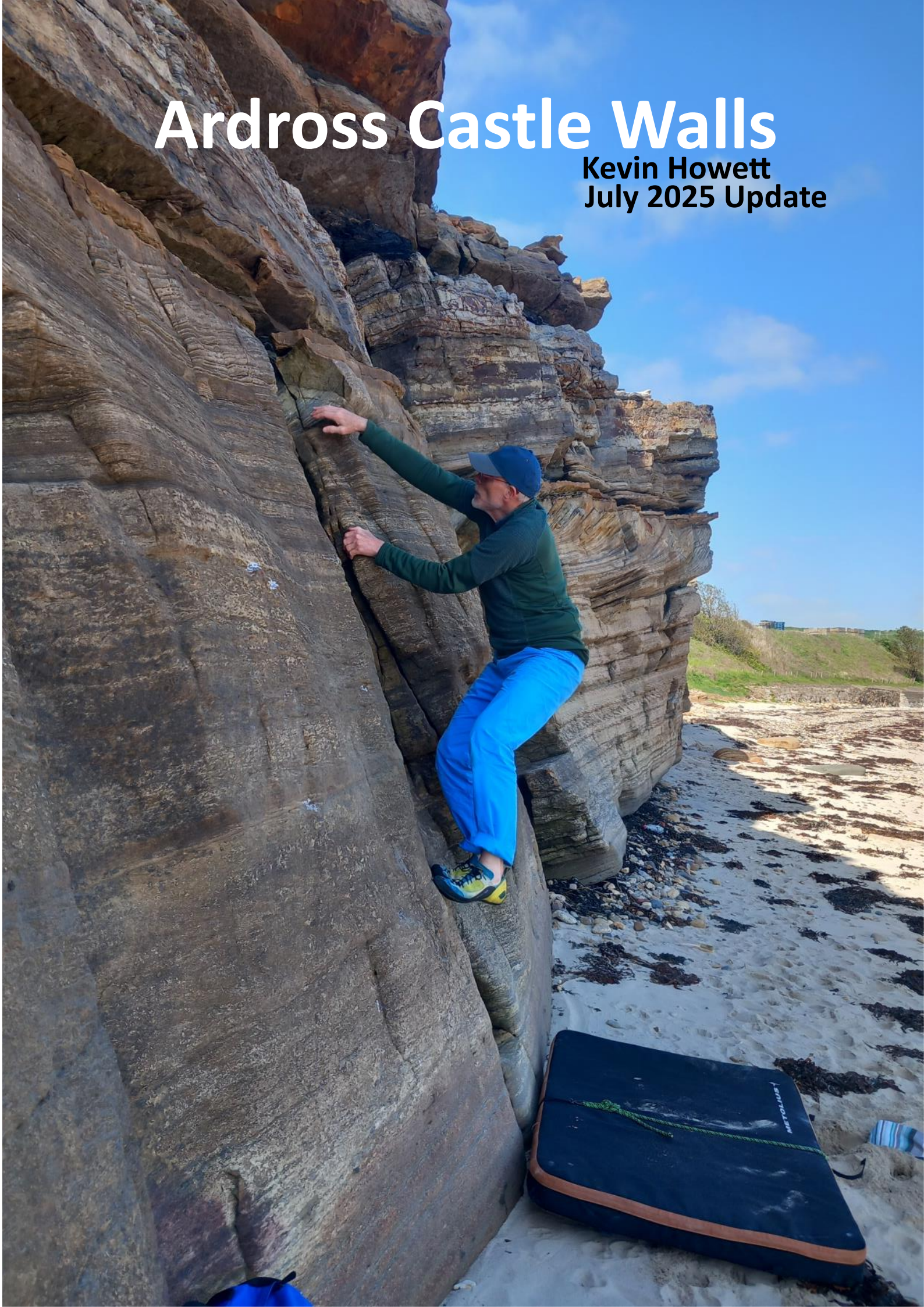
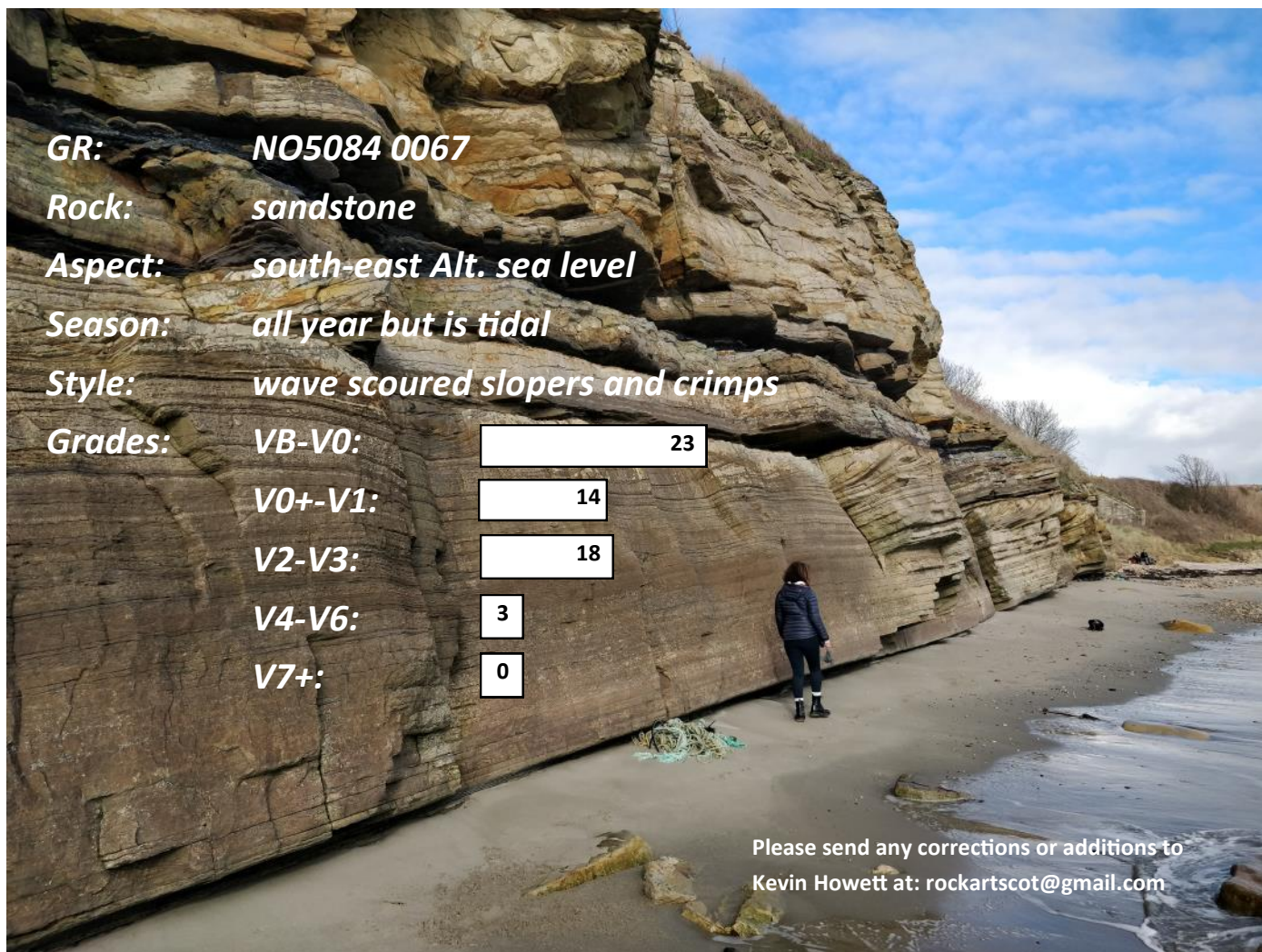


# Ardross Castle Walls

Kevin Howett  
July 2025 Update







# Ardross Castle Walls

## Introduction

Below the remains of Ardross Castle just 1km east along the coast from Elie, lies this excellent little sandstone venue.

The crag is about 75m long and although the upper half is soft and shattered, the lower 4m is washed by the sea for a few hours either side of high tides and is clean and sound.

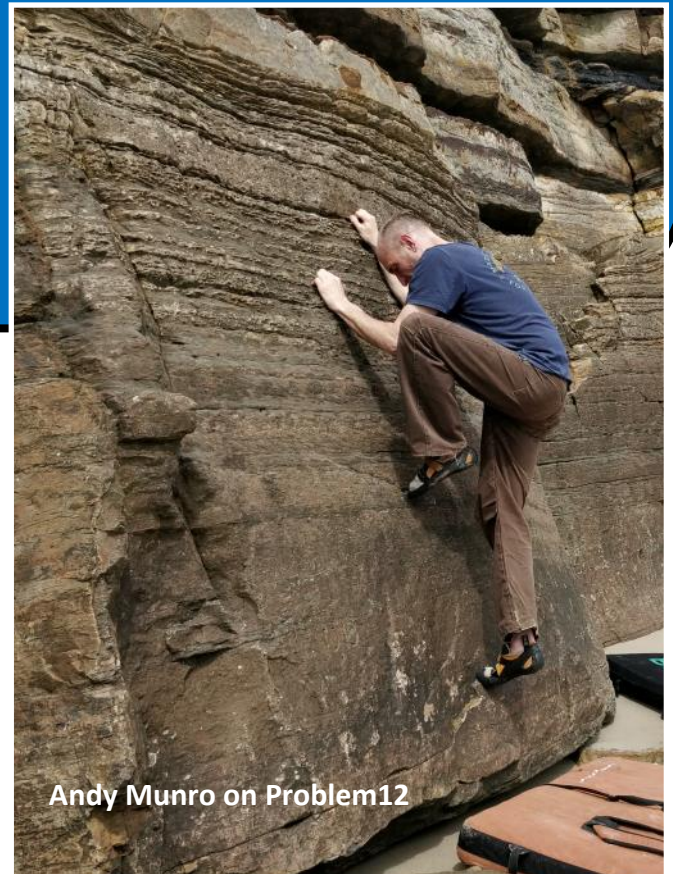
The only issue is that it gets soapy and loses grip when wet, so time a visit when it is dry (a little while after high tide) and with a good breeze blowing.

## Approach

There are several options. The crag lies pretty much halfway between Elie and St Monan's and is easily reached by the Fife Coastal Path. For a scenic approach, either park at the Wood Haven car park out of Elie near Elie Ness headland and follow the path eastwards (1.1km), or park at St Monans and take a slightly longer walk westwards along the path (1.5km). Both options lead to the farm of Ardross and the ruined castle. Below here lies a sandy beach backed by the crag.

A much quicker option is to park in a layby





between Ardross Cottages and Ardross Farm. Walk back to the cottages and take a track down and under the old railway line to the coastal path. Head east to the ruined castle. Or have a coffee in the Ardross Farm shop and then walk through the farm and down to the crag (50m).

The crag extends from just below the castle out to a small headland. The coast here consists of large areas of rock skerry's beyond the beach which are exposed at low tide. When the tide breaches the skerry, it comes in pretty fast, cutting off the left end of the crag first.

## Layout

When approaching from the path the crag presents a continuous wall increasing in height leftwards to its maximum above a collection of

boulders set in the sand. At the far left end are two separated 'boulders' which seem to have parted company from the crag and form the end of the point. A horizontal break extends the full length and above this the rock is rotten and loose. The problems mainly finish standing in this break.

The height of the sand under the wall varies after each tide making sit starts variable.



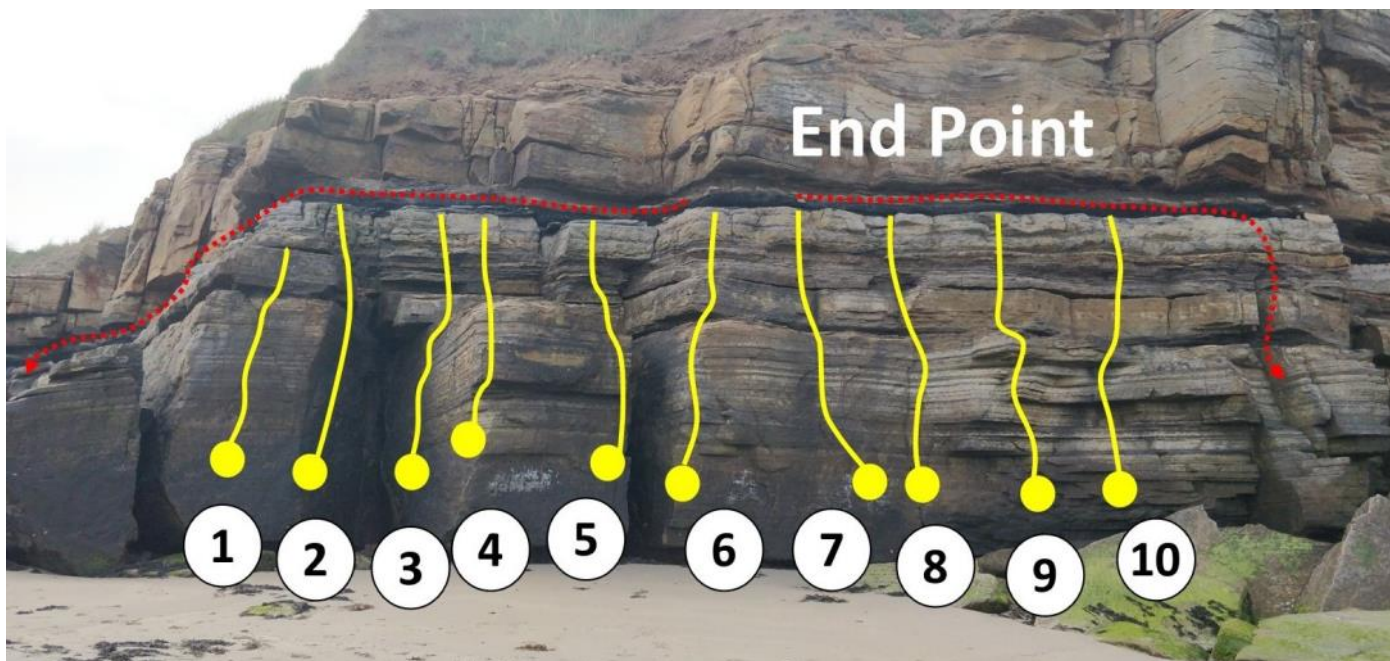
**End Point**

**Fallen Blocks**

**1913 Wal**



**End Point**



Rory Howett on FA of Problem1



Kevin Howett on FA of Problem6



## Prow'd Buttress

## Triple Slab

## The Long Crisp



### End Point

The very end of the crag is composed of two squared-off blocks which appeared to have separated from the main cliff face (they offer good arêtes) and a ledged vertical wall.

#### 1. Brute Enforcer V2 (6a)

Rory Howett 29 May 2024

SS the centre of the left block on low pockets and use both arêtes.

#### 2. High-status Dwelling V0- (4b)

Gordon Grant 17 May 2024

The right arête of the left block, climbing the inner wall on crunchie holds.

#### 3. Project V? (??)

???? ?? ??? ????

The thin vertical crack in the side wall of the right hand block.

#### 4. Muscles Up V2 (5c)

Rory Howett 29 May 2024

The left arête of the right block from a crouch start to the ledge above and a harsh mantle.

#### 5. Rough Wooing V1 (5b)

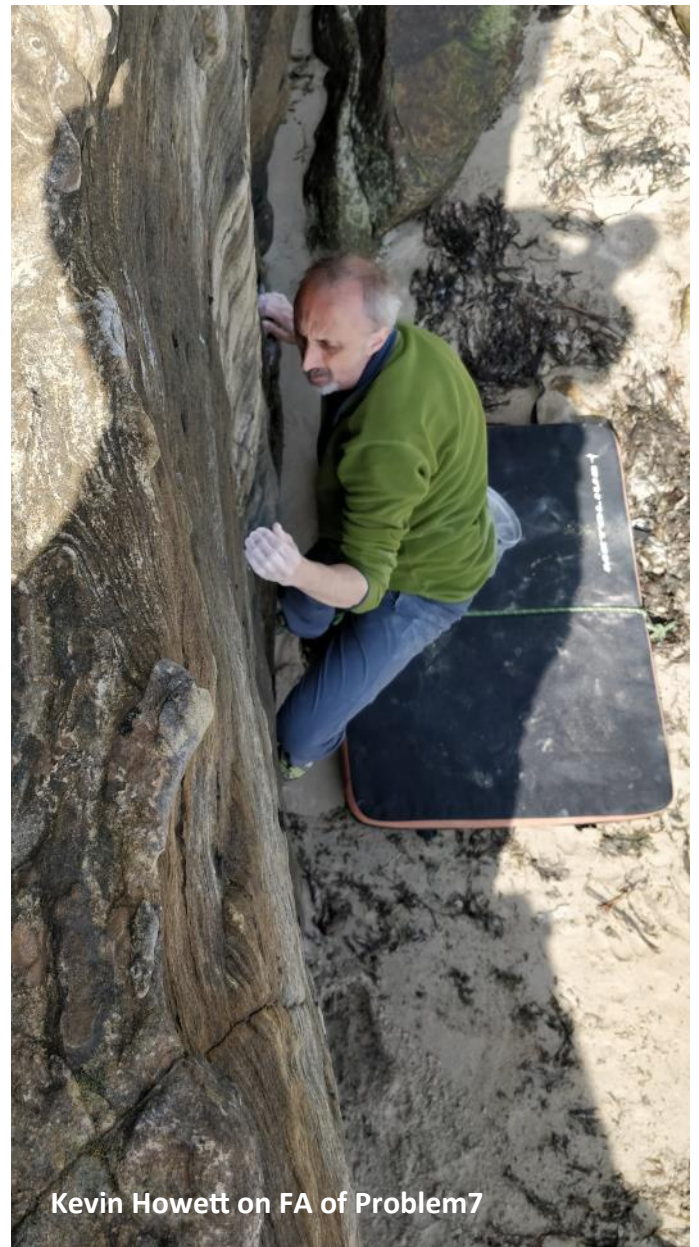
Kevin Howett 29 May 2024

The right arête of the right block from the obvious big hold low down.

#### 6. Royal Charter V2 (6a)

Kevin Howett 29 May 2024

The left arête of the wall from a SS on tiny crimp side-pulls left and right of the arête. Hard pull to good holds in the middle.



#### 7. Feeling Medieval V3 (6a)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024 / Louisa Kästner 31 August 2024 (after holds snapped)

SS the wall just left of the crack and reach up left to a boss (hard), followed by a hard move to gain the top.



## 8. A Coquette and a Beauty V0+ (5a)

Gordon Grant 17 May 2024

The excellent sharp flake crack from a SS.

## 9. Kissing the Gargoyle V0+ (5a)

Rory Howett 29 May 2024

SS below the slight prow and climb directly through it.

## 10. Ledge Route VB (3b)

Kevin Howett 21 May 2024

SS big flat holds up the ledges rightwards.

## Fallen Blocks

Between End Point and the 1913 wall, the face is set back with a jumble of very large boulders along the base which are testament to the unstable upper walls. This section is too low for problems.

There is scope to traverse the short slabby wall keeping off the top at all times.

## 1913 Wall

Directly below the highest part of the cliff (a loose jutting prow) is a large defined left-facing corner forming the boundary with Fallen Blocks. A long continuous wall extends right from here. The date '1913' is etched low down near the base of the cracked arete.

## 11. The 1913 arête VB (3a)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

The cracked arête of the corner.

## 12. 1913 and all That V0 (4b)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

The centre of the wall containing 1913.

## 13. Sand in your Spurs V0 (4b)

Andy Munro 10 May 2024

The right hand side of the wall containing 1913.

## 14. Dishinterested VB (3a)

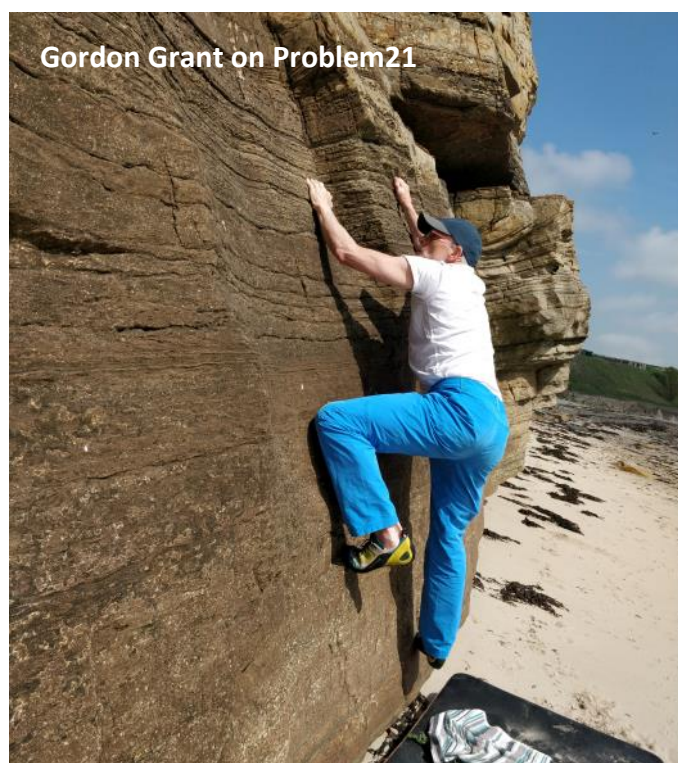
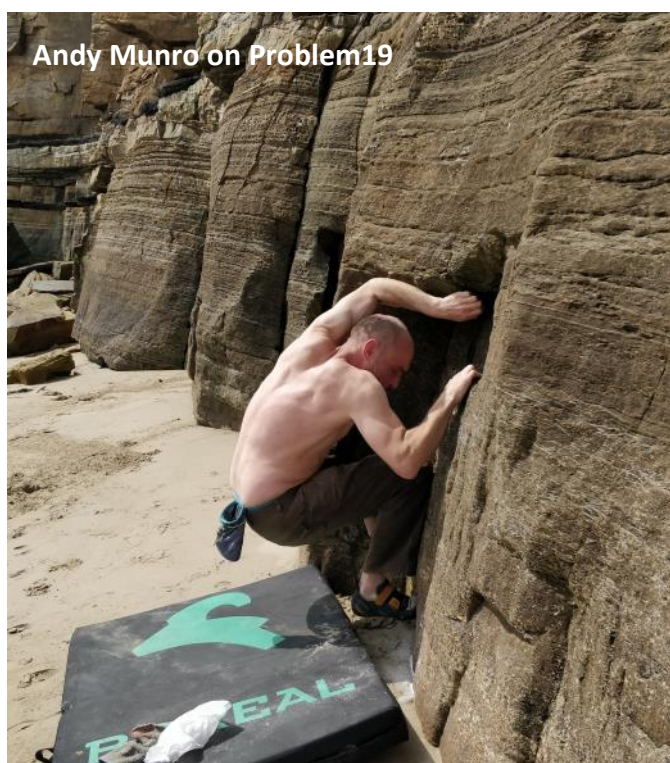
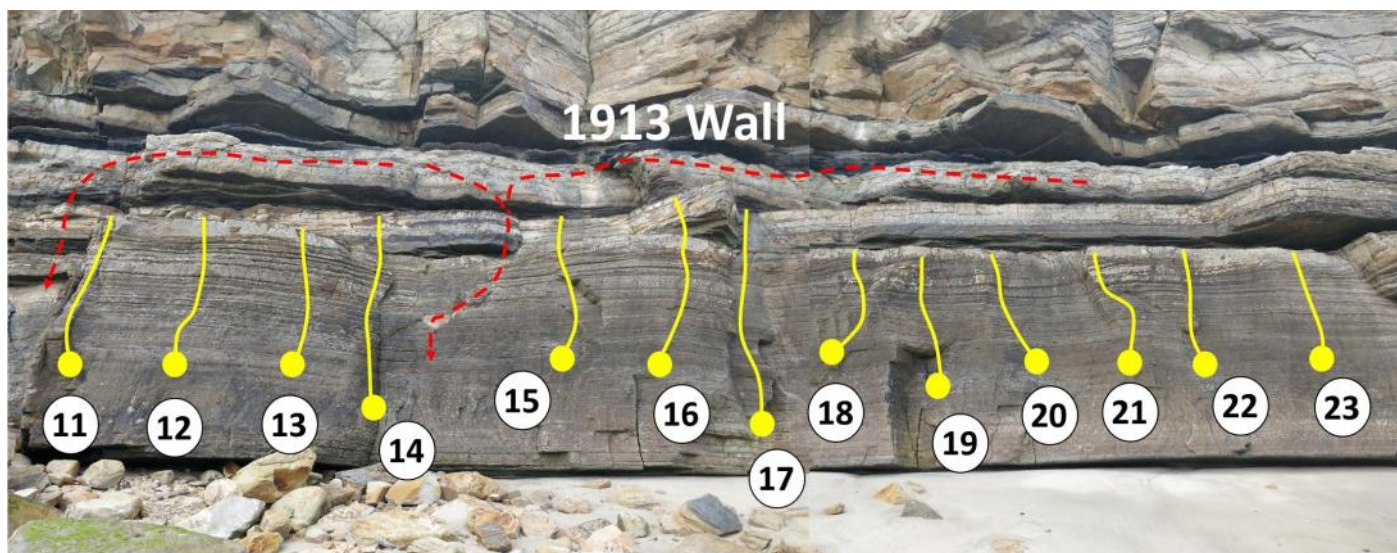
Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

The corner flake. Can be started sitting if the sand is low.

Immediately right of the corner is a stepped







rightwards staircase used as descent for the next section of wall if jumping off is detested.

#### **15. Kings Horse** V0 (4b)

Andy Munro 10 May 2024

Small twin hanging curved corners gained from directly below.

#### **16. The Kings Family Tree** V1 (5b)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

To the right, as the wall forms a barrel shape into a twin flake corner, are twin brown streaks. Gain them direct from the low corner/roof.

#### **17. Remains of the Dish** VB (3c)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

SS the easy large twin corner flakes.

#### **18. Silver Platter** VB (4a)

Andy Munro 10 May 2024

The slab to the right from standing.

#### **19. Bachillanus Seneschal** V2 (5c)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

SS below the capped corner. Make hard moves direct through the roof to gain crimps above.

#### **20. Unlikely Inheritance** VB (4a)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

A scoop leading onto a slight rib.

#### **21. Balistraria** V0 (4b)

Andy Munro 10 May 2024

A hanging corner utilising an obvious slot in the face on its right.



Andy Munro on Problem22



Kevin Howett on FA Problem25



## 22. The Younger V0+ (5a)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

A scoop to a protruding nose at half height.

## 23. The Sheriff of the Neuk V1 (5a)

Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

The centre of the blank looking section of the slab between the nose and the slanting corner.

## Prow'd Butress

Between the more slabby area of The 1913 Wall and the Tripple Slab is a steep projecting buttress that is undercut.

## 24. Barbican V2 (6a)

Andy Munro 10 May 2024

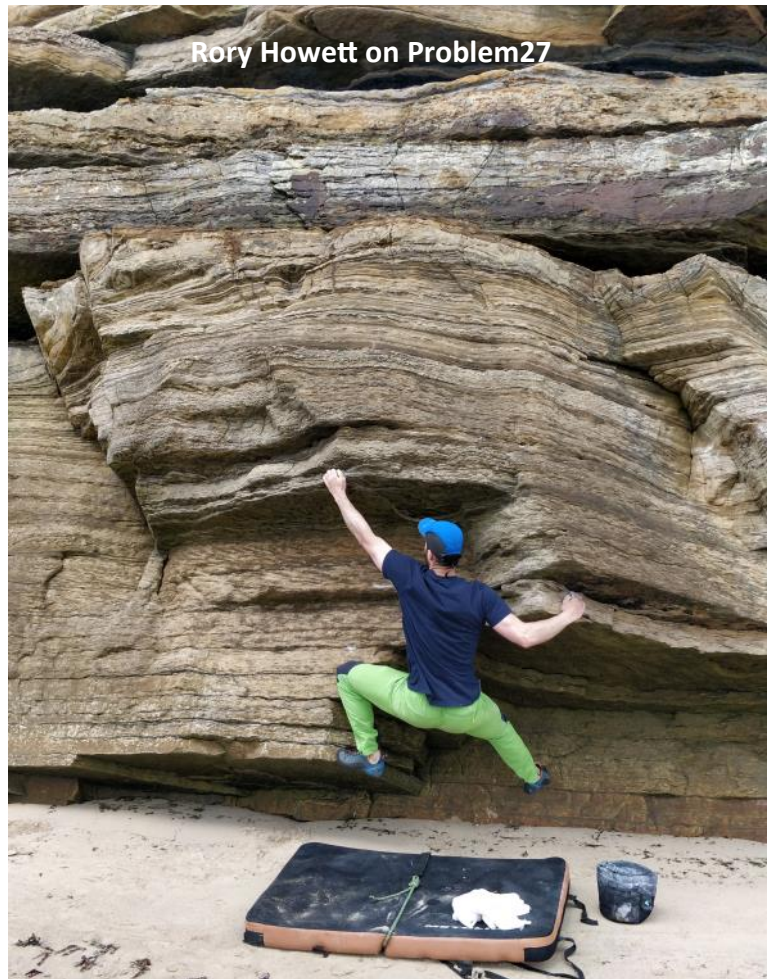
The left slanting corner from a contorted sit start. Hard for shorties (standing start is VB 3c)

## 25. High Status V0+ (5a)

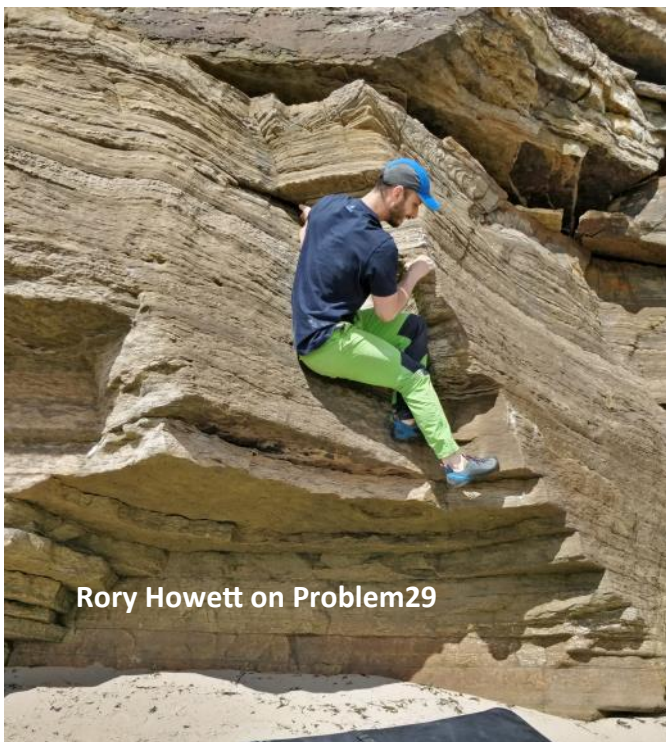
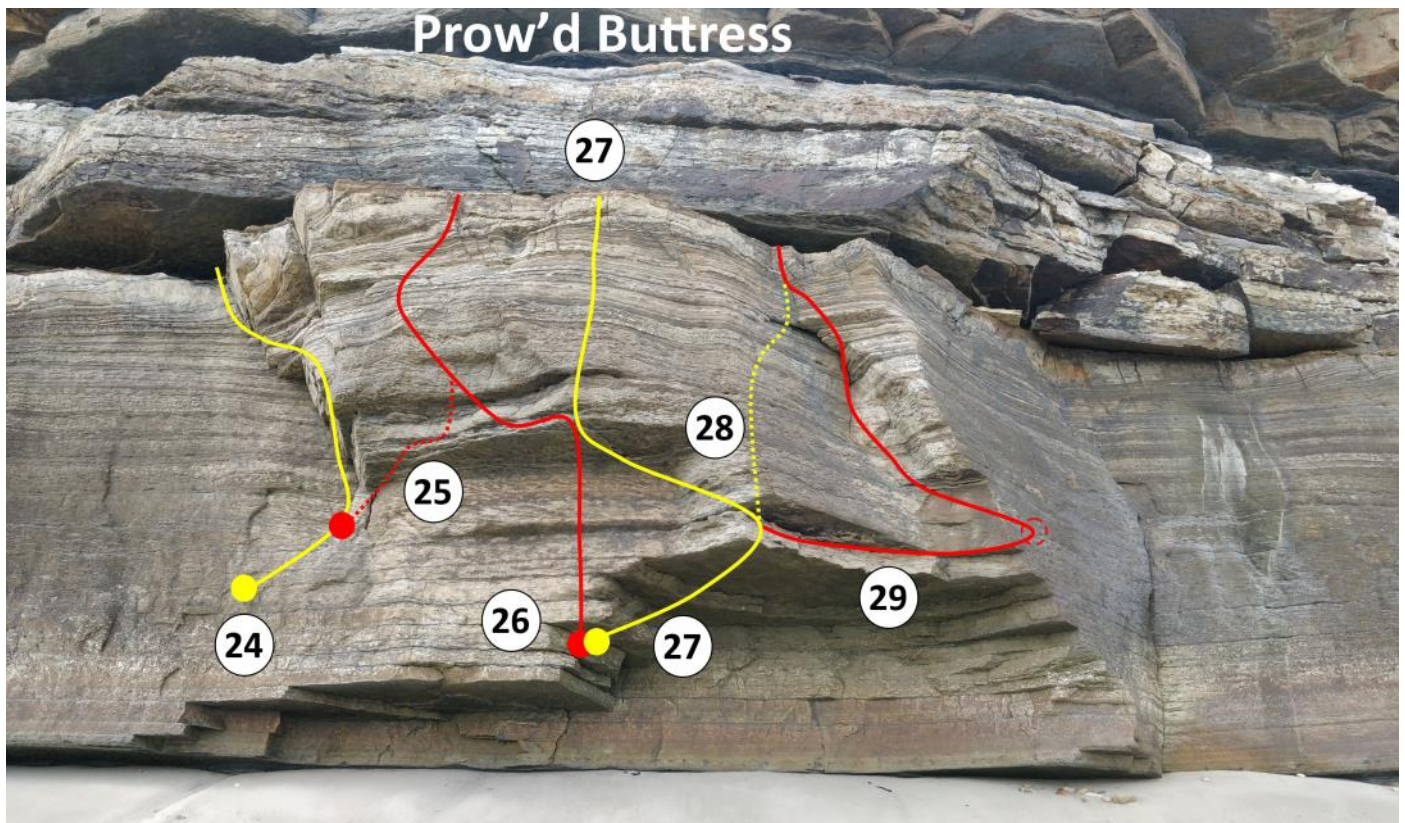
Kevin Howett 10 May 2024

Crouched start on small foothold below the corner. Reach right into the roof lip and pull over.

Rory Howett on Problem27







### 26. Man in the Box V2 (5c)

Robert Cunningham 1980

SS on a jug under the low roof. A direct lurch/long reach into the lip of the roof above. Reach left and up to jugs shared with High Status.

A variation traverses the lip left into the corner

(**Fell on Black Days** V2 (5c) Kieran Cunningham 1992)

### 27. The Lord of An Gearasdan Falls when the Parapet Crumbles V3 (6a)

Rory Howett 14 Jan 2025

SS the low jug and span right to a good hold in the lip of the further roof, then left to the hold in the right side of the roof lip above (shared with Man in the Box). Climb the wall above on crunchy crimps (crux).

### 28. Fourth Wall V4 (6b)

Dave MacLeod 14 Jan 2025

SS under the low roof. Span right as for Problem 27, then gain two tiny pockets above. Sort your feet out and then gain the undercling at the top of Problem 29.

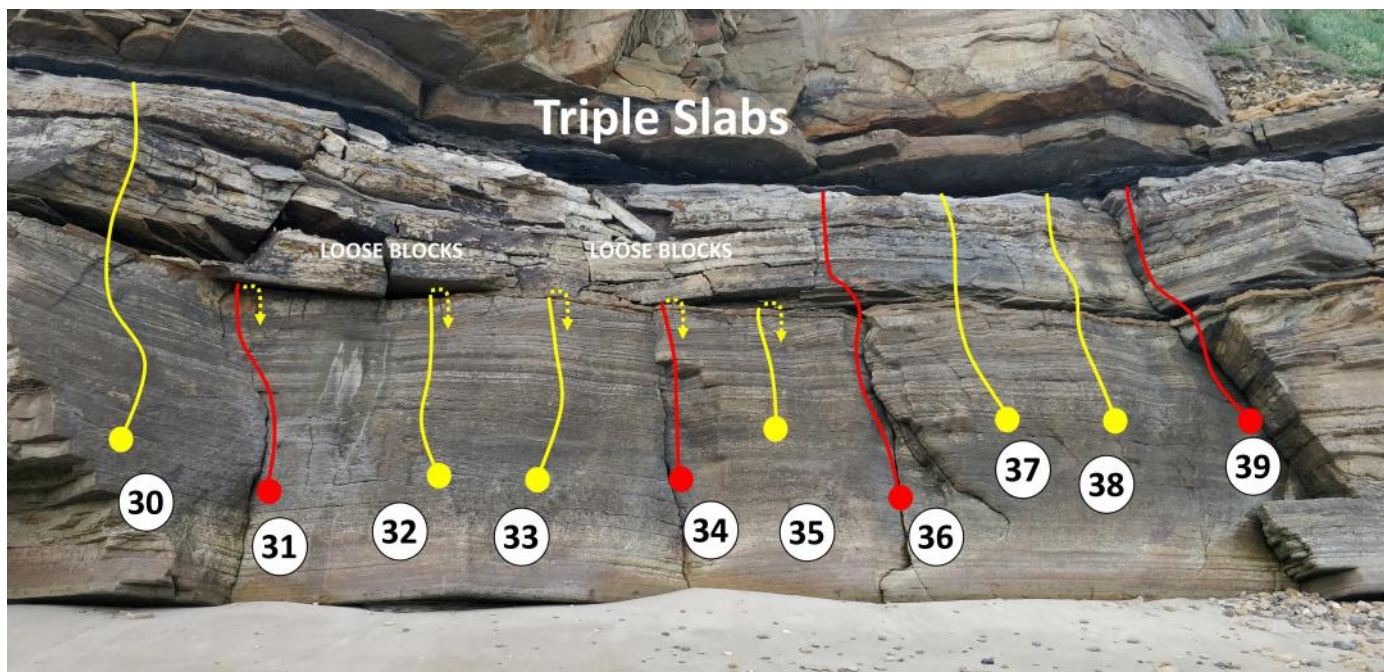
### 29. Bleed the Freak V3 (6a)

Kieran Cunningham 2013

The hanging left-facing corner. SS the low jug span right to the good hold in the lip of the roof Traverse right and reach a hold round the right and climb the corner by any means possible.

An alternative start can be made from this hold at the same grade.





## Tripple Slabs

The wall now sets back as an easy angled slab split by flake/crack lines. Although easy angled and short, the slabs are devoid of holds but friction is thankfully good.

### 30. Dishingtons' Go Forth V1 (5b)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

SS off the same hold as Problem 27, but pull up the side wall and climb direct.

### 31. Lounge Act V0- (4a)

Robert Cunningham 1979

The first flake/corner from a SS.

### 32. de Brus V0 (4b)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

The first slab has a central rib. Start on the rib and balance up. Has been climbed hands free.

### 33. The Manor Lords V1 (5b)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

The blank slab just right of the rib.

### 34. Nutshell V0 (4b)

Robert Cunningham 1979

The second 'peapod' shaped flake.

### 35. Elie Wally V1 (5b)

Gordon Grant 17 May 2024

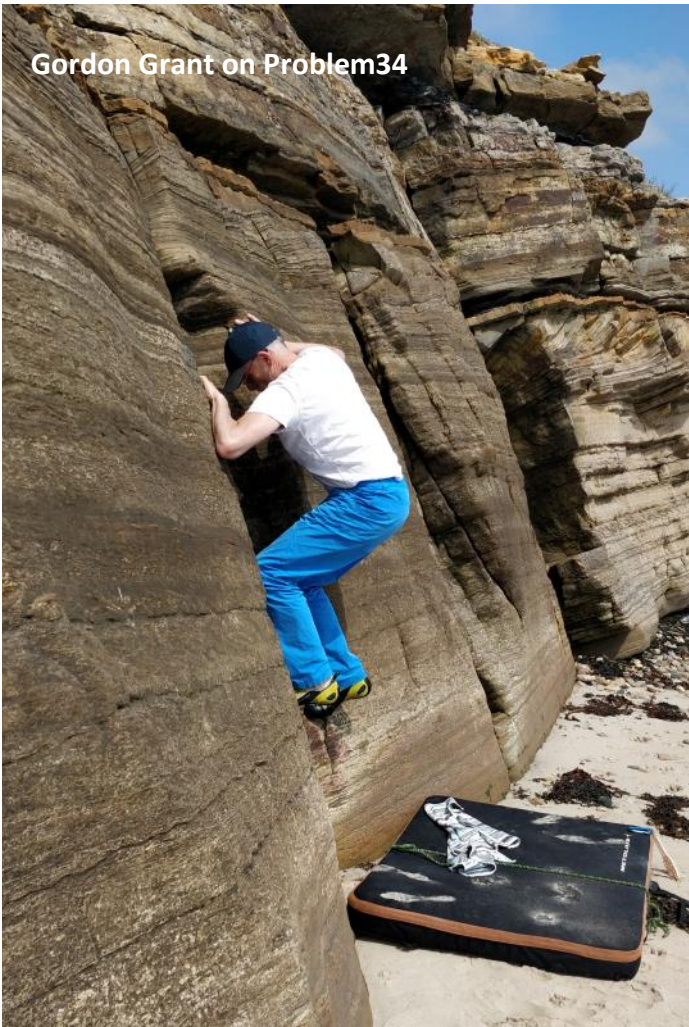
The centre of the slim slab starting off two small iron crimps.



Kevin Howett on FA Problem 32



Gordon Grant on Problem34



**36. Everything Zen** VB (3a)

Robert Cunningham 1979

SS the third, larger, flake.

**37. 14c Theft** V0 (4c)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

The slab using a tiny pocket high right and nothing for hands or feet in the flake of problem34.

**38. The Battle of Pinky Cleugh** V3 (6a)

Kevin Howett 6 June 2024

Balance onto the centre of the slab on imaginary footholds. Using a small pocket for the right gain tiny crimps and the ledge. Hard for shorties.

**39. Ragged Reefs** VB- (3a)

Gordon Grant 17 May 2024

The leaning corner with a ledge at its base. Also a descent if required.

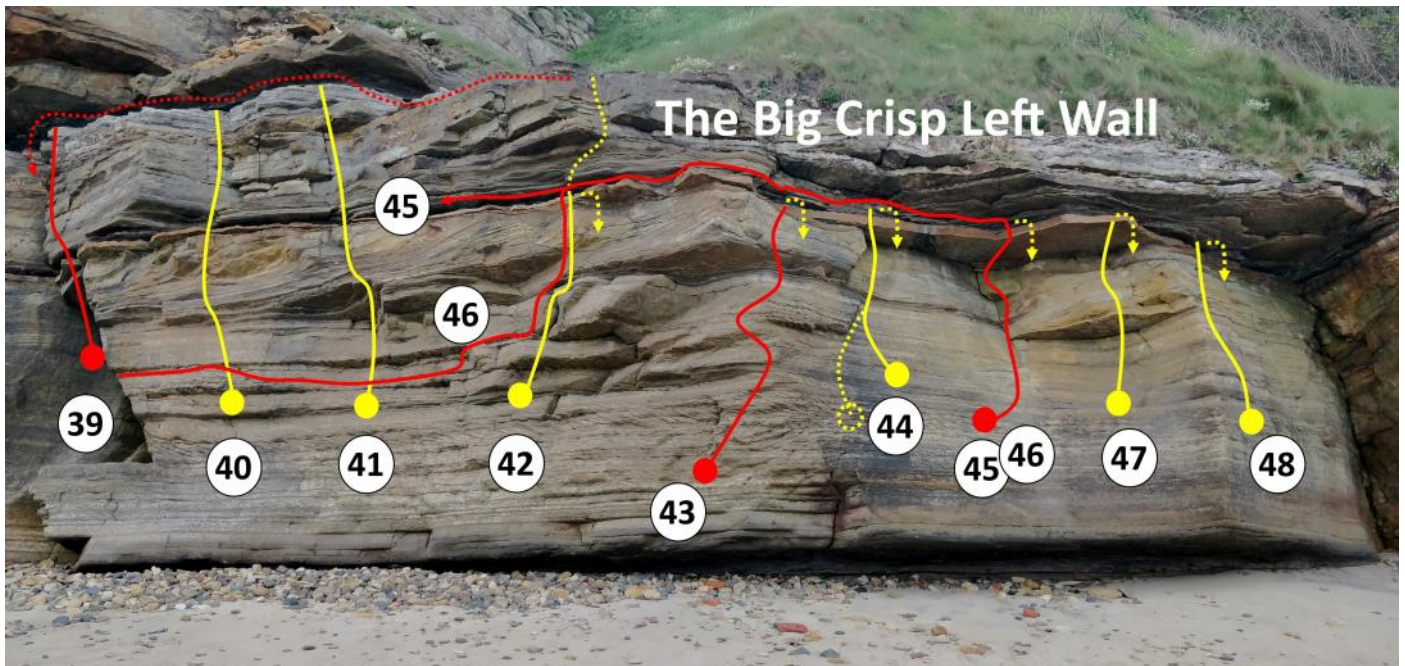


Robert Mackenzie on Problem38



Kevin Howett on FA Problem38





## The Big Crisp

This is a complex of large buttresses defined by large corners, followed by several much smaller, shorter ones. They lie just under the main castle ruins. Along the top of the wall is a thin protruding horizontal band of hardened red sandstone, hence the name. The rock here becomes more sandy with each successive buttress rightwards, but they are well featured and give good climbs despite this.

The level of the sand below here varies from tide to tide more than the rest of the cliff, but is free of sea water for longer.

The first four problems can be climbed through the upper slaty wall and traversed off left to descend problem 38. The others are jumped off from the crisp.

### 40. 17c Theft VB- (3c)

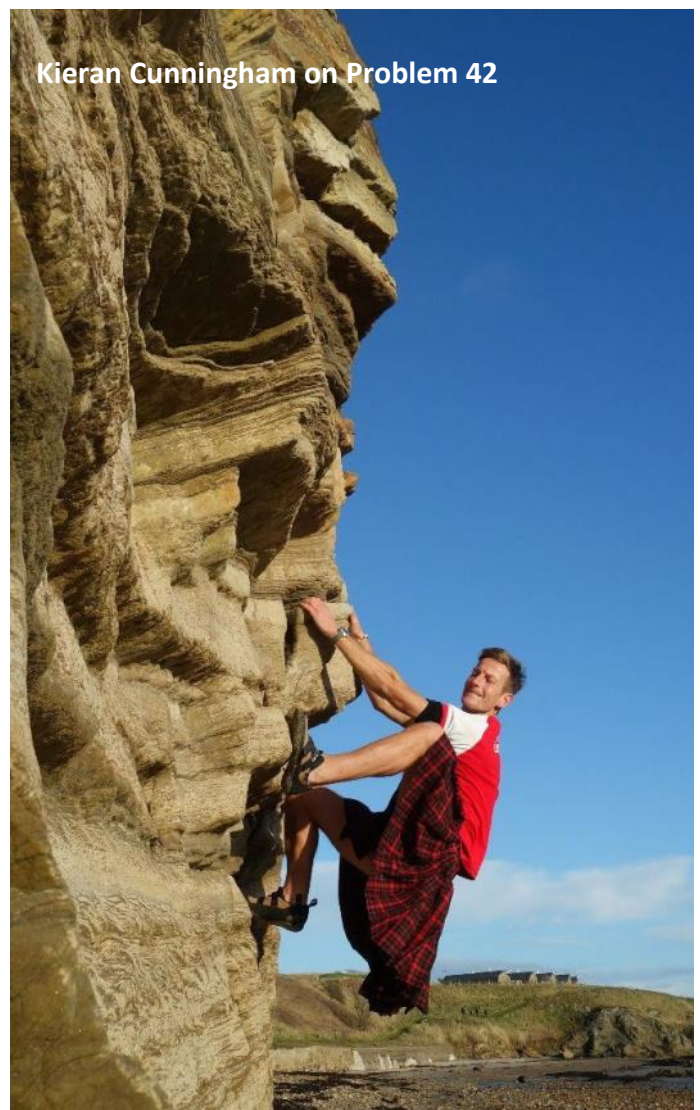
Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

The sandy wall is much easier than it looks.

### 41. Comedown V0- (4b)

Kieran Cunningham 1992

Up to a tiny corner in the roof. Pull through to the crisp. Easy above.



### 42. Even Flow VB (4a)

Kieran Cunningham 1992

Gain the large block then the crisp. It may interest you to pull through the steep wall above to finish.



### 43. 99er V3 (6a)

Robert Mackenzie 6 June 2024

SS on good side holds and follow the blunt rib and through the roof direct via a dodgy-looking small flake.

### 44. Back and Forth V1 (5c)

Gordon Grant 29 May 2024

From sloping holds above head height gain the hanging flake on the left.

A direct low start off iron crimps is V3 6a

Robert Mackenzie, 6 June 2024

### 45. The High Traverse V0 (4c)

Robert Cunningham 1979

From a long flat hold go right into the shallow scoop and through the crisp roof. Now traverse the crisp leftwards across The Tripple Slabs and continue along the top of the main wall to finish at the end of the 1913 Wall. Not particularly hard once on the crisp, but long.

Climbing the scoop to the crisp and dropping off is a nice V0 problem in itself.



### 46. Them Bones V1 (5b)

Kieran Cunningham 1992

Take the high traverse along the crisp but descend Even Flow and continue low to finish stepping onto the ledge below the corner of Ragged Reefs.

### 47. Crumbling Mantlepiece VB (3b)

Kevin Howett 29 May 2024

Mantle the large ledge under the crisp roof.

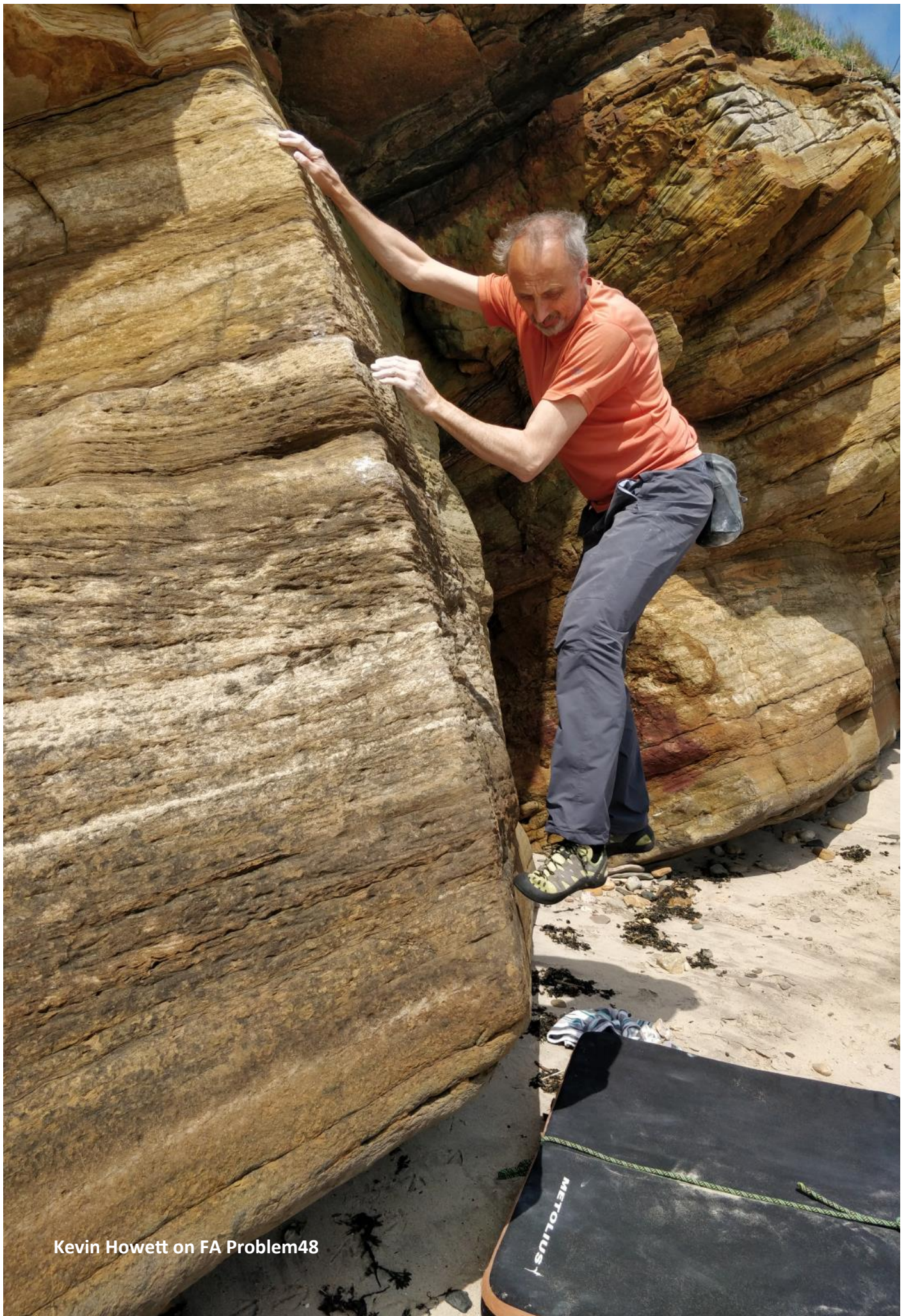
### 48. Dissing the Bruce V3 (6a)

Kevin Howett 17 May 2024

The slabby arête on its right side and laybacked to gain fingery holds and a final pull to the crisp.

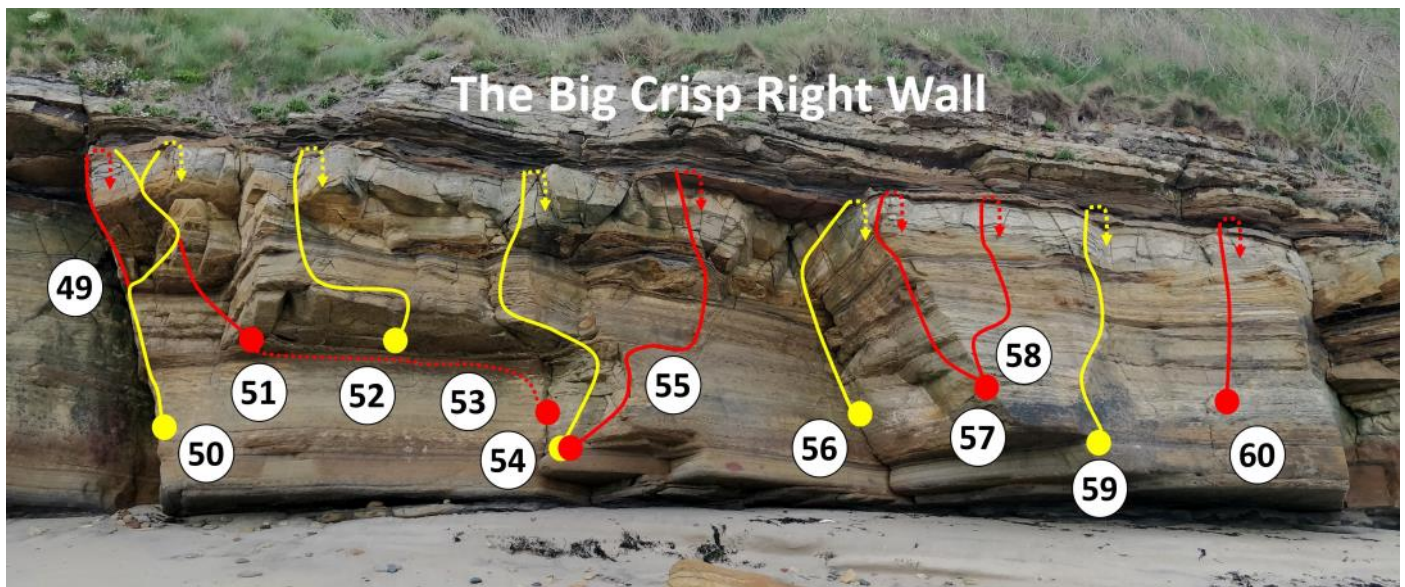






Kevin Howett on FA Problem48





The Right Hand Crispy wall is much more undercut and on low sand days, there is a convenient kicking board exposed which makes sit starts possible.

#### 49. Project

?? ?? ????????

Stand start the arête on its left side using a good foothold near the back of the corner and climb using good holds on the left side and the arête to gain a vertical protruding flake. Pull over direct but beware the possible nasty fall.

#### 50. Plush V3 (6a)

Kieran Cunningham 2012

SS heel-hooking the arête and make hard moves to gain a standing position on the slab and gain holds on Fiar. Finish over the lip left or right.

#### 51. Fiar V1 (5b)

Rory Howett 14 Jan 2025

The hanging corner. Step onto the slab and reach an obvious 'flange' over the lip of the roof above the corner and then the crisp.

#### 52. Project V? (??)

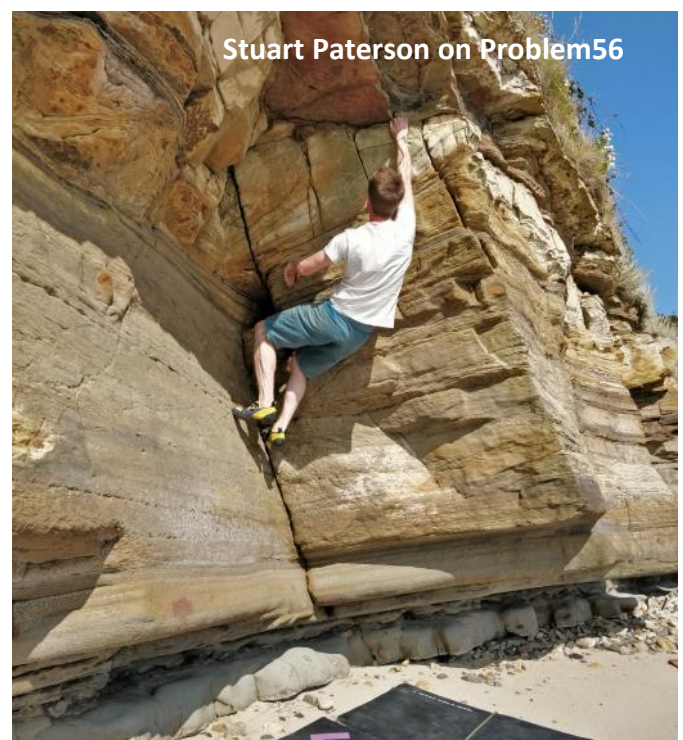
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The centre of the roof. Using the foothold under the slab reach up to a small undercling in the roof. Pull over leftwards and up with difficulty.

#### 53. Enter Sandman V6 (6b/c)

Kieran Cunningham 2020

Start in the crack above the low ledge and traverse left on small holds to gain the corner of Fiar.



Stuart Paterson on Problem56

#### 54. In Bloom V3 (6a)

Kieran Cunningham 2014

SS hanging the big ledge and gain the flake crack above the roof. A hidden crimp gains the crisp. The upper section is not as fragile as it appears.

#### 55. Project V? (??)

?? ???? ? ? ???? ?

SS hanging the big ledge and get established on the smooth slab. Gain the bulges above and the crisp.

#### 56. Limpetless V1 (5b)

Louisa Kästner 31 August 2024

SS the corner and reach out right at the roof.





**57. V-Forth V2 (5c)**

Stuart Paterson 31 August 2024

The rounded leaning edge. Standing start from sandy bobbles at head height and climb the arête on its left side.

**58. V-Fife V2 (5c)**

Louisa Kästner 31 August 2024

The wall right of the arete started as for Problem52 and pulling round right low down.

**5. Spock's Cross V4 (6b)**

Dave MacLeod 14 Jan 2025

The blank angled wall from a hanging position on a large rounded ledge.

**60. Tide Line V0 (4c)**

Rory Howett 29 May 2024

Stand start the sandy wall off small pockets.



Rory Howett on Problem59



Elie harbour looking across the beach to Earlsferry







Fine dinning at the  
superb Ship Inn,  
Elie Harbour