

Compassberg

Rock Climbing Guide



LEGAL NOTE: All climbing is very dangerous & always at your own risk. Nobody is forcing you to climb. You choose to climb, so choose to go home before the risks become too high. Remember even small injuries can take 6 weeks to heal. No responsibility for inaccurate or incomplete information will be accepted by the scribe or any other body. The landowners accept no liability at all. Climbers take full responsibility for themselves at all times. Fixed protection will become unreliable, loose rock is common, solid rock becomes loose & RD writers make up most of the information, with a beer, at the computer. This RD is only a guide & is no substitute for experience, training, common sense & a touch of caution. So you are on your own...take care!

EASTERN CAPE CLIMBING VENUES

Port Elizabeth	30 Coombs Gorge	37 EL urban crags & boulders	Toorberg	Swartberg
1 Lady's Slipper	Amatolas	38 Yellowsands & Inkwenkwezi	44 Graff-Reinet	49 Towerkop
2 Van Stadens	31 Fort Fordyce	39 Lalapanzi	45 Compassberg	50 Oudtshoorn
3 PE urban crags & boulders	32 Hogsback	40 Morgan Bay	Transkei	51 Gamkaskloof Bouldering
4 Sleepy Hollow	33 Stutterheim	41 Bola	46 Hole in the Wall	
5 Elands River	Langkloof	Winterberg	47 Hill of Execution	
6 Kirkwood	19 Nguniland	42 Mary & Martha	48 Port St Johns	
7 Cape St Francis	20 Kouga Wildernes	43 Hangklip		
Groot Winterhoek	21 Uniondale Pass			
8 Tygerhoek	Garden Route			
9 Naga's Kloof	22 Titzikama			
10 Eagle Gorge	23 Groot Rivier			
11 Momentum Gorge	24 Plett Crags			
12 Pinnacle Gorge	East London			
13 Cockscomb	34 NSA			
14 Grootbos & Kleinbos	35 Windmill Hole			
15 Nivera	36 Buffalo River			
Baviaans				
16 Grips				
17 Kudu Kaya				
18 Waterkloof				
Grahamstown				
25 Alicedale				
26 Howieson's Poort				
27 Moodies				
28 Bouldering				
29 Thornkloof				

NOTE FROM THE SCRIBE: It took consistent effort, time, work & organization to get this guide ready for your pleasure...for free! Thus please respect that all the information & photographs are strictly **Copy Righted**. You are more than welcome to print out, e-mail or link to a web page this guide in its unchanged format, with logos & all information intact. As this is a web based guide it can be considered a continual work in progress. It is easy to change. So please send missing details, corrections, additions & adjustments to marshall@gsafrica.co.za. All information will be greatly appreciated.

Thanks to the MCSA journals, Gavin Stewart, Ian Kotze, Ross Suter & Anthony van Tonder for the information. Their descriptions have been cannibalized to make up this "guide". There are certainly many more lines that have been climbed. If you suspect that you have opened a route please send me the details. You are welcome to print this out, e-mail or use the info for a better guide. Feel free! Please send me a copy.

WALK IN: From the closest point that a vehicle can get too the mountain, it is 954m to the base of the lowest crags on the Western Side of Compassberg. And about 1300 to the camp sites on the South West shoulder. Most of the walking is not very steep. Much less strenuous than the walk up Mary. There is no set path. Try not to create one, as domestic animals may also follow it, causing an erosion problem.



ROAD CONDITION: It is possible, in a two-wheel drive vehicle, to reach the *old kraal camp site* & the parking, but it would be an exciting drive. Some improvised road repairs may help in one or two places! After rains or melting snow, a four-wheel drive vehicle would probably be needed to negotiate this section of the road.

ACCESS: The mountain is best accessed from the north. From Middleburg take the road to Richmond. 24km out of Middleburg, turn L onto a road which is signposted Compassberg. 24km along this road, turn L onto the farm Compassberg. Nieu Bethesda is 45km further along this road. Follow the road past the farm house on the LH side. The road soon becomes a track as the mountain comes closer.

Please contact the farmer, Brenda & Alfie McCabe, on 049-842 2420, to make arraignments to climb. Arraignments to climb have to be made before hand.







ROCK TYPE: Vertical to on balance dolerite. South face is up to 140m high. All trad at this stage.

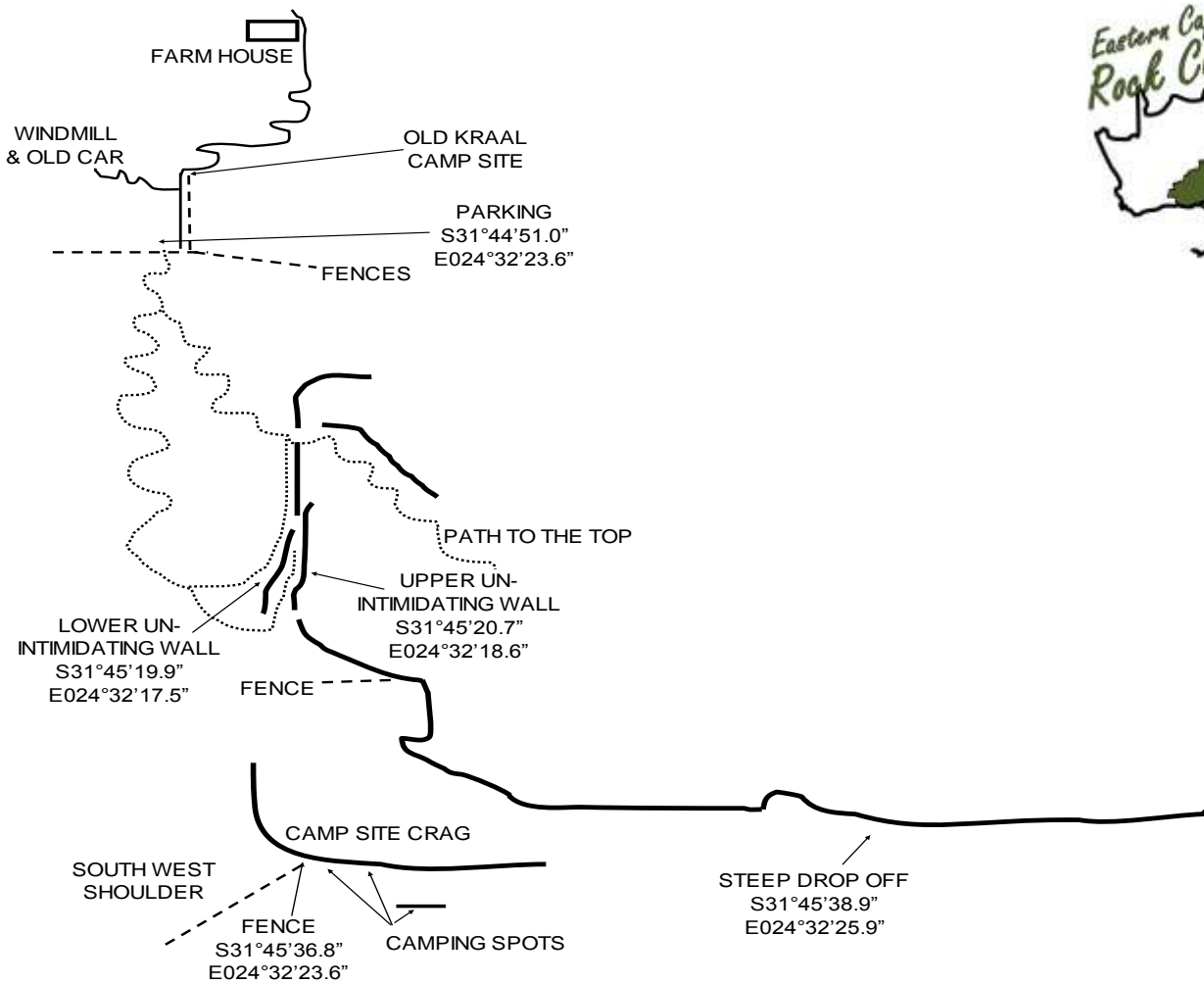
HAZARDS: No hazards that stand out

ENVIRONMENTAL: This place is unspoiled wilderness.

1. If you need to go to the toilet in the bush or at the crags, please bury your business well. Don't burn the toilet paper as this may set the veldt alight.
2. If you make a fire in your campsite, watch that it does not set the veldt on fire.
3. There are no bolt bans in the Eastern Cape. So feel free to bolt new lines. Existing trad lines should not be bolted...waste of bolts anyway.

TIME & WEATHER: The main face is south facing & in shadow the whole day. This makes it a summer venue. The faces on the western side will have sun on winter mornings.

STAR RATING SYSTEM	
★	Good route at this crag.
★★	Good route in the area.
★★★	Classic route in this province.
No star	Reasonable to bollocks.
ABBREVIATIONS & SYMBOLS	
4	Bolted route
T	Trad route, natural gear
6B	Number of bolts
C	Chains or top anchors
	Chains or top anchors
P	Piton
RB	Removable bolt
	Afternoon Shade
	Morning Shade
	Shade all day
	Sun all day
	Can be climbed in wet weather



POTENTIAL: There is mega potential for new trad routes. 100s of years of cracks.

ACCOMMODATION: Camping costs R35 per person in 2006. The choice is between camping at the bottom, next to the vehicles or at the top on the south west shoulder. Bivi spots on the shoulder seem fairly comfortable, protected by a slight overhang. Though it may become quite exposed in poor weather. There is very little water at the bivi spots on the shoulder. The drips are not reliable. There is a guesthouse on a neighbouring farm, owned by Brenda's mother. The guesthouse is about 15 - 20 minutes' drive from the start of the walk up.

There is also a selection of pleasant accommodation available in Nieu Bethesda, with the fascinating 'Owl House', but this too far away to use as a base for climbing here. It does, however, offer a great soft touch to the experience after many days of rough camping!

Another tip: if arriving late in the day from Graaff Reinet, stop over for the night at the Owl House Backpackers Lodge in Nieu Bethesda. The door is left unlocked and the fridge is stocked. You can sleep on a bed inside the house or pitch your tent (sleep under the stars) in the garden, and settle up in the morning with the pleasant German owners, who live across the road on the corner of a side road.

WESTERN BUTTRESS



A.McGuffie opened a route “a stones throw from the straining-post against the face”. According to the 1960 journal, this route is recorded in the 1926 journal. Have yet to track this down....help...

Declination – 10

C.F.Wynne & Mike Streeter May 1960

Declination starts up a vertical fault about 20m south of the fence on the west ridge.

P1 – 10 - 24m Up the vertical fault. From the top of a sloping block, move L on delicate balancing moves at about 15m. At the top of the fault move L along a narrowing grass ledge.

P2 – 10 - 21m From the ledge, up small holds.

Trend slightly L.

P3 – 8 - 40m Easy scrambling to a grassy recess.

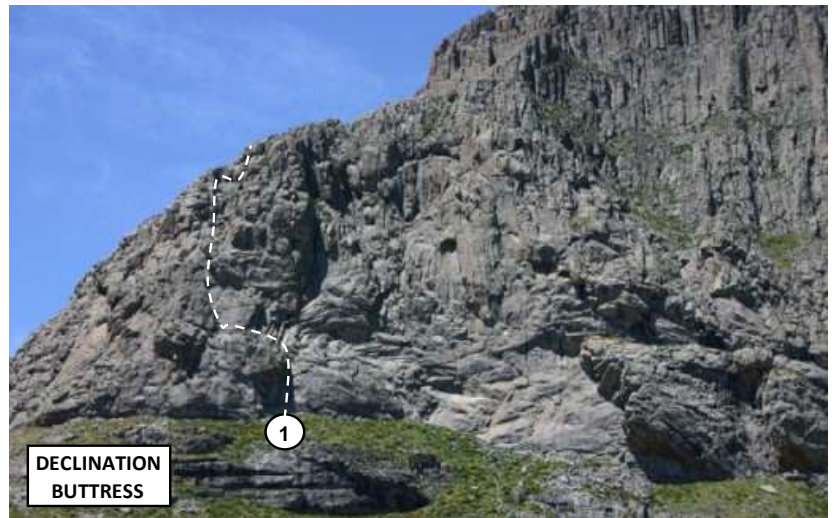
P4 – 10 - 24m Follow the crack on the L, then around a boulder that moves back & forth.

P5 – 8 Choose the easiest crack from the R. Up to a wide grassy slope. Walk up the grassy slope.

P6 – 10 - 30m Follow the route slightly diagonally L.

P7 – 10 - 24m up a crack in which a large bush can be used for a step-over to the R.

Route ends about 50m from the beacon on the north-west end of the summit ridge.



Inclination – 14

John Moss & Joe Maclennan 16/12/1977 (T)

This route starts 40m R of Declination, which goes up a vertical fault about 20m south of the fence on the west ridge.

P1 – 13 - 33m Up a steep slab to the R of a groove. Gain a ledge below a large overhanging block & a peg. Move L 2m & up overlaps to a stance on a sloping ledge.

P2 – 10 - 27m Continue up the slab to a steep wall. Up 4m diagonally R. Then diagonally l into an easy gully.

P3 – 13 - 33m Climb the RH groove, then over an overhang. Move L at the top to a big platform.

P4 – 11 - 40m Traverse L across a grassy gully. Then up an easy wide crack. Travers L across a small, smooth slab below a roof.

P5 – 11 - 23m Up the rotern crack on the L, treating a loose flake with care. Traverse L to the exit chimney.

Orange Triangle – 13

Joe & Don Maclennan, Gavin Stewart & Mathew Smith 06/1980 (T)

From the face past *Declination* & *Inclination*, down to a big recess with a triangular overhand above.

P1 – 13 - 30m Up groove on the RH side of the recess. Pull through a bulge & u

SOUTH FACE



Winter Snow & Ice climb –

Jon Rash & John Moss Aug 1974 (T)

Large easy angled ramp that goes diagonally L through the rock wall to the R of *Declination*. At the top of the ramp move out R onto mixed snow, rock & ice to the summit ridge. Not sure how many winters it would be *in-condition*.

Fat Man's Agony – 14

Don, Joe & David MacLennan 16/01/1980 (T)

This route follows the line of a long arête which bounds on the L of *South Face Direct*. Scramble for 50m up the big grass ramp to a neck just to the L of the base of the arête.

P1 – 14 – 50m (A0) Climb the broken rock, up a groove to an overhang. Step around to the L to a ledge. Using a fixed peg handhold, move up to the R onto a smooth slab & stretch for a good edge on the R. Continue past the grass-seamed slab to a wide ledge.

P2 – Walk about 25m R the other side of the arête.

P3 – 13 – 35m Climb the big chimney diagonally up to the L.

P4 – 14 – 40m Up the steep double crack & scramble to a shoulder on the arête.

P5 – 12 – 25m Starting from a stacked block to the L of the shoulder, up the chimney & groove to a ledge.

P6 – 13 – 20m Climb diagonally L & squeeze through a narrow slot.

P7 – 12 – 45m Up the chimney to the top.

The Final Exam – 20

Andrew Forsyth & Joe MacLennan December 1980 (T)

This route takes a direct line up the centre of the longest part of Compassberg.

South Face Direct – 15

Goonie Marsh, Steve Bowen & John Moss 21/06/1975 (T)

Start about 50m L of the huge recess that comes down from the step in the summit ridge. Start almost directly below the summit trig beacon.

P1 – 13 - 35m Straight up a grey groove containing a crack. Move R to a small stance.

P2 – 13 - 40m Step L of stance. Up & R to short crack. Up short crack to ramp diagonally to the L. Belay on the L near the end of the ramp.

P3 – 13 - 15m Up ramp for a few meters, then step R & up a short crack to a large scree covered ledge.

P4 – 13 - 25m Walk along ledge to the R to a break, which is just R of two parallel grass-filled cracks.

P5 – 13 - 25m Short steep crack. Over some broken rock. Move L onto a small platform.

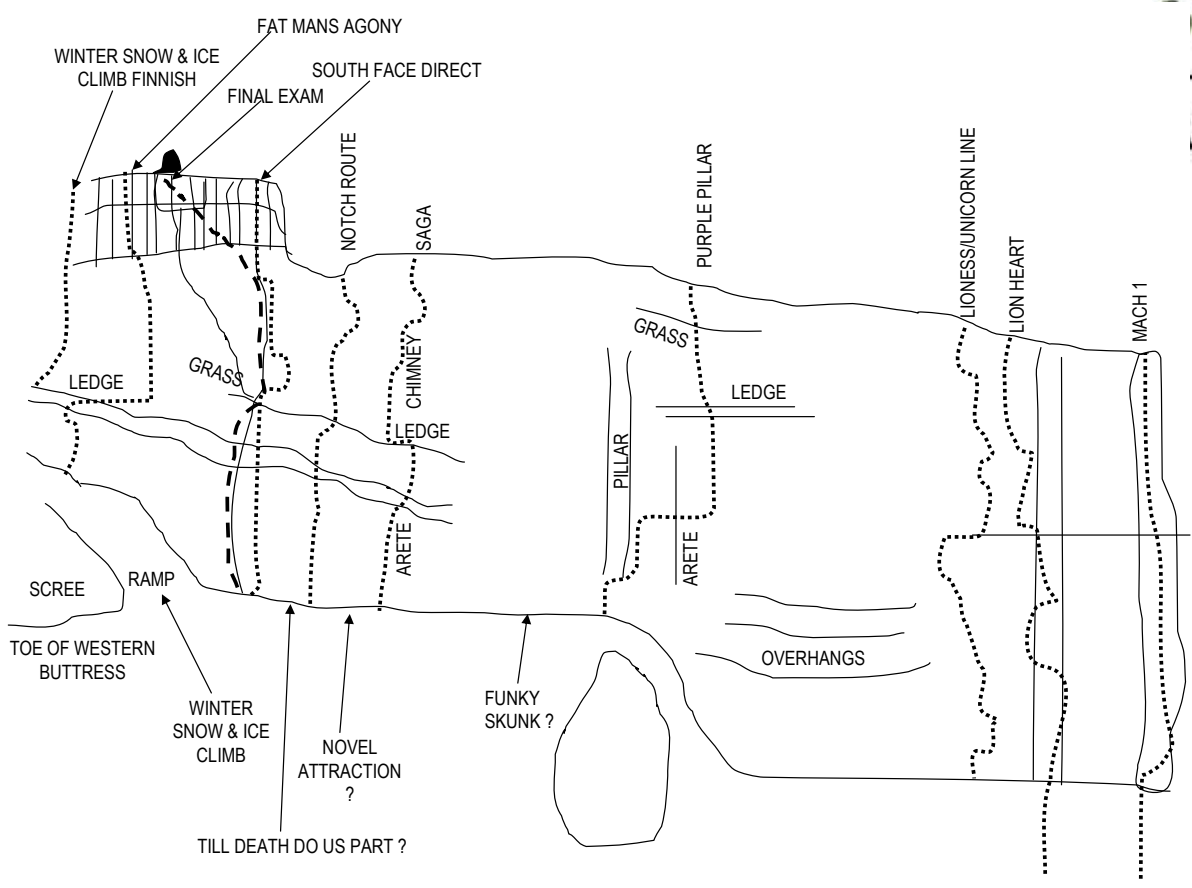
P6 – 15 - 30m Step L into a recess above the parallel grass-filled cracks. Up past some large flakes. The recess narrows & ends in an overhang. Climb L round the overhang & into the steep corner above. The stance is to the l.

P7 – 15 - 30m Up a short corner then traverse R, below a flake to a crack. Up this to a ledge. Move back L to the parallel cracks which are climbed to a small platform.

P8 – 15 - 20m Follow the thin crack diagonally L onto the front of the wall. Onto a small ledge. Step L & up a short crack. Easy moves to a ledge.

P9 – 11 - 20m Move L on the ledge. Up the corner to belay from the niche.

P10 - 13 - 35m Move R keeping R of huge hanging flakes, onto a ledge. Summit about 20m R of the summit beacon.



The Notch Route - 20

Andrew Forsyth & Joe MacLennan December 1980 (T)

This is a fine route on steep, clean dolerite. Start at a cairn to the L of the big recess which comes down from the notch in the summit ridge.

- P1 – 17 – 40m Climb a steep corner, then up easier rock to a wide ledge.
- P2 – 14 – 50m Up easy rock to the foot of a smooth open book which is in the line of the recess. Traverse 4m R, then up cracks to the terrace above. The rest of the route follows the line of a prominent slender pillar behind.
- P3 – 16 – 30m Up into a crack in the wall on the L of the pillar. Follow the crack for 10m, then R onto the corner crack. Up this to where a pull to the R brings you to a ledge on the front of the pillar.
- P4 – 17(A0) – 30m Up 3m to a bulge & into a jam crack. Follow the crack until it is possible to move L onto the face. Up on small holds up a shallow scoop to a stance on perched blocks.
- P5 – 20 – 35m Move L onto a steep wall. Up then use a flake to traverse diagonally L to the corner. Up a few moves in the corner, then traverse back to the R & pull into the groove above the belay point. Around the bulge onto easier rock. Up a crack on the L to a stance.
- P6 – 10 – 15m Up slabs to the top. Finish is about 20m R of the big step in the summit ridge.

Riders on the Storm - 21

Keith James and climbing partner(s)

Up the south face, starting about 5m right of John Moss' South Face Route.

- P1 - 18
- P2 - 20
- P3 – 20
- P4 - 19
- P5 - 20
- P6 - 21

Till Death Do Us Part - 20(A0)

Ian Kotze and Herman Uys 31/12/2004

Get to the bottom of the South Face. Roughly in the middle of the South Face is a very prominent notch. The route starts



below this and follows as straight a line as possible to the top.

P1 – 14 - 25m Pick one of the shallow grooves with a vegetated crack at the back. Climb this to narrow wide ledge.

P2 – 14 - 15m Climb non-descript rock to a wide ledge beneath a very large open book. Up to this point the rock is on angle, from here on it gets steadily steeper all the way to the top.

P3 – 20 (A0) - 25m Climb the face to the left of the open book following a crack to underneath a medium size roof. Traverse right (3 m) back into the open book.(Crux), A crack at the back of the roof takes a number 6 Wild Country Zero. Pull on this. Take a hanging belay. Note: we tried the open book but it was bloody hard, but it would probably be the more natural line to follow.

P4 - 20 - 15m Climb the hand jam crack up the open book to a detached pillar. Climb over the pillar and on the other side take a belay underneath another open book on a small ledge.

P5 – 18 Climb the open book. To a large ledge below the summit ridge. There is gear at about 2.5 meters and then it is a bit run out.

P6 – 16 - 15m Walk behind a big detached block through a little chimney. There is a nice big hand jam crack. Climb this to the top.

From here you can walk/scramble along the ridge to the summit. Pitch 3 and 4 can be combined into one if you just follow open book straight up.

Get off the summit ridge heading north and then head diagonally leftwards down the slope. A bit of route finding is necessary. Head towards the Western flank of the mountain where you will eventually get to a fence and the descent path.

Novel Attraction - 20 ★★

170m Ross Suter and Malcom Gowans, July 2000 (T)

This climb follows a direct break between the *Notch Route* and *Saga*.

At a R facing corner recess with black streaks and moss growing in it, below and about 10m right of the big recess that leads up to the prominent notch (step down in the crest of the face).

P1 - 15 - 33m Start immediately right of the corner. Climb up and rightwards, via undercling flakes, onto the arête. Climb up this and the recess above. Scramble up the blocky ramp tending slightly rightwards to a stance beneath a crack and black streaks.

P2 - 15 - 33m Climb the black-streaked break. Traverse 4m R and climb the L facing corner/crack. Stance on a ledge on the right, at the base of an obvious crack line.

P3 - 15 - 33m Climb the crack/break to a small stance on the L.

P4 - 20 - 48m Climb the crack/break. Take the R crack at the fork, until forced to move R into the next crack. Climb this to the top of the steep rock. Continue up, tending slightly L wards to stance on blocks 10m higher (cairn).

P5 - 11 - 20m Scramble onto blocks up on the L and climb the break to the top.

Scramble around R and up onto the summit ridge, traverse past the trig beacon to where the level starts dropping. Go down the first small step and then cut back sharp L and find a meandering, easy scrambling way down to a small neck, roughly above the west face. Descend the slope on the north side of this.

Saga – 13

Tom Davenport, David & Joe Maclennan 21/05/1978 (T)

Start 30m R of a big recess which comes down from the prominent notch.

P1 – 11 - 33m up the easy slab with the rib to the R. Move slightly R & up a grassy crack.

P2 – 8 - 17m Scramble across & up to the foot of the chimney.

P3 – 11 - 12m Up the chimney, then over to a wall on the R.

P4 - 13 Climb up a grassy crack for 5m. Move R & up the steep fractured wall to a big ledge.

P5 – 9 - 25m L along the ledge & around the corner. Up to the foot of a huge chimney with a massive chock stone in it. Should be a peg.

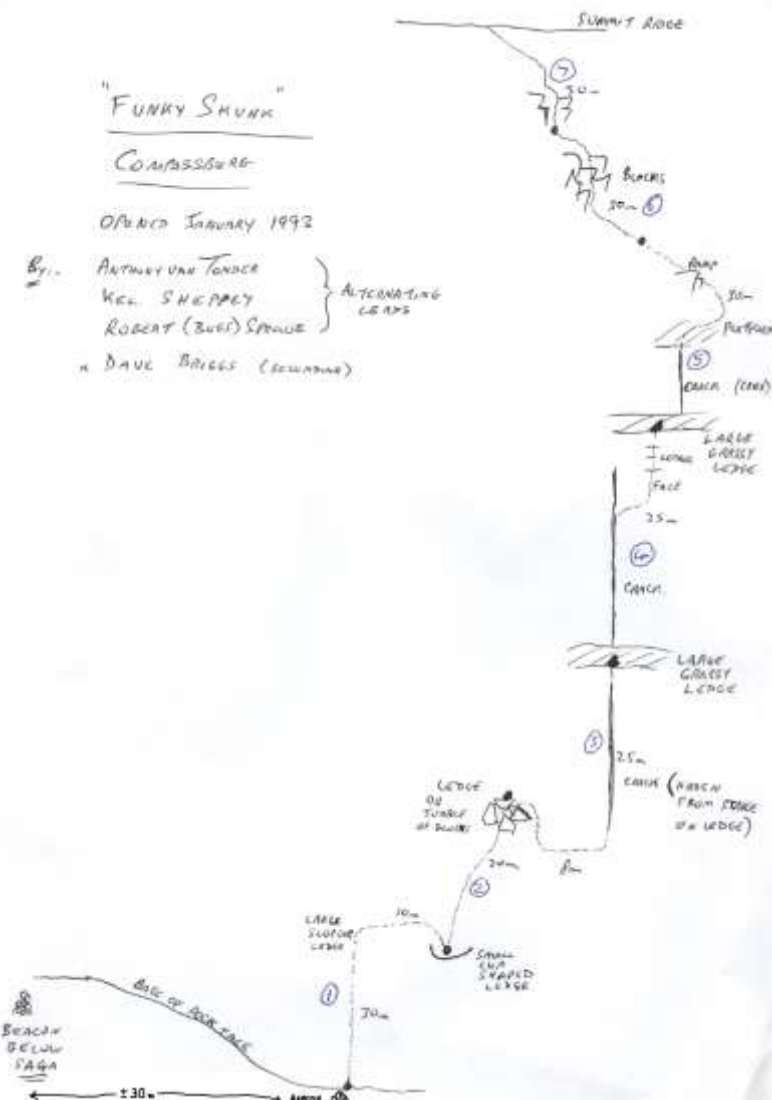
P6 – 15 - 25m Up the chimney to the first block. Climb around it with good pro. Up pulling out to the R of the second block. Find a stance on the huge blocks.



P7 – 15 - 25m R over a grassy platform to a narrow recess, just over a meter wide with a crack on either side. Bridge this & pull up on an over hanging block. The rock above is very steep. Travers R across a wall 2m below a roof. Move across & down to an easy crack which is climbed to a stance.

P8 – 13 - 26m Up the chimney on the L. Pull out of overhanging top on good holds. Scramble to the final rock band.

P9 – 10 - 30m Move L then up an easy wall to the top. Top out about 20m R of prominent notch in the ridge.



Funky Skunk – 19

Anthony van Tonder, K. Sheppey, Robert (Bugs) Sprouse and Dave Briggs, January 1993

Opened on sight. 7 pitch route on the main face about 30m to the R of Saga.

We named the route Funky Skunk. (Someone was farting silently and Bugs kept saying he thought he could smell a skunk).

Purple Pillar – 13

Chris Davies, Ben, Joe & David MacLennan July 1978 (T)

Start about 60m R of Saga below a big pillar. The ground to the R drops away steeply.

P1 – 10 - 30m Easy slabs on the L & up a groove. Pull out onto a ledge. Walk R to a stance just below the pillar.

P2 – 13 - 30m Traverse 5m R & up a big flake below a roof. Hand swing L & up to the side of the pillar past a peg. Step up onto a block & move R around a corner. Diagonally R over two corners to a stance below a roof. Prominent chock stone.

P3 – 11 - 35m Climb down 4m to the RH end of the stance, then traverse R to an arête.

P4 – 10 - 15m Descending traverse around an arête. Follow a ledge to a stance.

P5 – 13 - 25m Easier angled rib on the R. Start on the front then move L & up next to loose flakes. Past a bush onto a wide ledge.

P6 – 11 - 50m Up blocks to a ledge. Cross l to a big, leaning flake. Then diagonally R up a face to another ledge. Up a groove to a ledge at the foot of the final rock band. There is an obvious thread on the R & an easy ramp to the L.

P7 – 13 - 30m Layback up short steep crack 2m L of the belay. Step up into the corner crack on the R. Move up to where it overhangs. Pull out R. Up to a ledge & follow an easy ramp to the top.

Lionheart – 13

Don, Joe & David MacLennan 16/01/1980 (T)

Walk past the shoulder below Purple Pillar, drop down & walk along the foot of the overhanging cliff. Traverse onto a long, easy angled ridge.

P1 – 12 – 50m Climb the groove on the R of the ridge.

P2 – 13 – 50m Climb diagonally L up the front of the ridge on big flakes, then back to the R.

P3 – 12 – 40m Up to green lichen blocks & through a gap to a ledge. Walk 5m around to the LH side of the ridge.



P4 – 13 – 20m Up a short groove, then up a vertical slit in the front of a massive block.

P5 – 13 – 25m Traverse L & into a chimney. Up past a big chock stone then pull out to the L. Climb a face to the big stacked blocks & a ledge.

P6 – 13 – 40m Jam a direct crack up the last rock band. Finish L of the fence, about 20m to L of ridge.

NORTH FACE

This is the crag seen up on the left when three-quarters of the way up the approach slope on the walk to the West and South Faces. The highest part is in the middle of the crag and a lower band of clean-looking rock is to the left.

Road to Mecca - 18 ★★★

70m Malcom Gowans and Ross Suter, July 2000 (T)

Roughly beneath the upper orange face on the central, highest section of the crag, within 10m of the left edge of the protruding face. Start immediately right of a vertical crack, below and slightly left of a pale, thin, left-facing flake-fin at about 5 to 10m above the ground.

P1 - 15 - 30m Climb up immediately right of the crack to connect higher with the abovementioned flake-fin briefly, before moving leftwards and up to a small ledge. Continue up, tending rightwards to gain a good ledge, at the base of the orange face.

P2 – 18 - 25m From the bolted stance on the right side of the ledge, step right into the recess-corner and climb this, to exit up blocky rock above to a blocky ledge.

P3 - 15 - 15m Cross the ledge, slightly to the right, to twin vertical cracks in a short face. Climb these and up to a higher ledge. Abseil off prong or touch-point down to the bolted stance, then off these bolts to the ground.

Murder of Crows – 18 ★★★

35m Malcom Gowans and Ross Suter, July 2000 (T)

To the right of the central part of the face the ground level rises up into a wide 'bowl'. Start on the left side of this, towards the back of the 'bowl', at a vertical crack with an obvious block wedged in it at about 10m height. Climb the crack; step left into short right-facing corner at the top and up to a small ledge on the left. Continue up the crack to a large ledge. Abseil off touch point.

WESTERN FACES



This wall is above the parking on the North West side. The most RH of the lowest bands of rock before the shoulder. First three routes are on a small protrusion. 950m walk from the car park.

1. Thirty Three – 17

49m Derek Marshall & Craig Bester 27/11/2005 (T)

6m L of *Most High Dwelling*, up a 'V' shaped L facing open book. Which widens into a big open book. Up this to the top.

2. Most High Dwelling – 17

50m Derek Marshall & William Lesley 27/11/2005 (T)

Up smooth ramp 6m L of *Blood Red Wine*. Move L into deep 'V' recess, capped with a large block. Then onto top of "stack". L for a meter, then up the perfect lay away.

3. Blood Red Wine – 17

52m Derek Marshall & William Lesley 27/11/2005 (T)

Start 4m L of double L facing open books. The RH of which has a small square roof. Up cracks in ramp to a large ledge. Move R & up a L facing open book. Before the open book becomes an overhang and runs diagonally L. Move R into a large tricky open book.

4. Sabela – 14

32m Derek Marshall & William Lesley 26/11/2005 (T)

Shallow uniform recess to L of protrusion.

5. Sons of Pitches – 15

30m William Lesley & Craig Bester 26/11/2005 (T)

More prominent crack which runs out of a shallow recess in center of protrusion.

6. Skid Row – 12

34m Craig Bester & William Lesley 26/11/2005 (T)

'V' recess on R of protrusion.

