Wazzap! It’s Eager Tom! First post!

Ok, so I’ve been a keen climber most of my life, definitely since I was 14, and I’ve loved getting more adventurous with my trips ever since, but since starting my PhD I’ve found that I’ve had a lot less time to commit to it. During the year I spent living in Reading there was no rock around, but I’ve been disappointed with myself for not getting climbing since being back in Bristol.

That disappointment disappeared recently when a few friends who’ve been getting into the sport started to climb with me outdoors. I’ve been really enjoying their enthusiasm and it’s great to be able to organise trips with lots of great company again.

The first of these trips was organised for last weekend, and its write-up is the subject of this post:

Seven of us in all set off for Portland for a few days this weekend, and our times on the almost-island all overlapped one another. First to arrive were the boys from Sheffield, who got there a good day ahead of the rest of us. I’m led to believe they had a nice night in a YHA campsite, and spent the rest of their time peeking around the peninsula and tentatively climbing.

Obviously the most gnarly stuff got done when I turned up though! (Complete lie – Dan had me beat the entire weekend and did his hardest climb before I even arrived.) Greg and I had been at a birthday party the previous night, so it took us a while to get there, but when we finally turned up the weather was glorious, and we went straight to the Cuttings (after meeting up with Neda and the Chuntinator at Tesco’s\*).

The Cuttings is an easy crag on the east coast of Portland. It catches morning sun, so it was pretty cool while we were there – still not at all un unpleasant temperature though! The first casualty was early on – Neda took a super gnarly lead fall and had to be lifted out at the end of the day, but the show went on with her cheering enthusiastically from her blanket on the ground. Aside from that, everyone did a bit of leading and we even encountered some proto-wildlife (which turned out to be baby pigeons) halfway up one of the walls.

The rest of us joined Chris, Elliot and Dan at the campsite for the evening. Everyone had dinner (some more grim than others), and a game of Catan and a few beers tided us over until bedtime. The next day we got up bright and early, broke camp and, after leaving Neds to a well-earned coffee on the coast, headed to the west of Portland to climb at Blacknor. This fantastic set of crags spans the whole coastline, but some of our best climbs of the day were done down at the beach, about a hundred meters down the hill, on the Broken Slab, which provided stunning views atop pleasant climbs.

The Chris’s, Elliot and Neda had to head to their respective homes at about 3 o’clock, but Dan, Greg and I were able to nip further along the coast for some dope-ass flowstone before wrapping up in time to find fish & chips, a pint and a beautiful wild camping spot.

For our final day on Portland the last men standing went to \_\_ in pursuit of a few more easy routes for Greg to have a go at. After a delicate slab lead we stepped it up a notch, and our boy rose like a champion to tackle the dizzying heights of 5+ (pretty sweet for a newbie). Dan and I got some inspiring lines ticked too.

In the mid-afternoon we packed up and split the spit. Dropping Dan in Dorset, I escorted Greg to Reading station, where I bid him adieu as he boarded his train to graduation. As far as I’m aware fun was had by all (although we were all sorry about Neda’s tumble), and I’m massively looking forward to the next trip, with as many new keenos as can make it!

\*product placement sponsorship too hopeful?