

The Last Laugh

LANDMAN SCOOPS LAST GREAT GRIT LINE

If the gritstone season has been a little late in starting this year, it has certainly made up for lost time with a succession of rapid ascents of many hard testpiece routes. Pride of place, however, goes to highball bouldering and the first ascent of one of the most prominent and iconic unclimbed problems on grit – *The Smiling Buttress* at Curbar Edge in the Peak District.

This seven metre wall, blank except for a vague curving weakness in the shape of a smile, first came to prominence through the attempts of Ben Moon.

'I first tried this back in 97,' says Moon 'when *Hard Grit* was being filmed and then sporadically over the following years, but never really committed to it. It's only two hard moves really, but both are very hard with the last being a big dyno for the top. I always thought as a boulder problem it would be in the Font 8B/8B+ region. One of the reasons I didn't commit to trying it was because of the poor landing and I wasn't sure how I could do it even if I had managed to do it in a one-er on a top rope. As it was, I never did do it in a one-er although I did do all of the moves.'

Whilst others have toyed with the line, no one had made serious inroads until this autumn, when Tyler Landman decided to give *The Smiling Buttress* his full attention. Back in the 'noughties, Landman was arguably Britain's best boulderer





– climbing the legendary Stanage 8B *The Ace* aged 15, and then only two years later managing several 8Cs in rapid style around the world. Amazingly, during that time despite climbing numerous international first ascents he hadn't climbed a new problem in the UK and this time he was keen to make amends.

Despite poor weather a high powered team gathered at Curbar, with Ben Moon driving back early from business in London to assist with spotting. Adam Long was on hand with his camera, and describes how the day unfolded.

'The final ascent went down very quickly. I got a text the night before asking if I could carry an extra pad and a camera up. In the morning there were heavy showers, and things didn't look promising, but after a bit of a drive round the Peak I got a text from Sam [Whittaker] saying they were on it, so headed up. As soon as we arrived it rained heavily, but luckily it didn't last long and a healthy force 4 to 5 wind soon moved the clouds away and blow-dried the rock. Ty spent about five minutes on a top rope, with no warm up that I saw (it was baltic), then pulled the rope. After one false start from the floor, second go he nailed it, made it look well within his ability. We all nearly missed it, it happened so fast. Very impressive!'

Astonishingly, this was Landman's first time on grit in seven years, and represents an impressive return to top form following time out studying Neuroscience in America. Landman was particularly pleased with the quality of the climbing. 'It's so subtle and intricate. If your body is out just a few degrees from the wall it is not going to happen.' The crux final dyno also adds another dimension, Landman explains:

'The swing on the last move is horrendous, if you came off at the peak of the swing it would be messy.' Luckily the team of tied down spotters weren't tested despite technicalities estimated by Landman to be 'around 8B – similar to *The Ace*. It's not often that you get a climb that's not at all steep but is that difficult. It's classic gritstone.'

So how did one of the grand masters of British climbing, Ben Moon, feel about losing one of his most ambitious projects?

'If I had watched Tyler or anyone else do it 10 years ago, I would have been pretty gutted', says Moon, 'but not now when I am fast approaching 50... I am really happy that Tyler did it. He made very light work of the ascent, which just goes to prove he is totally world class.'

Footage of the ascent will be available on moonclimbing.com

SEQUENCE: Tyler Landman making the first ascent of *The Smiling Buttress* (highball V13 / 8B) at Curbar. ADAM LONG



Kendal Mountain Festival 2013

REPORT BY KATY DARTFORD



THIS PAGE TOP LEFT: The opening night.
TOP RIGHT: Alpinist to be in the ice-screw placing speed test.
LOWER LEFT TO RIGHT: The organisers and judging panel take their well deserved moment in the spotlight. /A typical festival goer pondering high culture/ Kendal's mayor enjoying the show / A family effort in the fell race. ALL KENDAL MOUNTAIN FESTIVAL









It was a 'world first' for the Kendal Mountain Festival: crowd-surfing in the new Marmot tent at the Basecamp Marquee. This could have had something to do with the 'Mountain Rescue' brew, which sold over 700 pints by the end of the Festival. Local Kendal band, Room Full Of Mirrors, couldn't believe it. They'd never played before climbers before, nor had crowd-surfers. In my experience, the festival is normally more a case of early to bed with a cup of tea and the silicon earplugs warming by the fire.

But this year's festival did have a real party atmosphere to it. Elsewhere in the marquee, the Glenfiddich taster sessions had been taking place in a cosy yurt, giving us the opportunity to get 'up close and personal' to the guest speakers. Andy Kirkpatrick chatted about his time on the Troll Wall, and how the chocolate milk he bought by accident, 'didn't taste very nice in tea.' He also reminded us of how 'climbing is like masturbation… it's fun when you're doing it, but no one else wants to hear about it!' Judging by the packed out talks and film screenings, however, this really isn't the case. Getting your tickets early seems to be the order of the day. As Andy clearly knows, what was the case is that people want to hear about climbers themselves- as well as being dazzled by the action.

Particularly moving was the demonstration of mental strength by Spanish climber Silvia Vidal in her talk, about her 2012 big wall climb of *Espiadimonis* in Patagonia, which she soloed, without any phone or radio or means of contacting the outside world. She reached the virgin summit alone after 32 days. 'That really made Leo's climb [of Ulvetanna in Antarctica] look piss...' said my friend, something Leo Houlding admitted himself during the awards ceremony, stating that 'women are beating us at our own game.'

At the Festival's premier of Leo's film, *The Last Great Climb*, on Friday night, Leo slid on to the stage in full down suit, dragging a sledge. He then stripped down to his dinner suit, drawing calls of 'keep going' from the girls in the audience. The film's director, Al Lee, then presented the Berghaus 'Last Great Beard Competition', and we all had a laugh at the recent *Sunday Sport* article on the climb with its 'attention grabbing' title; 'climber goes on last great climb' and description of Ulvetanna as 'a mountain of such impeccable [sic] height'.

The portrayal of 'character' was certainly at the heart of most of the winning films; *Defaid a Dringo*, portrayed a year in the life of 23 year old Ioan Doyle as he struggled to keep his climbing standards up whilst being a hill farmer in North Wales. The *Best of Britain* short film showed top winter climber Greg Boswell spending his summers working on a Scottish farm and training for climbing hard routes in the winter. Meanwhile, award winning adventure filmmaker Sebastien Montaz-Rosset explained the importance of understanding the athlete; to be connected to them and 'not to bother trying to be the best film maker, but to be different.' Similarly, back at the Glenfiddich yurt, Kenton Cool (resembling George Mallory, decked out in a tweed jacket and pink socks) explained how his theory was also 'not to try and be the best, but to be the best you can.' Kenton said that he personally wasn't interested in achieving an Ueli Steck-style solo climb of Everest, as the whole point of it for him is sharing the experience with others. As usual, a tear was shed when recounting some of his experiences on the mountain.

By the end of the festival the Marmot tent had sold out of beer, and there was talk of sneaking into the whiskey-soaked yurt to continue the festivities, post-party. If this actually happened, though, I couldn't possibly say….

ENTREPRISES Climbing Walls



LEFT: Neil McGeachy on *Foot Masseuse* (E4) at Clach Bun Rubhtair, Cairngorms. RORY BROWN
CENTRE: Iain Small on the first ascent of *Gecko Wall* (E6), , Glen Coe. SMALL COLLECTION
RIGHT: Guy Robertson on the first ascent of *Beefheart* (E2), Quinag. ROBERTSON COLLECTION

Scottish ROCK 2013

BY GUY ROBERTSON

The summer of 2013 provided arguably the best opportunity for mountain rock climbing Scotland has seen for some time. Although the early part of the season through May and June was still relatively cold, by July the mountains were fair game, and for much of August they were the only practicable option due to sweltering heat. However, it's perhaps a sign of the times that although general activity levels were high, most people were lower down on the outcrops.

Starting in the North West, the hitherto largely undiscovered west face of Sgor a'Chleirich on Ben Loyal saw no less than two teams visiting. At nearly 300 metres high, this is one of the biggest crags in Britain, yet few people even know it's there. Martin Boysen climbed a route there once and said it was his favourite. First off, the Ullapool-based partnership of Ian Taylor and Tess Fryer repeated *Milky Way* (E2) most probably making the second ascent, confirming the grade and high quality in the process. Next up it was Guy Robertson and Richard Biggar who climbed without a guidebook and straightened out the third pitch of *Mars* (E3) to provide a slightly sterner test of will at a pushy E4. After a rather shocking entry pitch (think steep, unprotectable and hairy side pulls) the climbing on this route was also superb.

Only slightly further south, on Quinag, near Lochinver, Robertson and Adrian Crofton stole a commanding central line up the impressive Barrel Buttress with the first ascent of *Beefheart* E2. This is another completely neglected but very steep and clean chunk of rock, strangely more renowned for it's occasional winter routes rather than stunning vistas out over the sun-kissed Atlantic.

Glen Coe also saw some new route action, and Stob Coire Nan Lochain in particular. With the exception of the uber-classic four pitch *Unicorn* (E1) this is yet another place where a rock climber is rarer than a quiet night in a Glasgow pub. Ian Taylor and Tess Fryer know different though and scooped a rough diamond in the form of *Shadhavar* (E3) up the right wall of the upper section of the main *Unicorn* corner. Providing sustained and well-protected 6a climbing in a very exposed position, the route was found to be much more amenable than appearances would suggest. Inspired by Taylor's endeavours, Iain Small, Tony Stone and Blair Fyffe soon followed with *Gecko Wall* - a two-pitch E6 climbing directly up the Chandelle like buttress immediately left of *SC Gully*. Iain admitted he didn't think a new rock route on this crag was at the forefront of his mind, but that Ian and Tess's foray had ignited a spark of interest. Maybe there will be more to come next year?

It's also worth mentioning that while in the 'Coe, Iain also repeated *Rocklord* (E7) and *A Sweet Disregard for the Truth* (E6) on Gearr Aonoch's Yosemite Wall, finding both to be in good clean condition. He also made the second ascent of Guy Robertson's *Eragon* (E6) up the impending wall right of *The Clearances* (E4), finding it surprisingly scary and at the upper end of its grade (skyhooks recommended). It's just a pity Iain didn't put the finishing touches to this fine piece of climbing by completing the equally fine-looking but as yet unclimbed second pitch!

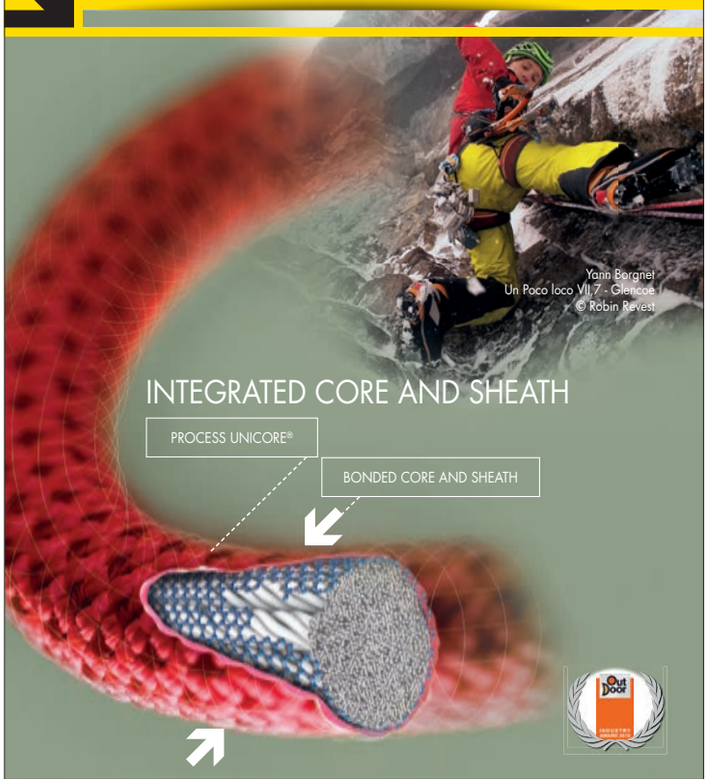
On Carn Dearg Buttress on Ben Nevis, Small and Stone were at it again, picking the fine plum of *Antonine's Wall* (E6) up the right wall of the Sassenach corner. Both parties led the pitch, which provided fully 50 metres of sustained and technical 6b climbing. This is one of a string of new E6's Small has climbed on the Ben – all of them from the ground, onsight and with minimal falls. Although the numbers may seem lowly by today's standards, don't be fooled – the great majority - perhaps 90% or more - of first ascents at this grade these days are either cleaned and / or practised first.

Deep in the Cairngorms, a group of over-heated fetishists found some wonderful esoterica. High up to the east of Beinn a'Bhuird, on the suitably strangely-named Clach Bun Rubhtair, ageing stalwarts Neil Mcgeachy, Graham Tyldesley and party plundered the oft-admired granite tors of Ben Avon. The resulting routes were described passionately by Mcgeachy as providing 'numerous full on squirming and chest jamming challenges in a style of climbing seldom seen in Scotland…awesome!' The pick of the bunch were Tyldesley's *Time for Tea* (E3) taking the commanding central crack, Mcgeachy's *Obscure Cleft* (E4) up the obvious off-width and technical ramp line above, and Tyldesley's *Foot Masseuse* (E4) up the even wider crack forming the right hand side of the 5m high granite foot feature! Other routes of note Rory Brown's technical slab challenge - *Tidy Package* (E1) and Donna Ryan's caving mission *Back Sack and Crack* (VS).

Other useful notes from the Cairngorms are that Creag an Dubh Loch's mighty *Flodden* (E6) received a good scrubbing and subsequent ascent at the hands of Iain Small and Tim Rankin. On the same part of the crag, Rankin and Gordon Lennox's desperately steep *Devolution* (E6) received its probable third ascent by Iain Small, with the crafty old man even managing to find a 'lie-down rest'! And finally, nearby on Lochnagar, Tony Stone maintained his ongoing community spirit by cleaning Wilson Moir's *The Existentialist* (E6) which Small then dispatched describing it as simply 'brilliant'. High praise indeed from a man who has climbed pretty much everything at that grade the Scottish mountains has to offer.

UNICORE®
TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR SECURITY

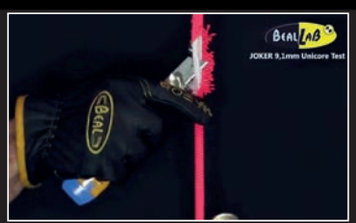
TECHNOLOGY FOR YOUR SECURITY



UNICORE® on treated ropes :

- Prevents sheath slippage.
- Prevents sheath bunching.
- Allows escape by abseil, even if the sheath is cut.

Dynamic rope
which benefits from
UNICORE® technology





1/2 ICELINE - 8,1 mm

1/2 COBRA - 8,6 mm

1 1/2 JOKER - 9,1 mm

1 TIGER - 10 mm

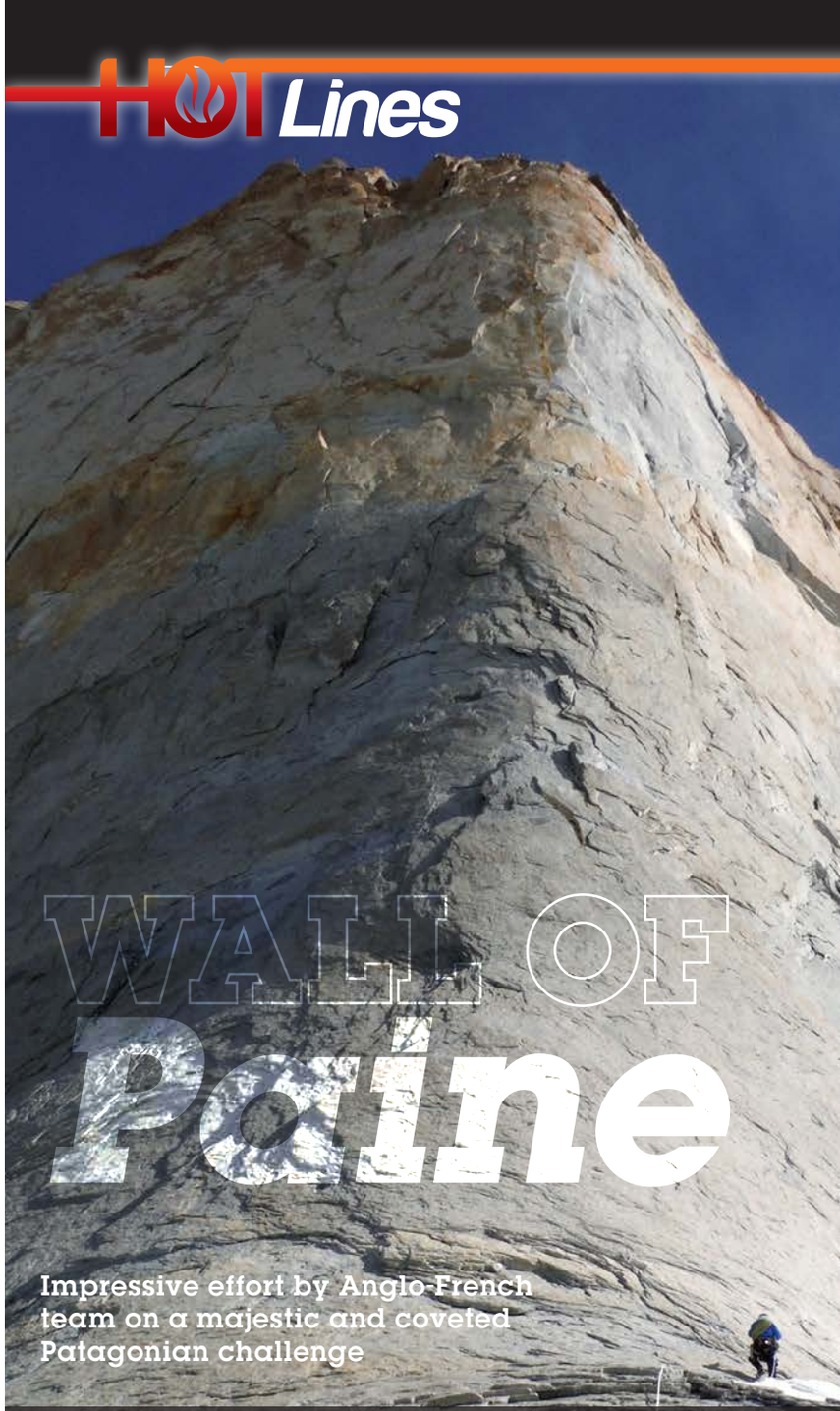
1 TOP GUN - 10,5 mm

Check out the video and learn more about UNICORE® technology by scanning here.

THE DYNAMIC BEAL COMPANY

beal-sport.com

Beal products are distributed in the UK and Ireland
by Lyon Equipment Limited
www.lyon.co.uk



WALL OF Paine

Impressive effort by Anglo-French team on a majestic and coveted Patagonian challenge

During October 2013, the English Patagonian big wall veterans Mike 'Twid' Turner and Jerry Gore were joined by young Welsh talent Calum Muskett and French cameraman Raphael Jochaud: their target was the South East Face of the South Tower of Paine. This face, over a kilometre high and wide has been one of Patagonia's most sought after unclimbed faces. 'It feels a formidable wall to climb.' says Gore, 'combine the sheer blankness, the cold and the prevailing Patagonian weather and you get one of the hardest big walls in the world to ascend.'

After three weeks of continuous effort the team reached a highpoint 18 pitches and 900m up. 'Storms raged throughout the duration of the expedition' reflects Gore; 'it was a major effort just surviving, let alone actually climbing.' A Type 1 diabetic who is raising money for the charity Insulin For Life, Gore also had a battle to keep his insulin from freezing.

Unfortunately on their final day, with only a 100m of easy mixed climbing to go to the summit, a ferocious storm hit. With winds up to 150kmph, the team were forced to descend without reaching the actual summit. Nevertheless, as Gore says, 'this 'suffer-fest' epitomises Patagonian big wall climbing. The team survived climbing the wall and the constant abuse of the Patagonian climate, and we came home alive and without frost bite, so we're more than happy.'

THIS PAGE: The huge South East Face of the South Tower of Paine. JERRY GORE/WALL OF PAINE 2013



ENTRE PRISES
Climbing Wall

Earth CALING

WHITTAKER ANSWERS THE CALL OF ICONIC GRIT TESTPIECE

Sheffield based Katy Whittaker has had an impressive run of form recently, culminating in ascents of two of grit's most coveted lines. Of those, Johnny Dawes' epoch-making Black Rocks route *Gaia* (E8 6c) probably has the most personal significance. 'When I first saw it I thought it was the best line I had ever seen on grit', says Whittaker, 'and knew I would love to try and climb it one day. Since then, it was always been niggling away in the back of my mind. This year I just decided I had to prepare for it properly.' That preparation involved quick ascents of the Millstone extreme slab climb *The Bad and the Beautiful* (E7 6b) and *Paralogism* (E7 6b) the Roaches' roof testpiece.

'I did them mainly as 'training' for *Gaia*' she says 'I knew the only thing stopping me was my head so thought a few head points were in order before hand. They definitely helped, I think I was more nervous before setting off on *Paralogism* than *Gaia*.' Whittaker eventually found herself at Black Rocks tied in with the last light of the day bringing perfect temperatures. 'The day I actually did it I knew once we started climbing that today was the day, it was the coldest it had been and the climbing felt great.'

Not content with that, a week later Whittaker visited Curbar for an ascent of the super technical *Knockin' on Heaven's Door*. 'It is harder than *Gaia*, both in terms of the climbing and the gear placements' says Whittaker, who used low cam placements but not an often-used peg, making the route E8 6c.

'From the ground it looks like a sprinting belayer could stop you decking for most of way. However, when you are actually up there it feels like they wouldn't be able to do that much!'

THIS PAGE: Katy Whittaker starting the crucial sequence of *Gaia* (E8 6c), Curbar. Failure at this point risks a ground fall, as demonstrated by Jean-minh Trin-Thieu's famous plunge from these moves captured on camera and featured in the film *Hard Grit*. DAVID MASON

Climb Subscription OFFER

SALE

SUBSCRIBE FOR JUST

£29.95*

(12 ISSUES)



RECEIVE

12 ISSUES DIRECT TO YOUR DOOR

WHEN YOU SUBSCRIBE WITH THIS OFFER

SCAN QR CODE TO VIEW THE OFFER ONLINE

or call 0116 2022732

(QUOTE PROMOTIONAL CODE: UKSAVEOFFER)

* UK offer only for overseas rates please contact us at subscriptions@climbmagazine.com or visit climbmagazine.com