

# Sydney

## A Climber's Guide

**A Community Climbing Guide Produced by stu.**

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Front Cover: Neil Montieth on **I Wish She Was Mine**, 19, Mt Amos North Face. Photo Neil Montieth collection.

Back Cover: Roger Parkyn climbing **The Meaning of Life**, 24/25. The Gonk. Photo Roger Parkyn collection.

<http://www.thesarvo.com>

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## Why Climb in Sydney?

Spoilt rotten bastards. Imagine that, a multicultural city of five million people, with all the lashings of the modern world, snugly wrapped around a picture-perfect crystal blue harbour, blessed with idyllic weather, with pockets of vibrant green bushland sprouting the odd sandstone escarpment for your climbing convenience. You might almost have the world's most livable city.

But with world class climbing only an hour or two away in the Blue Mountains, Nowra and Point Perpendicular, why would you hang around home and climb? Well, convenience really. Maybe you just want to go climbing for the arvo? Does riding your bike to a crag have appeal? Maybe you're just visiting the town for a few days and don't have the means to get further afield? Perhaps the weather gods are cloaking the mountains in white misty wetness, Nowra is sweating in its own humidity or you've run out of spare undies for the Point.

Whatever your motivation, Sydney is stocked full of a variety of great climbing on small sandstone outcrops scattered throughout the city. With the rock rarely giving solid "trad" placements, the dominant climbing style is "sport". (But there are plenty of quality trad climbs around, so don't sell your rack just yet.) It was not always this way, and many crags throughout this guide were "equipped" decades ago, with technology and attitudes of a different time. In recent years there has been a concerted effort to bring Sydney climbing, lumbering and recalcitrant as it is, into the modern ethos. Hopefully this guide will help you make sense of it all.

## What to Expect

At the popular crags (look for yellow stars under each region's crag list), expect quality sandstone climbing in a peaceful suburban setting. Many of the crags lurk under the tree canopies, tucked behind houses or hidden away in parks and pockets of native bushland, often with river or harbour views. Walkins are generally stupidly short and cafes and icecream shops are never far away.

Refer to the individual crag notes for the style of climbing at your chosen crag. Mostly you'll need just a sport rack, but bring along a couple of cams, wires and slings for the odd mixed route. A 50m rope is plenty enough. You'll also need bolt plates for many climbs - check the Things You Need To Know chapter if you don't know what these are! For the trad climbs, a standard rack of cams, hexes and nuts will do, nothing is too long or requiring any specialised gear.

For those crags where the bolts are old and manky, these climbs are best treated as top rope problems. For top roping you may need a swag of slings or a short rope, and a couple of bolt plates. Otherwise bring a couple of bouldering mats and buckets of courage!

The rock in the 'burbs is generally OK, but its the sea cliffs that will stain your lycra brown. Take extra care on the sea cliffs and treat all protection (and holds) as suss.

Whatever you do, have fun - And don't be a d\*ck and wreck it for other people. Take home all your trash, keep the noise down when close to houses, don't park in a way that blocks access for locals and their visitors, and generally keep a low profile. These simple courtesies will keep the crags open for everyone to enjoy!

## Weather

Late autumn, winter and early spring (April to September) are definitely the best times to climb in the Sydney region. The temperature almost never drops below zero degrees Celsius in the Sydney basin, and the weather is usually pretty stable during this time. It can get pretty bitter at shady crags that catch the wind (eg. Bangor West), but generally it's always possible to climb during the cooler months. Friction on the sandstone is also at its best when it's cold.

Climbing in summer is a real battle against the grease. It tends to be unbearably hot (35+ degrees Celsius is pretty common) and wet as well, with stinking hot humid days followed by seemingly endless days of torrential downpour that are barely any cooler. The shady south and east facing crags are the pick during the hot months, with Narrabeen Slabs and the Cathedral being good options. The sea cliffs are also a good option, since they are usually in shade by mid afternoon and swimming is usually possible. The boulders on Palm Beach are probably the pick of these areas.

Another disincentive for climbing during summer is the sea slime, which coats most of the sea cliffs and crags near the ocean. This can also happen at other times of the year, particularly if the prevailing weather is easterly.

# The Tasmanian Climbing Guide

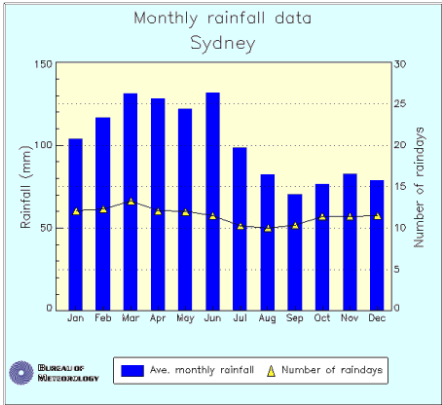
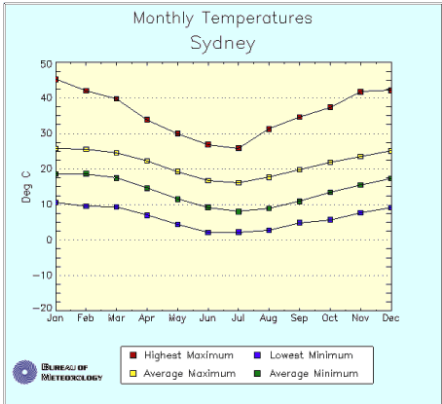
When choosing your crag, I should point out what is obvious to locals but not necessarily to northern hemisphere visitors. The sun rises in the east, sets in the west, and the north faces catch the sun all day long. So in winter seek a north facing cliff and in summer a south facing one.

Good sun protection (sunscreen, hats etc.) is an absolute must during summer. Foreign visitors should be particularly careful not to underestimate the power of the sun.

The sandstone found in Sydney is quite porous, meaning that many of the crags seep during and particularly after rain. The rock also has a tendency to soften somewhat when wet, so take care if you're cranking on small holds after rain.

The Australian Bureau of Meteorology website is an excellent source of detailed information on Sydney's climate. Amongst other things they provide an up to date Sydney weather forecast and an almost-realtime Sydney Rain Radar.

The following two graphs give a bit of an idea of Sydney's climate throughout the year (courtesy also of the Bureau).



## Getting Around

A car helps, but driving in Sydney can be a pain (and rather tense, especially for visitors!).

If you don't have a car, some crags can be accessed by public transport. The best resource for planning a trip is <http://www.131500.com>

Riding a bike is also an option. Some crags are near bike paths and you could combine riding with public transport. Check out the RTA cycleway maps online.

## The Best Areas

If you are just visiting and want to sample the best climbing around Sydney, check out the following areas:

- Barrenjoey (right by the beach, nice)
- Berowra (something for everyone, good for winter)
- Bangor (good for easy grades)
- Bonnet Bay (fab sport climbing right in the burbs)
- The Cathedral

## Grading

<Insert Grade Comparison Chart>

## Sport Climbing & Fixed Protection

Yes some of the climbs in this guide are sport climbs. These climbs are marked with the P symbol. This generally implies the route is adequately protected using in-situ bolt protection and has a lower off. However one person's opinion of what constitutes "adequate protection" may not be yours. Also, some people consider any climb with fixed protection a sport climb, even if there is no lower off, or you may need to place the odd piece of protection. Most importantly, there are many, many BAD bolts out there, particularly if the climb was bolted a few years ago.

Do not assume any climb marked with the P symbol is safe to climb or is completely equipped. You must assess the climb and its fixed protection before climbing the route. If in doubt, top rope it or do something else.

Many climbs that are not marked as a sport climb do have fixed protection. The local ethic for many years has been to place fixed protection where no natural protection exists, but leave otherwise naturally protected climbing to be protected using nuts, cams, etc. The variable and unreliable nature of the rock in Sydney has led to enthusiasm for fixed protection that would be scandalous in other parts of Australia.

Where there is no lower off, you should top out, create a three point equalised belay off whatever is available, and bring your buddy up, then refer to the guidebook for the best descent option.

Some climbs are marked with the "X", to indicate known safety issues. Either the bolts are known to be bad, the rock is friable, or something else is just plain bad.

Please let us know if you are aware of rebolting that is not indicated in this guide, or climbs with bad bolts which are not marked as such!

Here are some of the bolts you may encounter (TODO add pics & desc)

## Access Issues

There are a number of land managers who oversee the climbing areas in this guide. One of the incentives for publishing a complete up-to-date guide is to inform everybody of the current state of play, and to encourage climbers to behave in ways that will increase our chances of keeping access open.

The land managers are private land owners, city councils and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

Land managers are concerned about liability and environmental impacts (including tracks, erosion, fixed protection and vegetation clearing). Bureaucrats feel obliged to control or prohibit activities for various reasons, such as minimizing their workload, reducing risk, bowing to special interest groups, or simply because an activity falls outside their narrow view of acceptable recreation. Regardless of your own opinions, the reality is that land managers can act to prohibit climbing and so we need to deal with it.

Climbing in Sydney Harbour National Park is currently (January 2011) banned. Elsewhere climbing is discouraged by NPWS in Royal National Park and most parts of Ku-ring-gai Chase

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National Park. The one exception in this latter park is Barrenjoey Headland where climbing is permitted under the existing Plan of Management.

The Royal and Ku-ring-gai Plans of Management state that unless specifically approved in the Plan then climbing is only permitted with written consent from the Director General and is subject to payment of fees and any conditions considered necessary. However experience to date is that such permission is generally not forthcoming. Refer to the access notes for crags affected by this for more information.

Many of the crags in this guide are close to peoples homes. When parking, do not block driveways or park in such a way as to fill up a street and force locals to park further away. Keep noise to a minimum and keep a low profile. Basically don't give a local a reason to want climbing to be banned in their area.

If developing a new crag, be mindful that a row of shiny rings and chalk up a rock face might in your eyes be a beautiful thing, but for the average ground-based punter its an eyesore and an environmental impact. Forget the argument that roads, walking tracks, hand rails, power lines and suburbia are all impacts on the environment too, its an amusing argument with plenty of truth but sadly it does not hold weight in public debates involving non-climbers. So minimize your impact by not developing cliffs right next to popular walking tracks or in plain view of the general public.

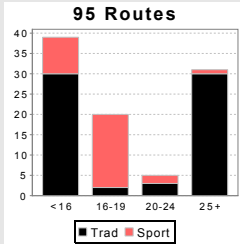
## Symbols and Abbreviations

▷ - Sport climb  
X - Danger! Danger! Crap old bolts, crap rock, loose blocks, snakes, bullants, dragons!  
Ψ - Route name made up, no FA details submitted.  
L - left  
R - right  
BR - bolt runner (might need a hanger)  
FH - fixed hanger  
RB - ring bolt  
BB - bolt belay  
DBB - double bolt belay

## Acknowledgements

This guide is, at least initially, a reincarnation of the "Sun, Surf and Sandstone" website put together by Peter Monks, who over the years gathered and organised information provided by the hundreds of climbers around Sydney. A big thankyou to Peter who provided the raw data from which gave us a starting point. Various people have been putting recent updates into the ACA database and those updates are now here too. In addition, I've sourced other info from the SRC website and various printed guides floating around. Where possible I have acknowledged the key contributors under each section. Mike Law, Neil Montieth, Dave Noble and Niall Doherty have helped with some initial updates, and Kevin Westren has been working through the crag access issues. But essentially the whole work is the product of the Sydney climbing community working together. Special thanks though to Jon Nermut who pioneered the software and has helped us get it up and running. Andrew Clarke has also helped with systems administration.

# The Cathedral



Steep 5 mins or scrubby flat 20 mins

Sandstone Climbing

## Author

Bundy, Mikl's guide and Sun Surf Sandstone

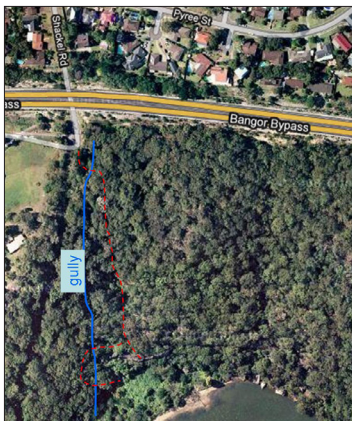
## Intro

The Cathedral is probabaly the best urban crag near Sydney, in a beautiful setting on the banks of the Woronora River right in the heart of the Shire. It's possibly the highest crag in Sydney town with a height of twenty-odd meters in some sections, with unusual (solid and very frictional) rock. There is almost something for everyone, from grade 27 cracks, great sporty little 16s, and heap of low 20 walls. Trad climbers and sport climbers will both enjoy the place. The area is very shady, not only from facing south but also from thick vine covered jungle. Bring mozzie repellent in summer and probably avoid altogether during a wet winter. One person has had ticks here.

## Access

Park at the end of Shackel Rd, Bangor. Please don't fill up the street, leave plenty of room for locals to park (if it's packed, park 50m further up the hill). Follow the track down 6m then left (East) 10m, diag right for a bit and across to the other side of the gully (about 50m all up). Walk down another 40m till you pass a small line of rocks on the left, at this point go diagonally left for 30m (across log and left) then pretty much straight down the hill to top of cliff. About 5 minutes. Either rap in or go right and down gully

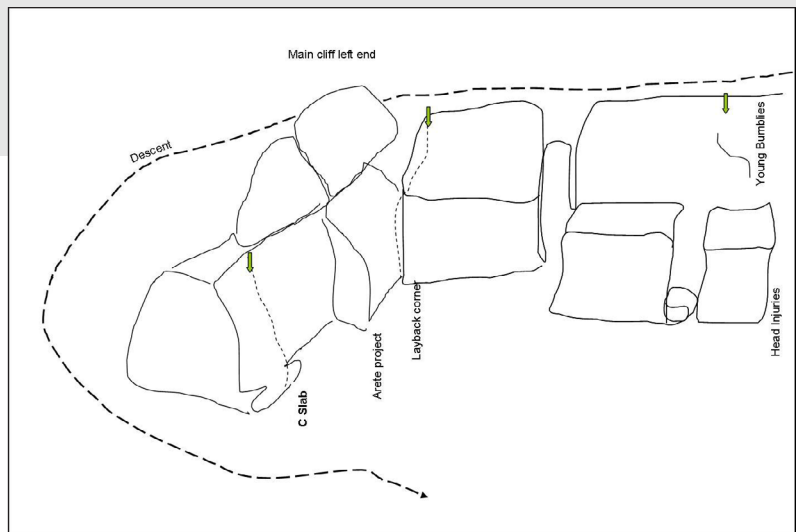
The alternative (original) way involves walking along the river and is a bit scrubby and eroded, but pretty. Park in Prince Edward Park in Woronora (or walk down the hill from Sutherland railway station). Cross the footbridge, turn left and follow the track along the river for about 1km. Although you walk past the right hand slabs first, they aren't as obvious as the main wall, which looms above the track about 20m to the right. Bash up through the jungle to the base of the crag. Maybe 20 minutes walking. If you've got a boat or kayak, paddle in!



## ► Main Wall

Climbs described left to right after you come down the descent gully. There is an evil descent chimney at the right end of the main cliff (maybe grade 10), but it's desperate and it's only 3 minutes to walk off down the gully on the far left. Besides, most of the climbs have lower-offs here.

Left end of main wall



### ★ C Slab 10m 19 ▽

Start below the boulder. Up the slab past Ubolts to lower off. Thin at top

?

### miki's arete project

Pointy arete 6m R of CS

### ★ Layback Crack 12m 18

Start: 10m right of CS, in a right facing layback corner that stops at 8m. Head up the corner to BR at top, then traverse right and up (BR) the arete to a lower off. Needs a bit of traffic, bring thin to hand sized cams

?

### ★ Head Injuries 8m 13 ▽

Walk down and right 20m and up to right facing corner crack

Graham Fairbairn 1989

### ★★★ Young Bumbles 10m 21 ▽

**Slabby classic.** Climb H.I. and head left and belay on Ubolt. Up flake and steep wall (4 Ubolts). Lower off all the way to the deck

Graham Fairbairn 1989

### ★★ Surface Paradise 20m 22 ▽

Start up Head Injuries and up wall above, powerful then delicate

Miki 2011

### ★ Surface Paradise DS 10m 23 3P

Up seam right of Head Injuries and up arete to join Surface Paradise. A few weird moves to a sloping ledge above the 3rd Ubolt. The fin on the left side of the ledge is on. Stay on the right side of the arete above to join SP at the break..

miki 2011

### ★★ The Dynamic Duo 18m 21 ▽

Start 2m R of HI, just left of a wide crack. Head left up the flake and onto the steep wall. There 'may' be some bridging in the corner but can be done without at 23.

Kent Heffernan 1989

### ★ Jaded Cravings 16m 23 ▽

Start 3m R of HI, in wide crack. Up the EZ arete. Gather your thoughts in a small cave, then bounce on to the wall and up

David Barnes 1990

### ★★★ Anticoagulant 15m 23 ▽

Up corner 15m R of HI (confusingly marked SSS) to cave then left and continue up leaning crack bulge and on to top. Weird, funky fun.

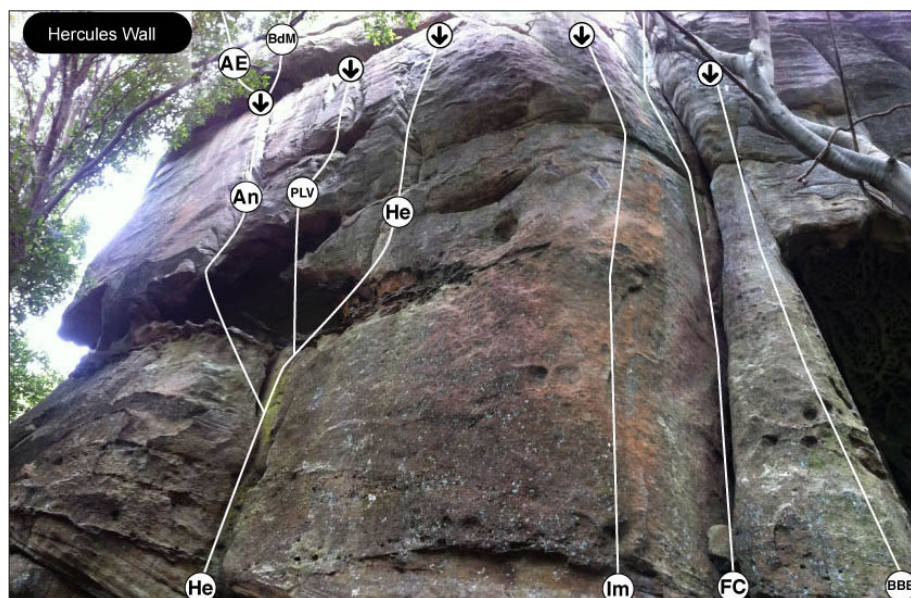
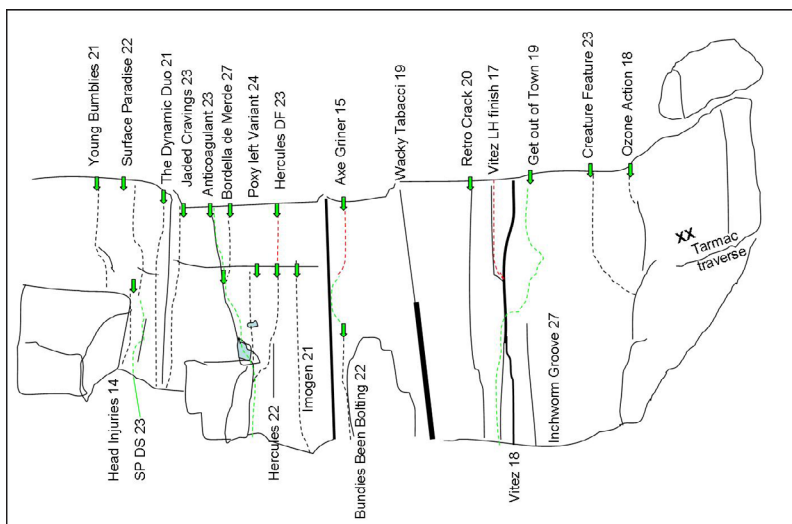
Graham Fairbairn 1989 to bulge (which is probably the crux), Extension to top by miki 1990

### ★★ Bordella de Merde 8m 27 ▽

The 3 RB's to double RB lower off above Anticoagulant, a great line, the pinch out right is on (rebolted 2008)

Mike Law 1991





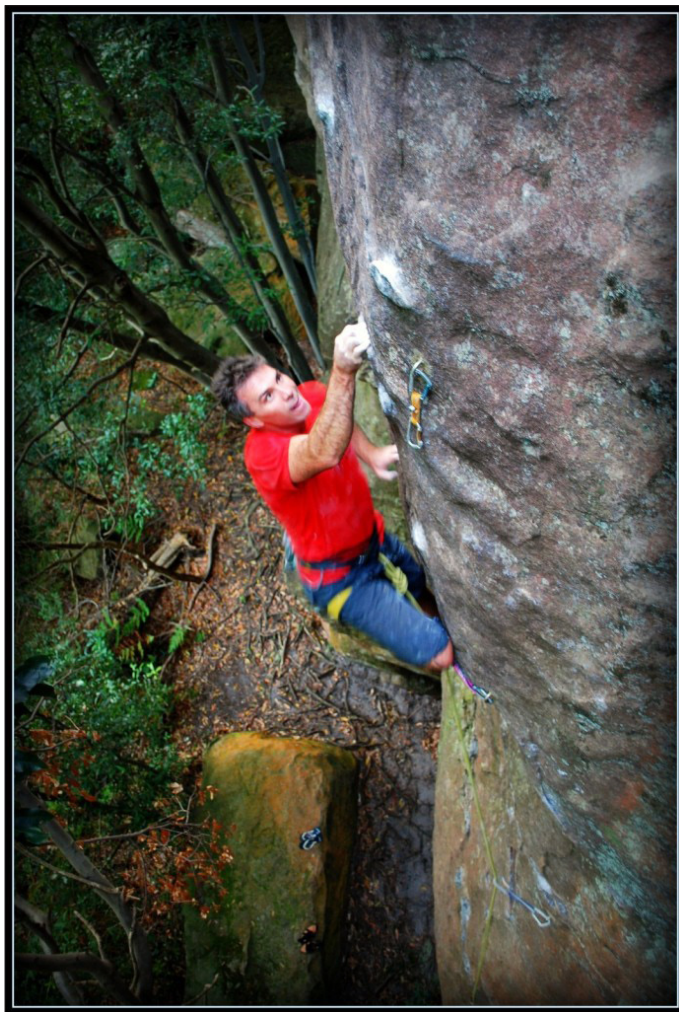
★ **Project miki poxy Left Variant 15m 4p**  
Start up corner as for Anticoagulant and Hercules then up through caves to tenuous finish on line of bolts a meter left of Hercules.

★★ **Hercules 15m 22 5p**  
Originally started as for Imogen, but extra bolts in that means most people missed the crux by bridging up groove and stepping left. Easier to start as for Anticoagulant in easy corner (with initials SSS for some reason!). Up, then step right and up line of bolts.

*Kent Heffernan 1989*

★★★ **Hercules Direct Finish 25m 23 p**  
From the top of Hercules, blast up the arete past hard move to slabby finish to lower off (rebolted 2008)

*Mike Law 1990*



Fat Bear on the FA of the classic Imogen. Pic by Doddy.

### ★★ Imogen 15m 22 ▸

Start just left of Cathedral Cave. Straight up blunt arete. Way cool rock climbing.

*Jason Lammers Nov 2008*

### Fat Crack 30 ?

Wide squeeze chimney corner crack which may or may not have been climbed. Thrutchy!

### Axe Grinder 8m 15 ▸

Probably a bit of a pain to get to. Rap in from trees on top of cliff to hanging belay off rings and old carrots. 3 RB to Double RB lower off. Nice and airy up there.

*David Barnes 1989-09*

### ★ Bundy's Been Boltin' 15m 20 ▸

Start just left of the Cathedral cave. Only 20 to the first lower off. The one move extension to the second lower-offs is 22. From here you can get into the wide crack and thrutch up then go right to join Axe Grinder at 23 (Cameron Taylor, The Shute).

*Jason Lammers 2007*

The large chossy cave located just here is called  
The Cathedral, and gives the crag its name.

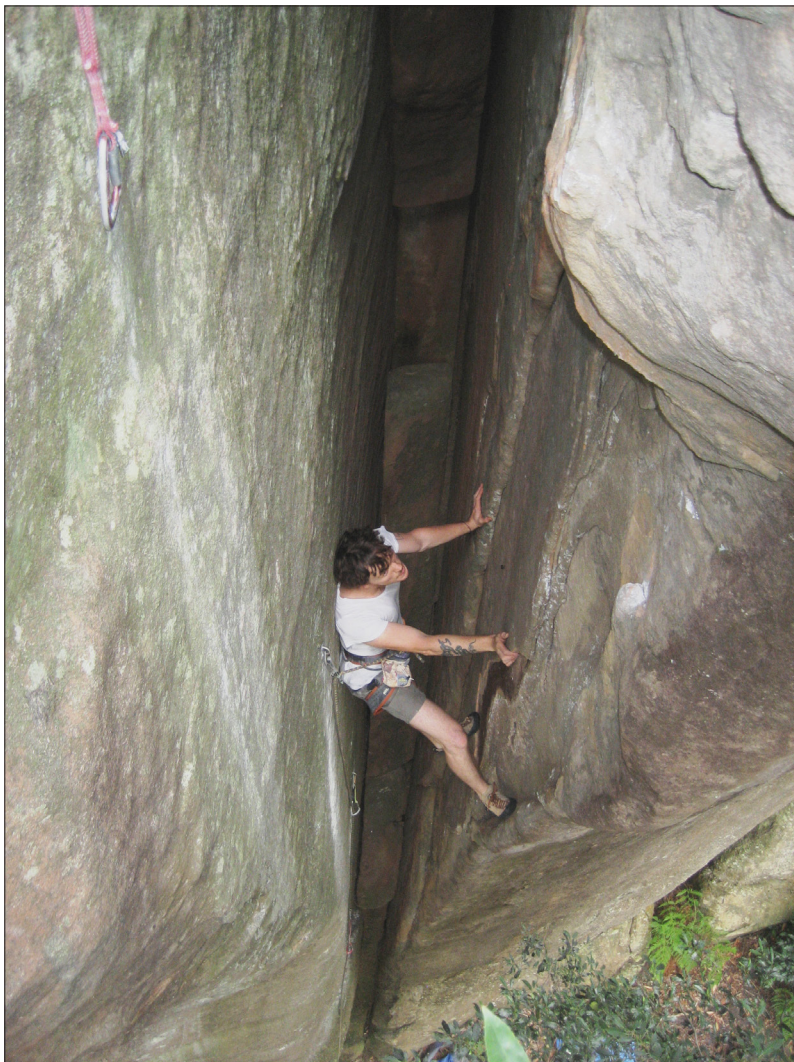
### ★★★ Wacky Tabacci 25m 19 ▸

If you like this sort of thing, this is the sort of thing you'll like. A classic with exposed climbing on good holds with 'sporting' pro, but there are a few chimney moves so long pants recommended. The obvious chimney to the right of The Cathedral cave. Hardest

getting to and past the 2nd Ubolt (you can use a medium cam for courage, but remember that you can't fall out of these things). Easiest to face right and use

the good holds on the right arete. After the roof step out onto the left arete past a slightly hidden Ubolt to lower off.

*Graham Fairbairn 1989*



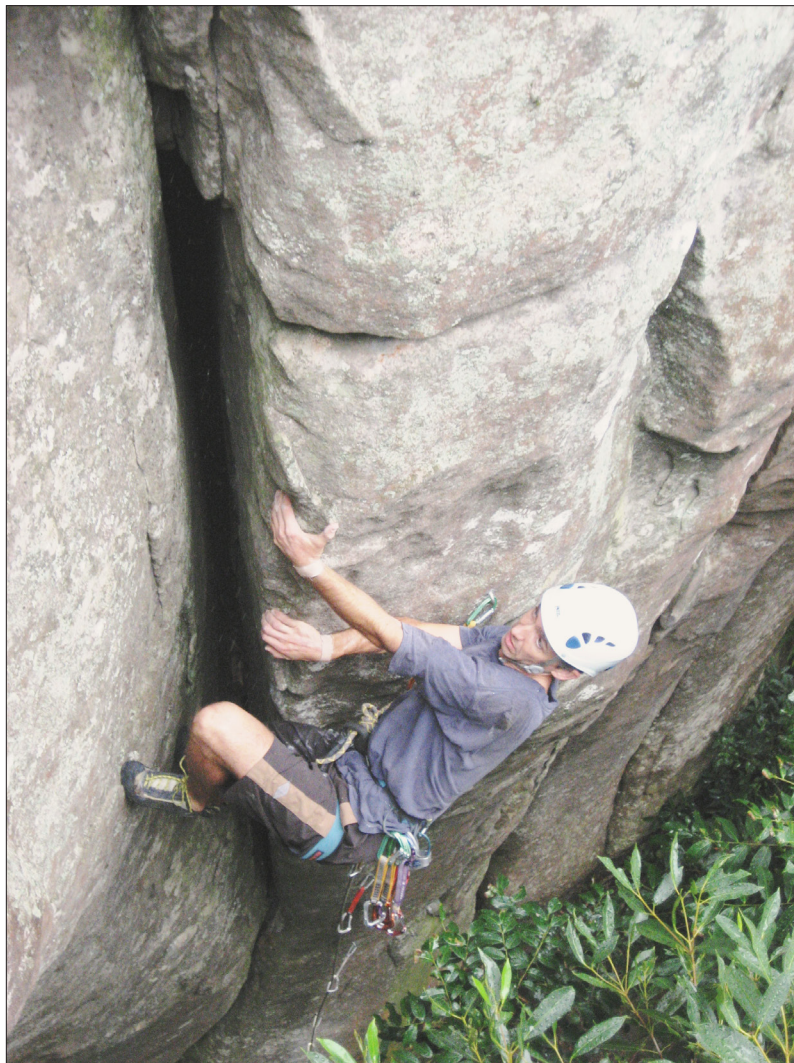
Nathan on Wacki tabacci, one of the old bolts is seen between his hands.

### ★★ Retro Crack 25m 20 ▷

The bolted crack line 1.5m left of Get Out of Town. Mostly laybacking and climbing the left arete, but a jamb or two may be needed. Could easily be lead on large natural gear if you don't like Ubolts. The top half had previously been bolted (and probably traversed in from one the cracks on the right)

*FRA Miki 2011, but may have been done before on trad.*





Rob Hodyl demonstrating how to climb wide cracks in the rain on Retro Crack

The following two climbs cross each other at the pea pod at half height. A good variant is to start up V, step left to GOoT at about 5m and then follow it to the top.

**★★ Get Out of Town 25m 20**

Start on face 1m left of V. Hard off the ground to RB, and trad up to pea pod. Move right and clip Ubolt and chain on IG then right again to join line of RBs (about 2m R of crack) to lower off.

*Kent Heffernan 1989*

**★★ Vitez 25m 18**

Start: Below the obvious recessed corner crack.

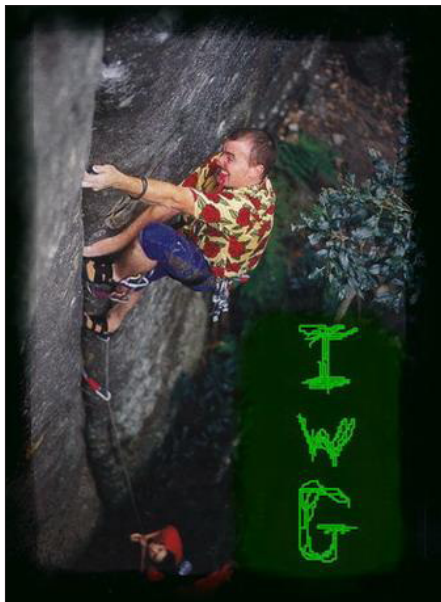
Follow crack up and over a bulge to the pea pod. Up this and follow the crack to the top past some carrots.

*P. Farkas 1989*

**★ Vitez LH finish 25m 17**

Step left onto flake above peapod and past 2 ring bolts to top

*unknown*



Mike Law on Inchworm Groove.

## ★ Inchworm Groove 10m 27

The hardest trad line in The Shire/Sydney/NSW maybe. Start below the thin seam, tenuous come desperate moves up the groove to lower off chain at half height or on to top. .

Mike Law 1990

## ★★★ Ozone Action 20m 18

Sydney Classic trad route at the grade! Hard weird start. Take a few cams and slings Start: Below the obvious water groove / flake feature. Follow the flake line / water groove past a two RBs, sling the spike (maybe hang some gear off it to keep it on) and throw in a cam, then either right up jugs for a few moves then back left, or straight up the flake. Cams then up flake and top wall (BR) to lower-offs or top out

Graham Fairbairn 1989

## ★★★ Creature Feature 22m 23

Great moves on the top wll. Almost a sport climb if you sling the big jug above the second bolt on OA. As for OA for 10m (past 2 RBs and a sling runner). Then move left past hidden RB and up the thin slab past lefthand line of bolts to lower off. Don't stray into project on right.

Graham Fairbairn 1989

## Project

Between the upper section of OA and CF

## ★★ Jack and the Beanstalk 8m 14

Start: Left of GW at tree.

Up, using the suffering tree to start. 2 Ubolts and cam. Finish up one of the upper routes

Christina Fairbairn 1989

The next climb used to finish at the Tarmac Traverse. The tree that used to be climbed to gain the rock has now gone.

## Guerrilla Warfare 8m 14? 2p

Start: Directly below CQ.

Start used to involve the tree, but it's been massacred, so the grade is probably much higher now. 2 BRs.

Kent Heffernan 1989

## Ghostrider 8 23

The short hard little problem under NN. Hard start to pocket then crimp your way to the chain under NN. Probably easier if your fall.

Jason Lammers 2006

The following 5 routes all start from the Tarmac Traverse - the obvious low angle slab leading left across the middle of the wall to a belay / rap chain (clip the first bolt on CC as a runner). If it is crowded you could also belay from the ground below the intended route. The following four routes have new lower-offs, please use your own carabiners if top-roping to save wear and tear on the bolts.

## Aero Arete 8m 13

Just right of arete. Up, using pro to the left (as for the top of OA) or clip the bolts on ST.

Steve Turcsanyi 1989

## ★ Suicidal Tendencies 8m 16 3p

Next route left. 3 Ubolts to lower off.

Graham Fairbairn 1989

## ★ Cathedral Quack 8m 16 3p

Next line to the left. Up (3 Ubolts) to lower off shared with ST. Named for a group of ducks that used to frequent the crag.

Kent Heffernan 1989

## ★ Neuron Nerd 8m 16 3p

Step right from the chains and up.

Graham Fairbairn 1989

## ★ Cosmic Cruncher 8m 16 4p

The right most line. Ubolts to lower off (shared with NN).

Kent Heffernan 1989

## Shoot That Dog 10m 14

The chimney. Looks hard

Kent Heffernan 1989

## ★★ Mushroom Mantle 12m 20 3p

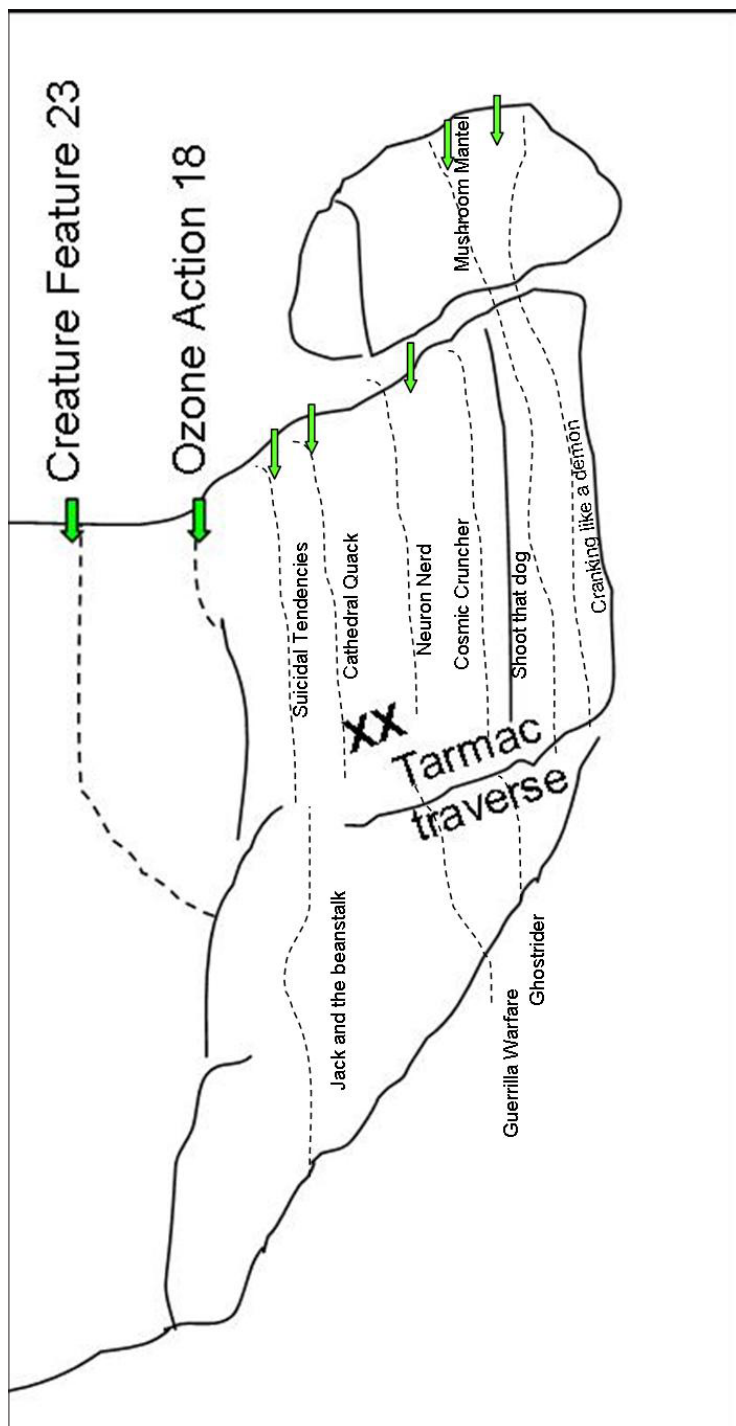
Start below flake. Up the flake with a bizarre mantle near the top. 4 Ubolts and lower-off.

Graham Fairbairn 1989

## ★ Cranking Like a Demon 12m 24 3p

Start left of descent chimney. Up slab and bulge (4 Ubolts) to lower off.

Mike Law 1990



## ► Right Hand Slabs

Extending away to the right of the main wall are a series of smooth slabs. You can walk across from the main wall, or veer off right from the open grassy area further down the hill.

Climbs described left to right, facing the cliff.

### ★★ Isis 12m 23 ▸

Start: 25m right of the main wall, Up seam to lower off. Powerful moves

*Mike Law 1990*

### ★★★ Glacis 18m 28

Start: 3m right of Isis.

Sustained and desperate climbing up the twin cracks. 5 BRs.

*Mike Law 1990*

### Moss Ghyll Grooves 10m 24

Start: Below cracks at left edge of steep wall, 20m right of G.

Up the cracks (BR). Looks easy, but looks can be deceiving...

*Mike Law 1990*

### Take me to the Tropics 11m 25

A bit contrived, up MGG then move right to double RBs

*Cam Taylor 2008*

### ★★ In the Groove 15m 25 ▸

Start: Right of MGG.

Up the slab (5 BRs).

*Mike Law 1990*

### Legless 20m 23

Start: 10m right of ITG.

Hard start, traverse right to corner then straight up seam. 3 BRs and natural protection.

*Mike Law 1991-12*

The following two unrecorded routes look hard.

### A 20m ??

The left hand route.

### B 20m 23?

Right of A.

Up (FH and 5 BRs).

A creek tumbles down the hill just here.

### ★★ Spite 15m 25

Start: Just right of the creek.

A desperate slab test piece. 3 BRs.

*Mike Law 1990*

### Mr Squiggle 10m 20

Start: 8m right of the creek.

Up the delicate groove, passing 2 BRs.

*Mike Law 1990*

### ★★ Ms Pat 10m 18 ▸

Start: 4m right of MS.

Up the delicate slab, passing 3 BRs.

*Mike Law 1990*

### Wire Brush and Dettol 18m 18

Start: At obvious block about 40m right of MP

Layback up block then up the left side of the arete above.

### Tourniquet 16m 16

Start: 4m right of WBaD.

Offwidth with BR down low.