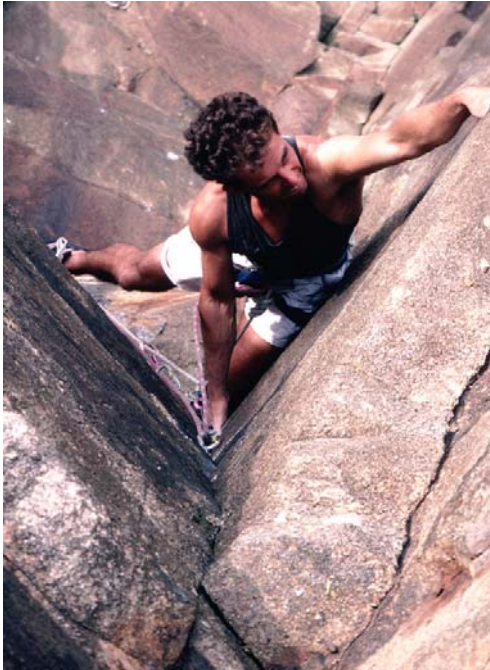


Cornish Gold

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Topo guide to climbs at Bashers Harbour. Lizard Peninsula Cornwall.



Mark Edwards on Pipe-line.

Bashers Harbour , not a name to set the pulse racing for Cornish climbing, although this hidden gem did have a number of unsung jewels . It is now a treasure chest full of Cornish Gold with routes equal to any of the leading areas in West Penwith . If you can image Carn Barra , but with longer routes , more of them and rock which is its equal, although sometimes worse, then you get some idea of the quality of climbing to be found in this new re-discovered Cornish Gem. Although Mark and I , with friend William Perrin, started climbing there as early as 1996/7 we made a decision not to publish our routes at that time due to our concerns for the climbing environment in this unspoiled area, more on this later. Basher's Harbour, has some superb routes on it with many three star ones. The rock is rough granite made up of small crystals which allows hard routes to be done without stripping the skin from your fingers which West Penwith granite usually does. Although most of the climbs are in the upper E grades there are sufficiently lower grade climbs to make it worth a

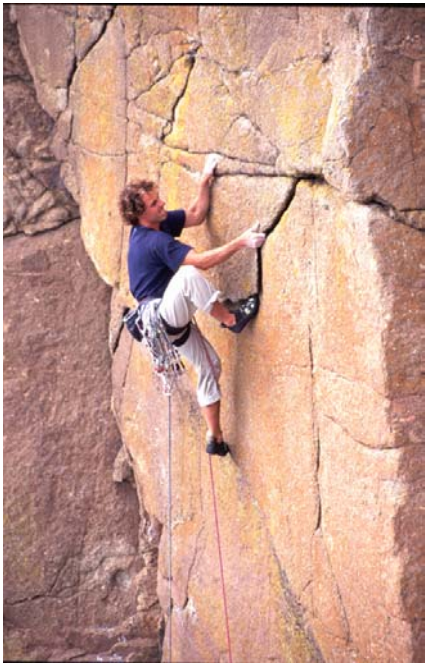
visit by middle grade climbers. Access is easy, only a short walk from your car, which will make it one of the more popular areas to climb.

Access and approaches.

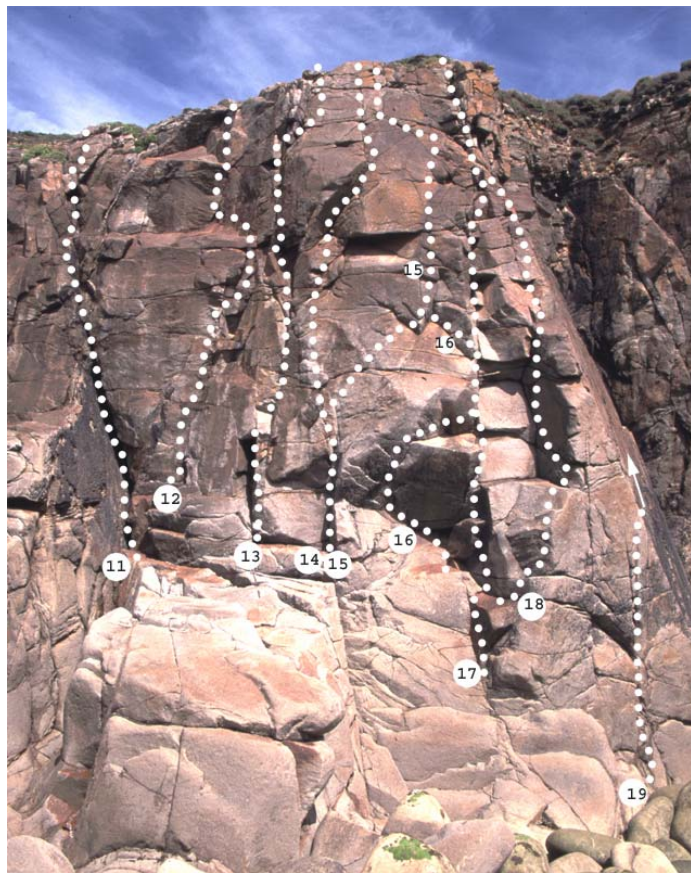
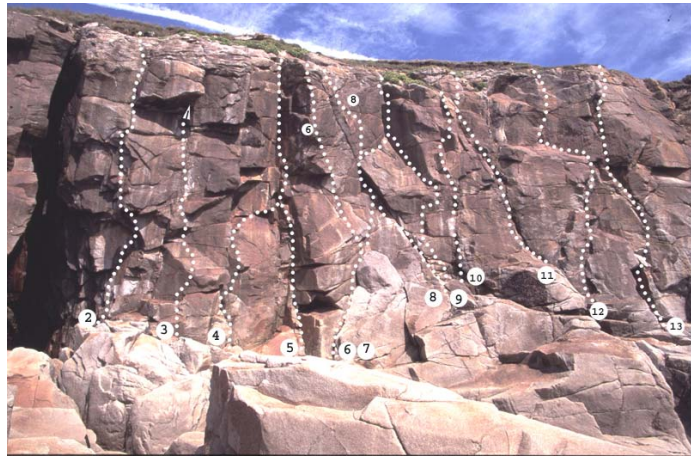
Bashers is a tidal crag and care should always be taken in getting to know what the tide is doing. On days when there are large swells extra care needs to be taken as the tide gets near to the base of the cliff. Even so there are a number of areas which can be reached on most high tides (so long as it is not rough). These are accessed by abseiling from one of the steel stakes embedded in the top of the crag (more on this later). Although a walk and down imbing can be used the most satisfactory method will be to abseil to the base of the cliff. Once you have reached the base of the cliff you need to identify at least one of the buttresses to get you barings. The Most obvious feature on the left (north end) of the cliff is the deep cave crack to the left of which are a number of short climbs .All these routes are in the CC guide. A number of hard short routes have also been done here, really boulder problems, and are not included in this article.

The routes

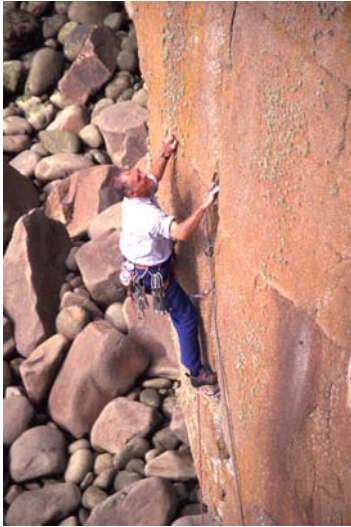
As most of the important climbing starts to the right of the cave that's where I will begin. Just to the right of the big cave the rock really starts to become steep and overhanging with a completely different feel to the climbing. The first route here is, **2. Fire in the Souls.***** **E7 6b.**(M and R Edwards 1997) A fierce double overhang with some quite intricate and



Mark Edwards on Better Days



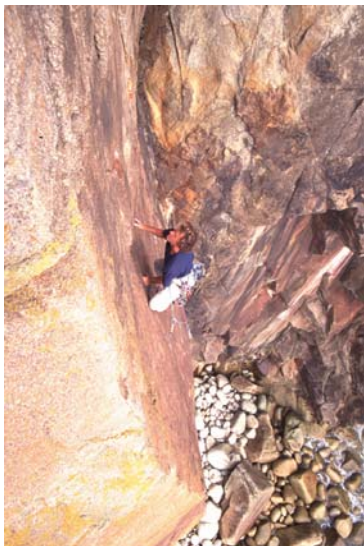
strenuous moves. Right of this is **3. Hawks Crack****. **E4 6a (R & M Edwards & J Perrin 1996)** a more relenting, although still quite bold climb. Right again is one of the more obvious features of the crag, and one to get your bearing from, this is the steep corner of **4. Pipe-Line***** **50ft E5 6b(M & R Edwards & J Perrin 1996)**. This was one of our first exploratory climbs here which opened our eyes to the potential of the crag Pipe-line looks quite innocuous from below but don't be fooled. A direct start to Pipe-Line is **5. Chicken Run*****. **E6 6b/c(M & R Edwards 2000)**. which if combined with the upper groove is quite some challenge. To the right is the steep overhanging arete of **6. Spanish Raid *** E6 6b(M & R Edwards / J Perrin 1996)** another strong and bold route. On the right again is the old route of **7. The Flake VS 4c (1987)**. Route number **8. The Long Stretch E4 5b/c(R Edwards 1997)** takes a rather wondering line up the same area but with some very bold climbing at its top. A little less bold is **9. Zig Zag E3 6a.(R & M Edwards 1997)** and at a more reasonable grade is **10. Two Way Stretch** E2 5b (R & M Edwards 1997)** a good route get to know the rock and style of protection. Just to its right is the obvious slanting fault of **11. Black Crack. Severe 4b. (1986)** this route is a good land mark for identifying where you are and an escape from this platform.. The climbs now start to steepen up again and to the right is **12. Gego****. **E2 5c (R & M Edwards/J Perrin 1996)**. another 'getting to know you' type of



*Rowland Edwards
Climbing Fireblade*

route. Just to the right of this is the superb 13. **Deception *** 60ft E3/4 5c (R & M Edwards/ J Perrin 1996)**. And to the right again is 14. **Lotus Eater*** E3/4 6a(R & M Edwards 1997)**. Starting as for Lotus Eater but ascending rightwards onto more slabby climbing is 15. **Quartz Dancer** E3/4 6a. (R & M Edwards 1997)** Just to the right again is a square ledge which gives the hard moves to 16. **Raptor* E3. 6a(M & R Edwards)**, getting onto this ledge takes some effort. At a more reasonable grade is (17) **The Endeavour E2 5b**(R& M Edwards 2000)**. which climbs the steep corner and slabs on the left of the arete. Another of the older routes takes the arete to the right (18) **South Without Scott* HVS 5a (1982)**. Just to the right the rock starts to get steeper again with an obvious crack running up the centre of a steep wall, this is (19) **In The Fast Lane** 100ft E3 5c (R Edwards 1997)**. The routes up to now have been between 50

and 80 ft but the crag now starts to get bigger and with a lot more atmosphere to it.(20) **Foot Loose ** VS 4c (1982)** takes a line diagonally up the centre of the slab and (21)**Knights Move Severe 4b(R Edwards Esther Edwards, 2000)** (a good escape route) takes the rock on the right with a traverse left at the top. The next route start on the far side of the buttress below, and just to the left, of some fabulous slabs and grooves. Starting up a short groove in the front of the buttress is (22) **Fancy Free**E2 5c (1986)** A direct start (22a) takes the groove on the right at the same grade (M&R Edwards 1996) Another old route starts on the left edge of slab(23) **Double or Quits *** E3 6a (1986)**. Starting with the same start is (24) **California Dreaming***E2 5b (R & M Edwards 2000)** but takes both of the grooves in their entirety . A more spectacular finish to the previous route is (25) **Better Days*** E2 5b (M &R Edwards 2000)** . (26) **One Two Zero *** E3 ,4b,5c** (the combined years of the first ascensionists) (R Edwards, B Birch 2000). is a two pitch route with some incredible slab climb on the top pitch. (27) **Agamemnon*** E3/4 6a. 5b/c (R&M Edwards 2000)** is



Mark On One Two Zero

another superb slab route with a strenuous start .We now start to go into over-drive with the next buttress across the bay. The most obvious feature here is the steep, and usually wet, perfect corner of (28) **Lion Heart** 40ft E2. 5b (M & R Edwards 2000)**. Start this climb late in the day to allow it to dry out. This route has a peg lower off at the belay and is also the start for (29) **Whispering Gallery* E6/7 6b/b (M & R Edwards 2000)** exciting climbing for both leader and second with rock which at times is suspect. Just to the right is a faint vertical crack taken by (30) **Porrizo *** 120ft E7 6b/c (M Edwards 2000)**. A very powerful line which is at the moment the hardest route at Bashers. Around to the right is (31)**Catch a Falling Star * E4 6b (1989)** and starting in the same place, but breaking out right low down, is (32) **The Crunch* E5 6a (1989)** which still need a lot of repeats to make it solid. We now start to get some confusion with the older routes as one climb, a previous route called



Pennies from Heaven E3 6b (1989), should climb rock in this area (described the CC guide) but we could fit anything to the description. **(33) Cake-walk ** 80ft E3. 6a.** starts as Pennies From Heaven (as mentioned in the CC guide) but takes a completely different line. We now get back to sanity with **(35) Fireblade*** E3 5c** (R Edwards 2000) and **(36) Uphill Racer 80ft E2/3 5c** (R Edwards. I Blake. E Dozenkal 2000) both of which are excellent route to start with. A bit less steep is **(37) St1100 E2/3 b/c.** (R & E Edwards 1996) The next two



climbs are quite loose (crunchy) at the moment but should clean up in time. **(38) Gold Star Crack E2 5b** (R Edwards1996) takes the left side of the pillar and **(39) The Arrow E2 5b/c** (R Edwards1996) takes the right side. Both routes ending up on the steep wall at the top. The rock now gets better but still crunchy on the top .**(40) Happy Banger** E1 5b 4b** (1986) takes a stunning crack up the short wall but has an awful finish. To its right is **(41) The Eternal Triangle** E3/4 6a** (M & R Edwards 2000) a rather bold route on

solid but loose looking flakes and again with a rather loose finish . To finish the routes on this wall is **(40) Piledriver VS 4b. 4b.** (1986) and still quite loose.

Belays_

There are few ,if any , belays at the top of most routes . The policy of the local Club, CC and the BMC is that metal stakes should be used or to leave a rope in place as an abseil or belay. You can also make use of the old stone wall by threading a rope through it. Most of the Old stakes have now rusted away to leave very dangerous spikes hidden in the grass (beware sitting down or walking in bare feet) .Leaving ropes hanging over the edges also creates its own problems with erosion and to my way of thinking is no better than using a lower-off.

We have continued to follow the same policy and some of the stakes have been renewed with alloy or Stainless Steel ones.

Well that's the lot for now. I hope climbers visiting these climbs get as much fun out of them as we did. It is an astonishingly beautiful area, completely unspoiled, just as Carn Barra, Isis, St Loy and Trewavas Head once were when I first visited them. Unfortunately all those

crag soon suffered badly from erosion due to the lack of provisions to stop the destruction of parts of the cliff tops and descents. The removal of lichens and flowers by climbers, has on some cliffs made them vertical rock deserts. St Loy, being swept bare of most of its lichens. We have now got the Green Guide for Cornwall in which we are told we should avoid such areas. I think we should not touch them at all if at all possible. There is a way to avoid this and yet still allow climbing. Many climbers will know I have for many years advocated the use of lower offs to protect areas where climbers have to scrambling over cliff top vegetation. Such actions has reduced some crags to deserts. In the West Penwith area the idea has been rejected completely regardless of what damage was being done. It has even been rejected again in the latest CC guide to the area, even though it was proven to have protected one climb, Isis, from being stripped of its flowers etc. for eight years. For that period of time lower offs were in place and no damage was done to the top of the crag. Eventually, with the agreement of the BMC the bolts were chopped. The result was that most of the flowers and lichens were stripped from the crag and its summit. Climbers were advised to use a top rope or to abseil. Climbers going there to-day may think that it all looks so natural but I know what it once looked like. Ask any of the older climbers what Bosigran once looked like and you would be shocked in their reply. The lower off system of protecting the environment has in fact in many other parts of the UK been adopted by the BMC and has proven to do its job

Part of an E-mail I received from the BMC after asking for something to be done to protect bashers

The National Trust has never expressed any concerns about the ecological impact of climbing at Bashers Harbour (nor did they raise the issue at the West Penwith Env Liaison group meeting in April (2000 I presume) and I don't think we should be in the business of raising unnecessary concerns that could jeopardise accepted climbing ethics in the area.

I am sure many climbers will disagree with this way of doing things.. What I had proposed at Lands End in 1989 for Land's End, Isis, Carn Barra, St Loy and now for Bashers, is that something should be done BEFORE THE DAMAGE IS DONE, and not to wait until all the crags are stripped bare of their flowers etc. Surely it doesn't hurt us to try to prevent such damage. Do we have such arrogance to think that we can repair these areas back to what they once were before we used them? Put the flower back at Carn Barra when all the soil has now gone or replace all the lichens and flowers stripped from St Loy! There could be a real spin off for climbing if we could use lower offs intelligently. Areas which are too loose and vegetated at the top of the crag would be available to climb on. One visit to put the lower off in and from then on NO DAMAGE to the environment. We still have to take care of the approaches but at least one part of the countryside will not suffer the effects of our sport! There are hundreds of miles of sea cliffs swept clean by the sea, all awaiting to be climbed. We can not justify destroying the upper cliffs but with the intelligent use of lower-offs the lower areas could be available for a new generation of climbers.

Mark Edwards climbing Porrazo

