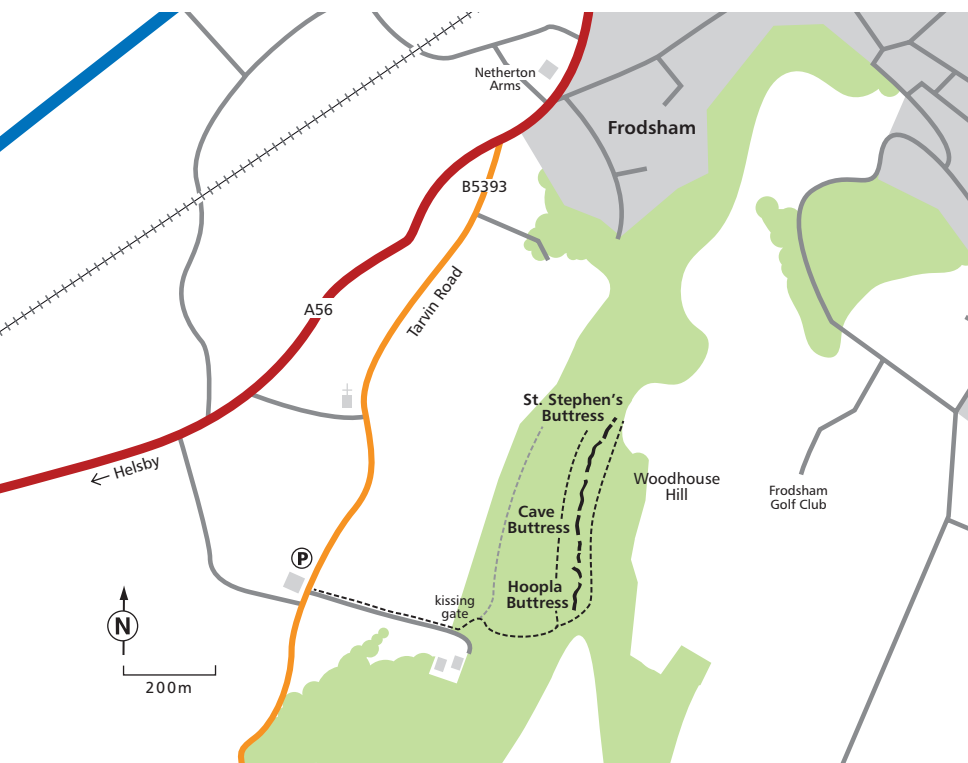
Martin Boysen on **Superwall V2** (problem 40). A typical Frodsham route; good positive holds but have you the strength to use them? Photo: Niall Grimes.



**Approach**

Head south towards Helsby out of Frodsham on the A56 (the main road running through the town). Just as you leave Frodsham you will pass a pub called the Netherton Arms on your right and after that, take a left turn signposted Alvanley (the B5393). Follow this road for roughly a mile, passing a cemetery and ignoring a right turn by a farm. Not long after the right turn you will reach a converted barn and farmhouse. Park considerably on the road by the barn, making sure that all valuables are hidden or removed as break-ins to vehicles are common, even in leafy Cheshire. If this small parking space is full there is further parking another 200m along the road.

From the parking by the converted barn, cross the road and walk up the narrow road that runs along the edge of the field towards the base of the hill. When you reach the end of the road (as it turns towards the house by the trees), go through the kissing gate, turn right and stomp up the steep track through the trees. By the time you reach the top of the track, you will certainly be warmed up, if not exhausted. The crags now lie to your left and are described left to right so it's best to walk along the wide path until you reach the golf course. St. Stephen's buttress is directly below you. Roughly ten minutes approach time.

**St. Stephen's Buttress**

The first buttress is just below the footpath where the woodland meets the edge of the golf course. The best descent is on this side of the buttress.

**1 Minute Arête V1 (5b)**

2.5m An obvious tiny boulder problem  
5m left of the main crag.

**2 St. Stephen's Wall V1 (5b) \*\***

6m Use big flat holds to climb the centre of the steep sidewall. Pray that you can find the hidden jug when you come to top out.

**3 Left Wall V1 (5c) \***

6m Start up just left of the arête and then swing right awkwardly to get established on the ledge. Knees not allowed!

**4 Mexican Bob V3 (6a)**

6m A direct eliminate up the left arête that avoids holds on problems either side of it. Stretch up to a small pocket just over the lip of the roof, pinch the arête with the left hand and make a huge reach to jugs.

**5 The Long Lurch V2 (5b) \*\*\***

7m A brilliant problem through the centre of the honeycombed roof via some great holds. A sandstone classic with exposure and commitment out of all proportion to its height.

**6 Rick's Reach V3 (6a) \***

6m This climbs the nose of the buttress. As the name implies; a big move to a pocket and then a tricky mantel onto the ledge.

**7 Right-Hand Route V1 (5b) \***

6m Careful with the rock lower down as you make another long move to the ledge. Again, a final tricky mantel provides the crux of this problem.

**8 Big Wall Left V1 (5b)**

6m Stay just right of the grim corner to a high crux move.

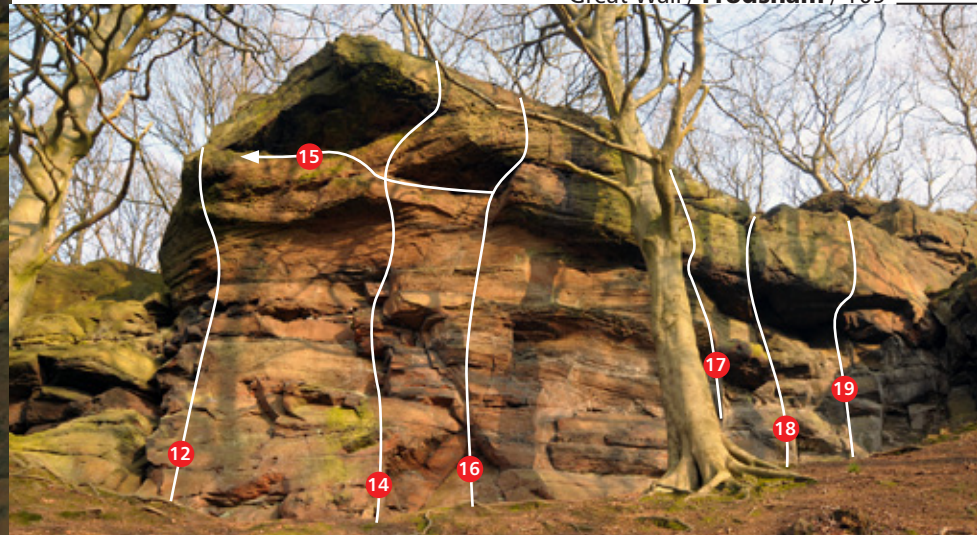
**9 Big Wall Right V0 (4c) \*\*\***

6m Great moves on good pockets and edges up the highball wall to the right gives a classic 'easy' problem.

**10 Deep Crack V0 – (4b)**

5m Green and dirty!



**11 Narrow Wall V3 (6a) \***

5m An eliminate that climbs the undercut wall just right of *Deep Crack*.

**Great Wall**

75 metres to the right of St. Stephen's Buttress the ground drops away steeply and a large steep wall with a jutting neb appears. This is Great Wall and is home to some exciting and intimidating climbing. Although the problems on this buttress have been given bouldering grades they are all verging on full blown routes.

**12 Left Arête V2 (5b) \***

10m The moves aren't too hard but it's all a bit high for a boulder problem.

**13 Tom's Roof Not led (6b)**

12m Straight up the wall and over the big roof on dodgy holds. A high crux and little in the way of protection suggest a solo would merit a high E grade.

**14 Anabasis V2 (5c) \***

12m Climb up the wall to the big roof but sensibly avoid the horizontal bit by escaping off right.

**15 Left-Hand Route V2 (5c) \*\***

16m Start up *Great Wall* and then traverse leftwards all the way across the wall until you've avoided all the really steep bits.

**16 Great Wall V2 (5c) \*\*\***

13m Climb the centre of the wall into the hanging corner, and then swing out right to gain the wall above. A superb very highball problem with a big satisfaction factor.

**17 Iron Dish Wall V2 (5c) \*\*\***

8m Start just right of the tree and commit to the upper wall over a bulge via a series of honeycombed breaks and edges.

**18 Frodsham Crack V1 (5a) \***

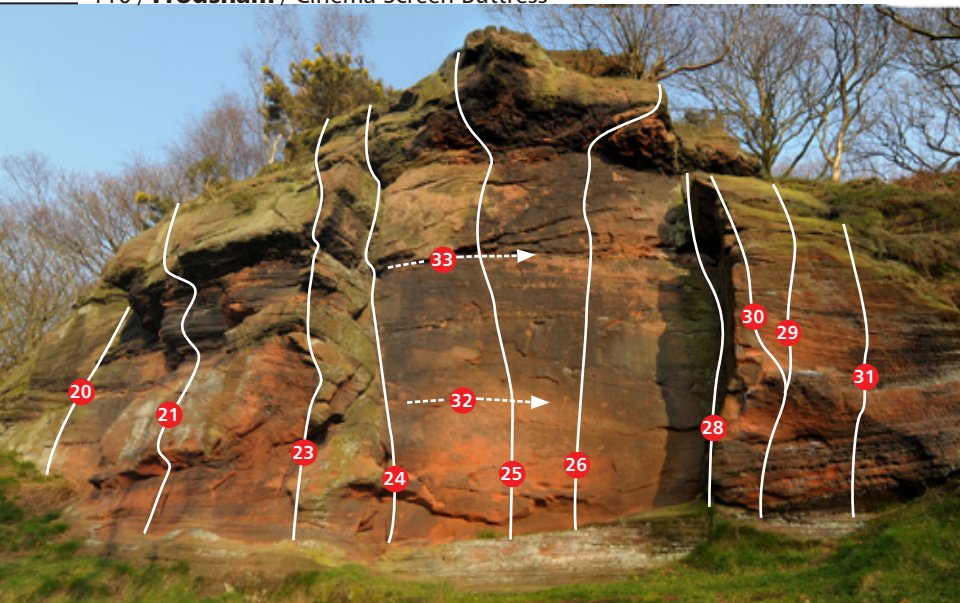
7m Jam, thrutch or stretch up the innovatively named fissure.

**19 Scary Wall Not led V5 (6a)**

7m Hard, high and with blind moves. The landing could be better and there are some suspect holds.

Left: Martin Boysen on *Iron Dish Wall* V2 (problem 17). More than one local has failed to top out and leapt for the tree! Photo: Niall Grimes.





### Cinema Screen Buttress

Continue rightwards under the main path for 30m, passing some pleasant but rarely climbed slabs, until you reach another large chunk of rock. The resemblance of this buttress to a cinema screen is far from uncanny, but certainly worth acknowledging. The rock on the "screen" is a bit snappy in places and most of the problems are rather high and route-like.

#### **20 Slanting Crack** V0 – (4a)

**8m** Wander up the wide left-slanting crack on the extreme left of the buttress.

#### **21 Slab Route** V1 (5a)

**8m** After a sandy start up the first slab, step left at the ledge to avoid the roof and finish up the next slab.

#### **22 Arête Eliminate** V3 (6a) \*

**8m** Start on sandy rock just left of the arête and use a collection of small pockets to move leftwards up to the

ledge. Finish up the arête or traverse off to the left. A really nice move but not the best landing.

#### **23 Cinema Arête** V0 (4c) \*

**8m** Good, bold climbing up the arête that finishes on nice big holds. Another problem that can be dirty towards the top.

#### **24 Birch Tree Corner** V0 – (4a)

**8m** Sandy and not really very inspiring.

Most ascents of the next two routes scuttle off left and right rather than finish on friable rock.

#### **25 Multi-Screen** V3 (6a)

**8m** Make tricky first moves on positive but potentially fragile edges and then a high finish on good holds left of the wide part of the roof.

#### **26 Central Route** V2 (5c)

**8m** More fragile holds and an easier finish, to the right of the wide roof.

#### **27 Cracked Corner** V0 – (4b)

**8m** The corner takes drainage and consequently is usually rather dirty.

#### **28 Doff Your Cap** V2 (5c) \*

**6m** This often damp but interesting problem climbs the narrow wall between the corner and the arête without touching holds on either problem. The grade is for dry conditions and the name apparently refers to an incident on Scafell.

#### **29 Arête Route** V2 (5c) \*\*\*

**6m** A quality problem with some enjoyable moves on great holds. Can be done from sitting at V3 (6a).

#### **30 Purely Arête** V3 (6a)

**6m** The same line but this time only use holds on the arête. Lovely moves and it doesn't really feel like an eliminate.

#### **31 Uber Wall** V3 (6a) \*

**5m** From the sandy ledge make fingery moves up the wall right of the arête.

There's no need to explain that the arête is out of bounds. A further V5 (6b) eliminate version avoids the two positive pockets and uses just a couple of tiny edges to move between the low ledge and the upper ledges.

#### **32 Cinema Low Traverse** V3 (6a)

Start in *Birch Tree Corner* and move rightwards, staying low on edges and pockets until a finish up *Arête Route* can be accessed. Purists will avoid holds in *Cracked Corner* then drop down on slopers to swing round and join *Arête Route* at the low ledge. Purists will thus also get a higher grade (V5) and a bit more respect from peers.

#### **33 Cinema High Traverse** V2 (5c)

Head rightwards from the corner but this time stay high on yet more fragile edges.

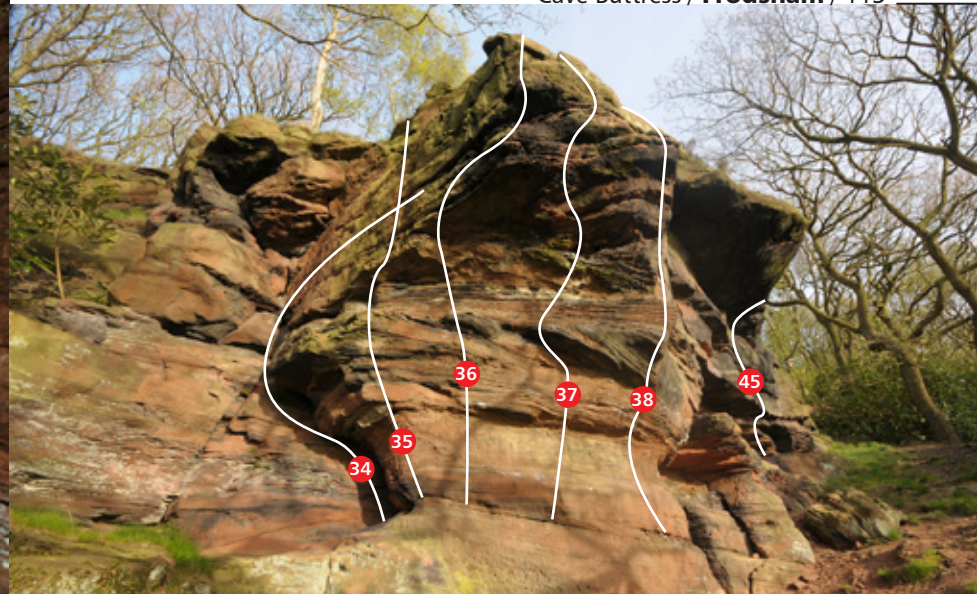


Ben Farley on **Purely Arête** V3 (problem 30).  
Photo: Ben Farley.





John Dunne climbing the lovely **Arête Route** (problem 29), an understated V2 at the right side of Cinema Screen Buttress.  
Photo: David Simmonite.



### Cave Buttress

A short distance right of the Cinema Screen lies a very overhanging buttress that is home to several of Frodsham's finest and historic problems. The rock is for the most part near perfect and well endowed with good, positive holds. As well as a great view of the Mersey estuary from the summit, this crag also boasts some fine eliminate bouldering at its base. Yet again, some of these problems blur the distinction between bouldering and routes.

**34 Corner and Traverse** V0 – (4a)  
8m Head up the short grubby corner and then traverse right to the arête on huge holds. Barely worthy of a bouldering grade but a pleasant ramble.

**35 Left Wall** V1 (5a) \*\*  
7m A steep move from the undercut arête gains the fine wall which is climbed using some wonderfully sculptured and rather sharp holds.

### 36 Crew's Arête Left-Hand V2 (5c) \*\*

7m Reach the base of the arête by either swinging along the lip from the left or reaching up from directly below. Once established at the base of the arête, banish any doubts and head straight up the jug infested upper section. A truly marvellous romp in an exposed position.

### 37 Crew's Arête V2 (5b) \*\*\*

7m It's worth the walk up the hill for this problem alone! Pass the lower bulge then ape out across the widest part of the roof to some of the largest holds known to mankind. After a bit of crafty footwork to turn the lip, the upper slab is easy but high. Wonderful.

### 38 Superdirect V4 (6b) \*\*

7m More steep moves and a long stretch to reach the juggy upper section. For the locally approved tick, make sure to avoid the pockets to the right and the jugs on Crew's Arête.



# PEX HILL

**Grid Reference:** SJ 501887

**Altitude:** 50m

**Aspect:** Various

**V0 - V10 D - E6**

by Mark Hounslea

Pex Hill is a disused sandstone quarry on the outskirts of Widnes with great quality rock. It contains over 160 climbs, from boulder problems and micro-routes to walls in excess of 12 metres. Pex tends to polarise the view-points of climbers. For aficionados of fine crimping, neat footwork and slinky hips there is no finer venue in the universe, but power hungry wall thugs will need some time to appreciate Pex's quality.

## The Climbing

The quarry has provided a forcing ground for developing technique and fitness for generations of Merseyside climbers. Easy of access and home to the mini-route, that particular hybrid, too high for a boulder problem and too small for a full blown route. The smooth sandstone walls demand good technique and develop awesome finger strength and deft footwork. Many of the higher routes can be soloed by the competent although top roping is also popular. In addition many fine traverses, often close to the ground, make Pex an ideal training venue or a suitable crag to visit if you are on your own. Combining these traverses can give epic endurance sessions. Stories suggest that some of the great exponents of this art in the past have gone up to five hours before touching down!

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

## Conditions and Aspect

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

Right: Ben Farley demonstrating the finger strength and precise footwork needed to succeed on **Breakaway** E4 6c (route 12).  
Photo Paul Evans.







*'...led astray by a disgraceful cast of characters. I was given little chance of redeeming myself and making anything of my life. Instead I broke bones, cut fingers, ripped tendons, lost girlfriends, signed on and dropped out. Oh! but what a great way to do it...'*

### Grades

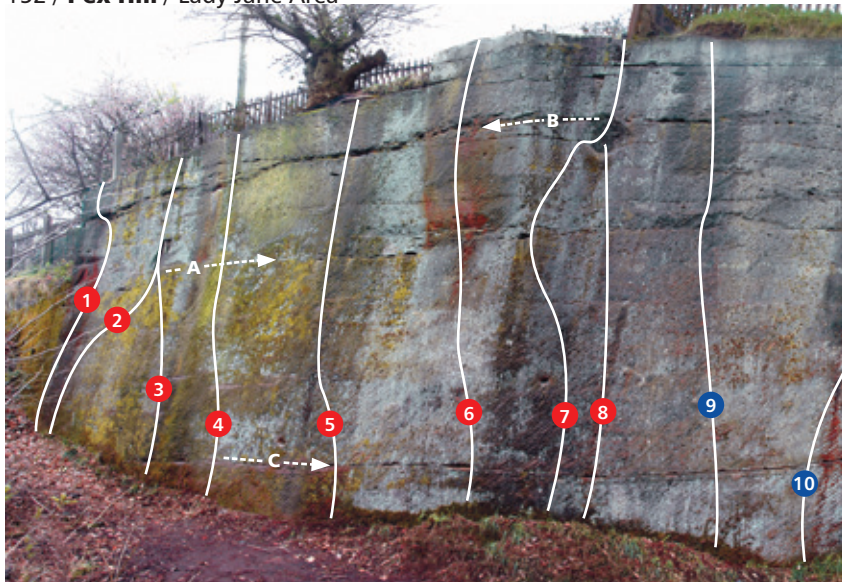
Traditionally Pex Hill routes have been graded using only British technical grades as the distinction between boulder problems and micro-routes are blurred. Most routes are either top roped or soloed. Many of the climbs involve hard technical moves relatively close to the ground with easier climbing above, but beware, there are exceptions! The local ethic often involved soloing as high as possible before getting pumped or gripped and then down climbing before jumping off. Gradually, as bottle and familiarity increased climbers would then commit and go for the top. The widespread use of cams and the increasing use of head pointing tactics have meant that leading has become more common and the use of bouldering mats has led to a blurring of the distinction between what is solo-able and what should be top-roped.

This situation is further confused by the presence of handy horizontal breaks two to three metres up, which often provide a convenient stopping place for those climbers who use the first part of routes as boulder problems.

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

Left: Nigel Hunt on the technically demanding **Staminade** E6 6b (route 118). Dodgy bolts, a bomber peg and then more dodgy bolts protect. Photo Paul Evans. Above: Photo: Will Hunt.





### Lady Jane Area

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

#### 1 Too Bold For Steve Boote V2 (5c)

4m The wall just right of the fence without using the left edge. Incidentally it isn't.

#### 2 Set Square V0 (5a)

5m Swing up and right on a deep pocket to the small ledge. Finish direct.

#### 3 Set Square Direct V2 (5c) \*

5m Very frustrating on a warm evening.

**A Lady Jane Middle** V2 (5c) starts as for *Set Square* and finishes at *Lew's Leap*.

**B Lady Jane High** V0 (5b) steps up from the end of the *Middle* and traverses the top break back left to the arête.

#### 4 Tequila Sunrise V2 (6a) \*\*\*

5m Start by the tree. Lovely elegant climbing up the wall with a stiff pull past a small L shaped ledge.

**C Lady Jane Low** V5 (6b) Traversing the foot ledge rightwards from *Tequila Sunrise* to *Bermuda Triangle* is height dependant.

#### 5 Harvey Wallbanger V2 (5c) \*\*\*

5m The wall one metre right gives a popular root with an unusual finishing hold. A technical and balancy start followed by crimping moves lead to a good finger slot.

#### 6 Black Russian V4 (6a)

5m Start by a slot at knee height. Difficult reachy moves lead up the wall finishing just right of the step at the top of the wall.

#### 7 Lew's Leap V1 (5c) \*\*

7m A tricky high step to a pocket leads through the beehive shaped niche to a handy finishing hold.

#### 8 Lew's Leap Direct V2 (6a)

7m Fingery moves up the wall to the right without recourse to the original route's pocket.

#### 9 Finger-Ripper E5 6b (V6)

7m Hard and bold moves directly up the wall right of the niche.

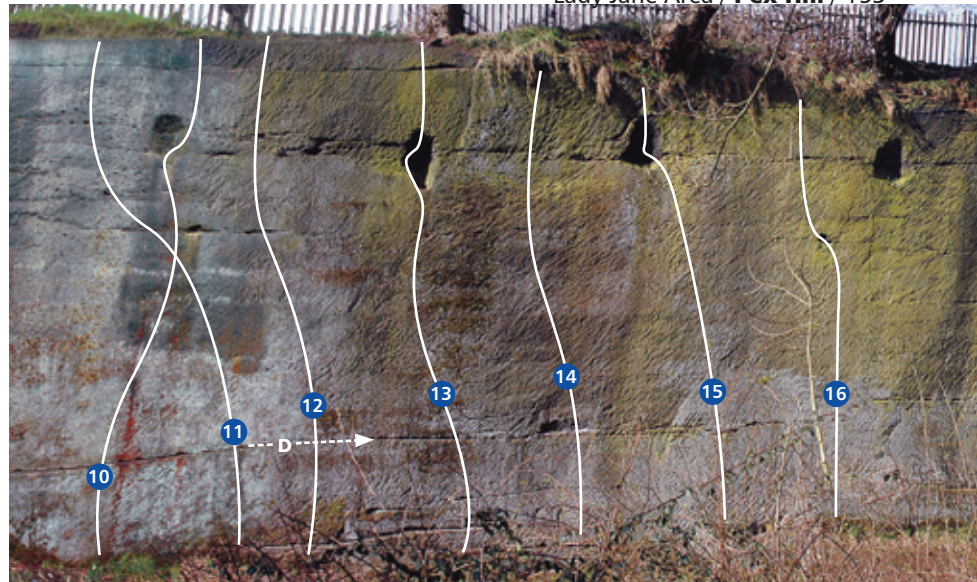
#### 10 Bermuda Triangle E3 6a (V4) \*\*\*

9m A difficult start leads to the infamous tendon popping double pocket. Easier climbing leads through the second niche to flat but good holds before the top. Unmissable.

#### 11 Cosine Alternative E3 6b (V6)

9m A counter line which crosses *Bermuda Triangle*.

**D Lady Jane Classic** V0 A fine warm up traverse leads from here to *Unicorn*.



#### 12 Breakaway E4 6c (V8) \*

9m Marginally easier since recent vandalism, this climb still gives cutting edge crimping. More often finished up *Bermuda Triangle*.

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

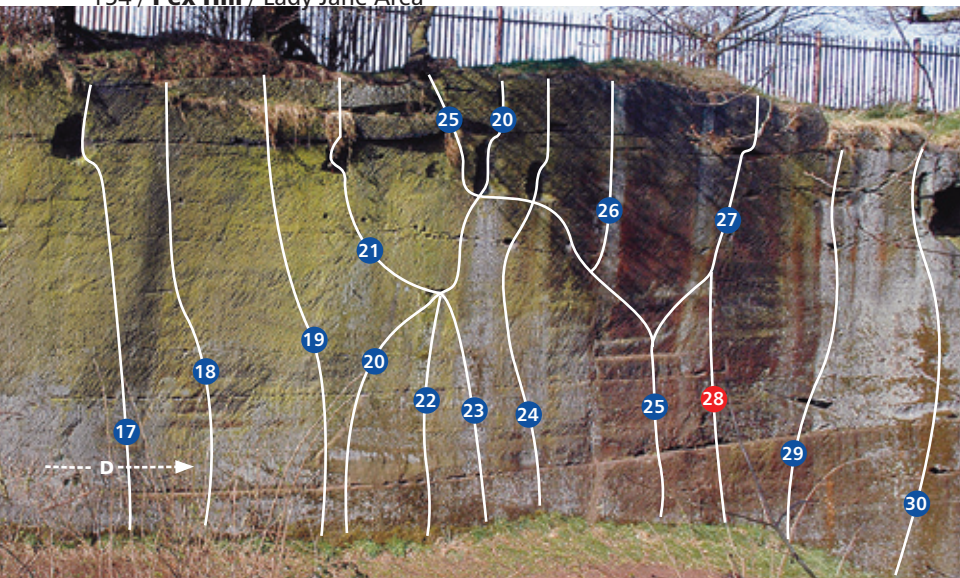
#### 13 Catalepsy E4 6c (V7) \*\*\*

8m Reach the third niche by a hard and balancy crux. Thank god for mats!

#### 14 Monoblock E5 7a (V10) \*\*\*

8m The wall to the right of the third niche. This proved to be Joe Healey's 'magnum opus' and can be impossible to find if not chalked as the holds are so small! Joe's line stands up on the break and shuffles left before a tricky move to a three finger pocket with the right hand. Phil Davidson's line starts to the left and moves slightly left to the same pocket





### 15 Bernie E4 6b (V6) \*

8m Climbs the wall past the old bolt and through the fourth niche.

### 16 Termination E5 6c (V7)

8m A desperate move left to the large pocket provides the crux.

### 17 Philharmonic E4 6b (V5) \*\*

8m Easier for those of above average stature.

### 18 Algripper E2 5c (V2) \*\*

8m This excellent route links the three pockets and the slot. Much harder than it looks and more than one move.

### 19 Jurassic Pork E5 6b

8m Thin climbing up the blank wall to the right.

### 20 Lady Jane E1 5c (V2) \*\*

8m Climb the right trending ramp till a committing rock-up gains pockets. Step right and climb straight up past the left-hand of two niches.

It is possible to traverse rightwards after the crux of the following four routes and reverse *Twin Scoops* to get back on the ground.

### 21 Crossbow E1 6a (V3)

8m Make a hard move left from the good pocket on *Lady Jane* to the sixth niche.

### 22 Lady Jane Direct E1 5c (V3) \*

8m Direct to the big pocket.

### 23 Sidestep E1 5c (V2)

8m Climb straight up to the pocket on *Lady Jane*.

### 24 Twin Scoops Direct E1 6a (V3) \*\*

8m Straight up to the right-hand niche by a high step, crimp pull and long reach. Very satisfying.

### 25 Twin Scoops HVS 4c (V1) \*

9m Mantelshelf on to the obvious ledge at 3m and then follow holds leftwards through the two scoops. This can be used as a descent by the confident.



### Do not feed the butterflies

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

by John Hart, published in Crag.

### 26 Twin Scoops

#### Right-Hand E3 5c (V3)

9m Straight up from the ledges using the obvious pocket.

### 27 Creeping Jesus E1 5b (V2) \*\*\*

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

### 28 Creeping Jesus Direct V2 (5c) \*

9m Use layaways to gain the ledges.

### 29 Kitt's Wall E5 6b \*\*

9m Technical climbing past a small overlap up the big wall to the right via an obvious pocket.

### 30 The Black Pimp from

#### Marseilles E5 6b (V6)

10m Climb the wall left of the rib of *Unicorn*. Named after a local youths entertaining solo hitch hike to the Verdon Gorge!



Right: Pat Bootham on **Zigger Zagger** V2 (problem 36).  
Photo: Adam Crook.



# FROGSMOUTH QUARRY

**Grid Reference:** SJ 506818

**Altitude:** 35m

**Aspect:** Various

**F4 - F8a**

by Mark Hounslea

Frogsmouth Quarry offers bolted climbs up to twenty metres high on variable sandstone and is a great complement to the boldness of Helsby and the quick fix of Pex. At its best the crag provides high quality wall climbs which are probably the nearest thing to bolted gritstone. The rock quality ranges from excellent to rock so soft you'd be better off with a bucket and spade rather than chalk and clips. The majority of the routes were originally bolted and climbed by John Codling and Ian Dring. The crag had a make over in 2010 with a major clean up and bolting organised by the BMC and local activists. The routes and lower offs were retro-bolted as full sports routes and the days of near misses as falling leaders gently kiss the ground should be over.

## Conditions and Aspect

The sandstone faces catch the afternoon and evening sun and have superb views over the Mersey estuary. The crag is at its best from spring to autumn. And though it suffers like most urban crags from the detritus of modern living - the odd smashed lager bottle and spaced-out glue sniffer - doesn't really detract from a pleasant climbing environment.

## Environmental and Access Considerations

As part of the access agreement, climbing is restricted to the described parts of the crag (the rest is pretty crap anyway), and a failure to comply could put access into jeopardy. The flora which grow in this, one of the last heath land habitats in Cheshire, mean that topping out or abseiling over the lip of the quarry should be discouraged. The quarry is owned by Halton Borough Council and the site is managed by Mersey Valley.

Right: Mark Hounslea on **The Flying School**, F6c (route 25). Two hard moves; a full on mantelshelf low down and a long reach high up make this the middle grade classic of the crag. Photo; Paul Evans.





**History** by John Codling.

Quarrying at “Frogs Mouth” started around 1734 and finished around 1850. The 20m walls are only 1/3 their original height. Infill from later quarrying “spoiled” a bigger climbing experience. The quarries were then used as a chemical dump until the 1970s when topsoil was added and horses were grazed. Nowadays it is part of Run-corn Hill nature reserve. A rare 25mm Dor beetle has been found in the reserve as have footprints made by a pre-dinosaur nicknamed the “Hand Beast”.

Early climbing history is murky. A collection of 28 top-roped, scary aid and free routes had been recorded by Les Ainsworth in 1973. Over the years as the undergrowth rose, the odd desperate party repeated the routes and added more top-rope lines. No-

one had the stupidity and the balls to lead any of the main lines until Michael Collins turned up in 1986 to lead *Comet Crack* at E5. You could consider it an easier *London Wall*; except that you have the feeling that every one of the 15 runners you put in the crack would rip through if you fell.

In 1991 Ian Dring and John Codling got obsessed with Frogsmouth. It took two years and hundreds of 1” diameter x 6” long bolts and over thirty routes before they were cured. Constantly in fear of Gary Gibson getting in on the act they were up “all hours” and knew they were really onto something when editor and publisher Ken Wilson publically condemned their activities.

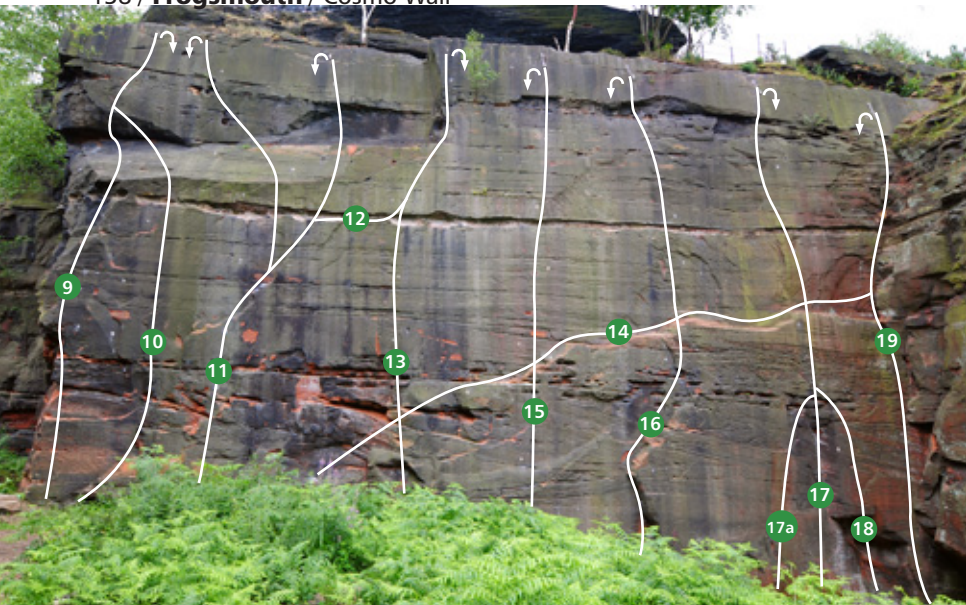
Desperate for partners, Ian Dring got a non-climbing workmate to hold his ropes. Ian pulled a large block off, almost decapitating his second who proceeded to let go of the rope and run away leaving the offender stranded mid-route.

Route names were themed on the cult Viz magazine cumulating in *The Big Stiff One*, a centrefold F7c up the largest wall, after some 40 attempts. Of course Simon Nadin sighted the second ascent. The quarry received official and deserved recognition in 2010 with a comprehensive re-bolting exercise ably managed by the BMC.

Above: 1980’s superstar Simon Nadin on the second ascent of **The Big Stiff One** F7c (route 28). Photo: Ewan McCallum.  
Right: Nigel Hunt picks his way up the immaculate **Topless Skateboarding Nun** F7b (route 27). Photo: Paul Evans.







### **Cosmo Wall**

Cosmo Wall is easily identified by the striking arête of *Dogsbody Arête* on the left edge. It is characterised by an obvious horizontal fault at two thirds height and a long ledge system which runs from left to right. The routes dry quickly and are in condition all year round. They are all good quality and should suit the middle grade climber.

#### **9 Dogsbody Arête** F6b \*\*\*

**14m** A fine route with an entertaining move past the roof which provides a good introduction to climbing at Frogsmouth.

#### **10 On the Couch** F7a

**14m** A stiff little route just right shares the same finish but the arête is out at this grade.

#### **11 Wall Street** F6b+ \*\*\*

**15m** Climb up through the crescent shaped feature to the break and a choice of crimpy finishes on to the slab above.

#### **12 Fashion Spot** F6b

**17m** Climb as for *Wall Street* to the break and then traverse right to finish up the next route. Shell suits are obligatory for the flash.

#### **13 Agony Aunt** F7a+ \*

**16m** Start behind a boulder and below a sandy slot. Climb the obvious weakness and make a thin pull past the second bolt. Finish easily to the right of the corner.

#### **14 Gardener's Ledge** F5

**25m** Start as for the previous route but move right as soon as possible to reach a large stepped ledge running horizontally right. Follow the ledge to and finish up *Perfumed Groove*.

#### **15 Zest** F6b \*\*

**18m** A stiff pull up the pocketed wall leads to the ledge where a long reach may lead to good holds. Originally chipped by giants!

#### **16 Horoscope** F6b \*\*

**18m** Start at a small left leaning groove and climb to the ledge where good moves lead up the wall. The start will feel hard for fat fingered short climbers.

#### **17 Sex Survey** F6c+ \*\*

**18m** Climb the difficult groove to the ledge and the smart wall above. A left-hand variation start, **17a M&B Special** (F7a+) climbs the wall to the left of the groove joining it at the ledge.

#### **18 Smart Girls** F6c+

**18m** Start with some difficulty up the arête to the right of *Sex Survey* and climb a parallel line up the wall to the right. Very eliminatish.

#### **19 Perfumed Groove** F6b+

**16m** Climb the obvious corner with a cunning and devious start.



The following climbs are on the wall at right angles to the main wall. They tend to be sandier and lack the quality of the previous routes.

#### **20 Chaturanga Danasana** F6b+

**18m** Climb the dusty wall 1m right of the corner up a series of scoops and bulges.

#### **21 Just Another Fifty** F6a+ \*

**18m** A slightly better route. Start up the small groove before trending right to finish up the previous route.

#### **22 Savasana** F6a+ \*

**18m** A pleasant climb on good holds. Pull through the roof and head directly for the treat the top of the crag.

#### **23 Apple Crumble** F6a \*

**16m** The striking red arête is climbed mostly on the left-hand side until exciting moves swing right to finish up a short corner. Make sure you have squeaky clean boots for this one!