

Howison's Poort

Rock Climbing Guide

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Directions: Howison's Poort is situated 8km out of Grahamstown on the N2 going to Gqeberha (Port Elizabeth). Howies is about a kilometer down the hill from the Stony Crescent Hotel. At the Berg River bridge there is a parking area next to an old quarry, on the opposite side of the road to the hotel. The caves are very close to the car park, but they don't look good at all... till you cross the stream.

Walk-in: About 40 seconds max.

Access: No access restrictions.

History: Howies was discovered by Keith James ¹...way back. Initially its potential was only recognized as a bouldering or training area. Later, after much gardening, some routes were bolted. The wasp problem was sorted by burning them out with a blue stove tapped to a stick ³. The first 14 routes were bolted & developed by Keith James, Jeremy Colenso, Shannon Law & Marc Scáafer ⁴. The Rhodes University Mountain Club sponsored 50 bolts & 5 drill bits for this initial development ⁴.

The first recorded mention of the climbing at what we know as Howison's Poort is in Jeff Stevens', *Crag Fax Grahamstown Crag Guide*, published in 1994. He records Howies as a bouldering area called *La Plage* (page 38). Keith James always refers to *Howison's* as *Scoops* or *The Scoops*. This scribe adopted the name *Howison's Poort* because this was the name used by the climbers of his generation in the late '90s. Howison's Poort was named after the builder of the road through the poort, Captain Howison.

Joe MacLennan's route guide booklet *A Short Guide to Rock Climbing near Howison's Poort* (1978) & Joe's reference to Howison's Poort on page 8 of his booklet "a pocket guide to rock climbing near Grahamstown" (1980); refers to what we now know as Moodie's.

The names of routes that were opened in the '90s info is information that was given by Kevan Watkins, Keith James & Martin Renz. This info got scrawled in the back of Derek Marshall's copy of Jeff Stevens', *Crag Fax Grahamstown Crag Guide*. These became the adopted names. There were some unnamed routes, for example the routes opened by Marc Scáafer. These were, after various enquiries, summarily issued names by Derek Marshall.

Fat Boys Aerobic Workout was bolted by Keith James & Jeremy Colenso in late 1995 ¹. *Fat Boys* was opened by Jeremy Colenso & Shannon Law in 1996. At that time wherever *Fat Boys* was mentioned in publications, it was given a grade of 30 ⁴. Notably

Star Ratings	
★ ★ ★	Classic route in this province
★ ★	Good route in the area
★	Good route at this crag
No star	Reasonable to bollocks
Abbreviations & Symbols	
	(T) Trad route (natural gear) & grade
	Sport route (bolted) & grade
	Open Project / in-progress & ± grade
	Closed Project & ± grade
	(S) FA was solo & grade
	Potential
	Abseil point
(11B&C)	Number of bolts & top chains
P / RB	Piton / Removable bolt
	Afternoon Shade
	Morning Shade
	Shade all day
	Sun all day
	Dappled shade all day
	Can be climbed in wet weather

an Italian, Alfredo D' Matteis (social researcher in PE townships, in '98/99) flashed it, and then later soloed it ¹. He also soloed all the other routes in the big cave. Paul Brouard on-sighted *Fat Boys* & left it at 30, this was his hardest onsite at that time. Later climbers like Martin Renz, Kevan Watkins, Adam Ludford & Dave Harding gave the "consensus" grade of 29. Juan-dray Marshall, who was 15 at the time, re-bolted & sent *Fat Boys* in 2011.



Huge thanks the following people for giving route information & general historical snippets; Keith James, Kevan Watkins, Jeremy Colenso & Martin Renz.

Re-bolting was sponsored by Derek the Monster Marshall.

Time & Weather: Shaded most of the day. Can be cold in winter. The caves only seep after a few days of continuous rain & can be climbed in the rain. After heavy rain the routes become a bit sandy, so take a brush.

General: 42 sport routes and 2 short poor trad routes. There is limited potential for new routes.

Rock Type: Overhanging quartzite.

Hazards: Area is reasonably safe, but take the usual precautions as the crags are on the national road. The caves tend to attract wanders, vagrants & Rhodes students, but they are mostly harmless. There are sometimes turds in the smaller cave. Watch out for these, they are not fun to stand in.

Environmental: There is lots of trash at Howison's. Please do your little bit & spend 5 minutes filling a bag to take home, you will influence your mates & they will join you. In time it will make every bit of difference. Believe....!

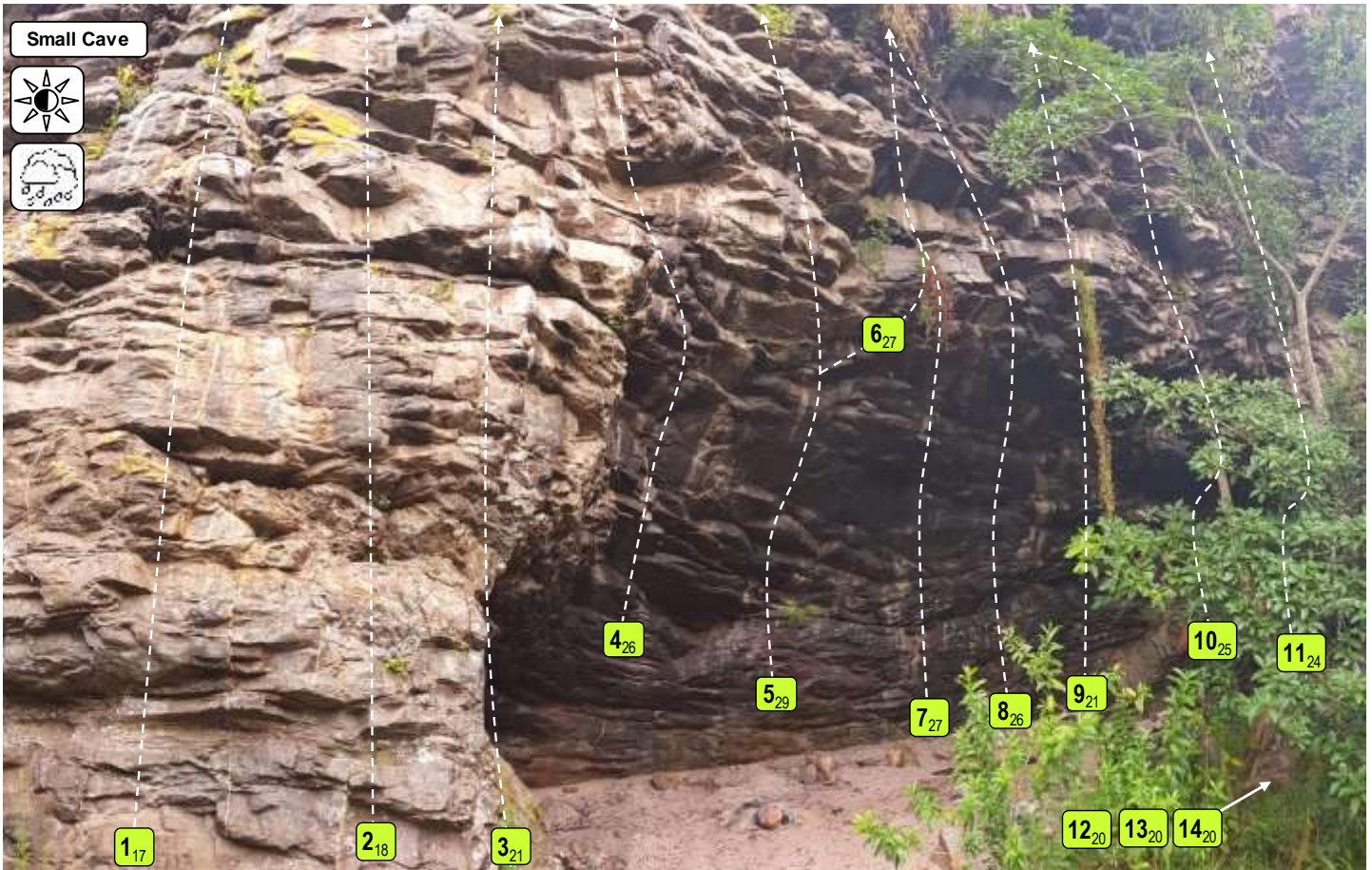
Please do not add to the existing graffiti.

Accommodation: There are a hundred and one places to stay in Grahamstown. Google is your Friend!

Small Cave



This is the sandy cave closest to the main road.

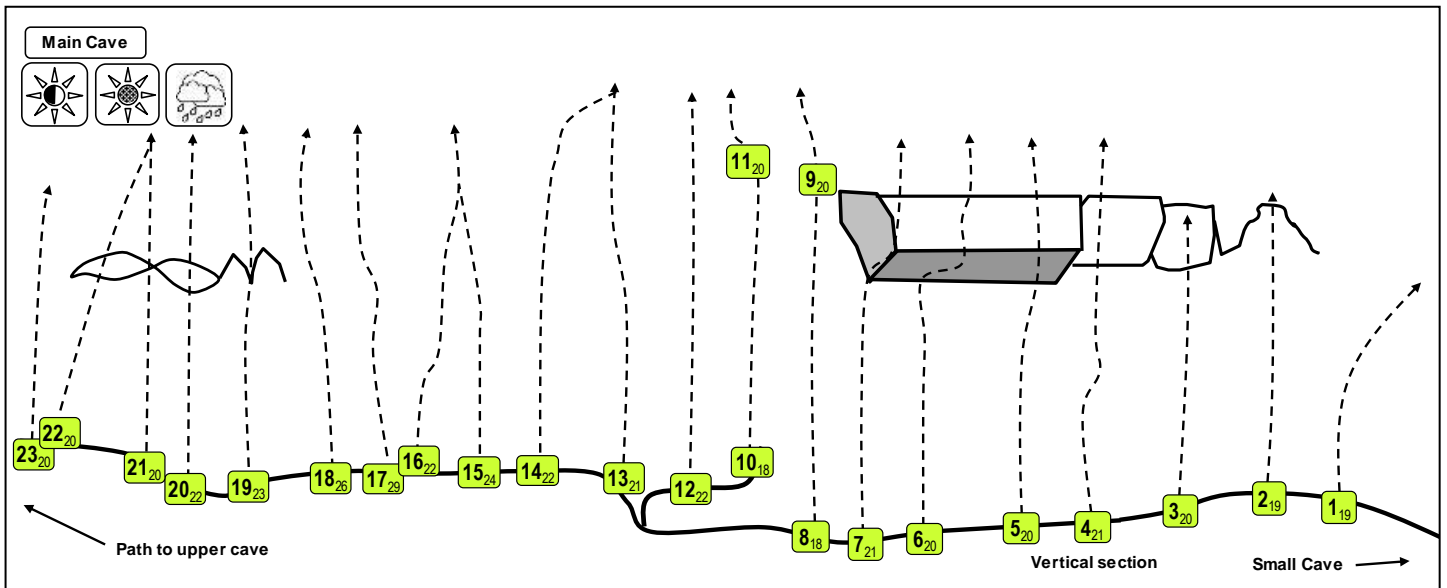


- **1. Crystal Crack – 17**
Martin Rehm & Derek Marshall 15/01/2011 (7B&C)
- **2. Hande Hoch Fritz – 18**
Martin Rehm & Derek Marshall 16/01/2011 (4B&C)
- **3. Fringe Benefits ¹ – 21 ★**
Re-bolted & extended by Juan-drays Marshall.
Keith James May 1995 (4B&C)
- **4. Sputnik – 26 ² ★★**
Jeremy Colenso & Shannon Law May 1995 (5B&C)
Re-bolted & extended by Juan-drays Marshall.
- **5. Body Parts – 29 ² ★★**
Jeremy Colenso & Shannon Law May 1995 (5B&C)
Re-bolted & extended by Juan-drays Marshall.
- **6. The Future Now – 27**
Martin Renz 2004 (6B&C)
Link route.
- **7. The Fridge ³ – 27 ★★**
Shannon Law & Jeremy Colenso May 1995 (7B&C)
Re-bolted & extended by Juan-drays Marshall.
- **8. But Here I Am – 26 ★**
Juan-drays & Derek Marshall (7B&C)
- **9. Another Roadside Attraction ² – 21 ★★**
Keith James April 1995 (5B&C)
This was the first route to be bolted at Howissen's. Re-bolted & extended by Juan-drays Marshall.
- **10. Ma se Auntie – 25 ★**
Juan-drays & Derek Marshall 23/01/2011 (6B&C)
- **11. L.O.V.E. Machine – 24**
Juan-drays & Derek Marshall 23/01/2011 (6B&C)
- **12. Ek Koekeloer Jou – 20**
Stefan Kramer & Juan-drays Marshall 16/01/2011 (6B&C)
- **13. Ek Sommer Moer Jou – 20**
Stefan Kramer & Derek Marshall 16/01/2011 (6B&C)
- **14. Tattooed Madman – 20**
Terence Trevaskis & Derek Marshall 16/01/2011 (8B&C)

Main Cave



This is a few meters up stream of the *small cave*. The “vertical” lines in between the caves are included in the *Main Cave*.



- 1. **Reprobate Alley** ⁵ – 19
- 2. **King Tut’s Tomb** ⁵ – 19
- 3. **Chuck & Duck** ^{4 5} – 20

Extended by Derek the monster Marshall.

- 4. **Has Been** ¹ – 21

Extended by Derek the monster Marshall.

- 5. **Gymrat** ¹ – 20 ★

Extended by Derek the monster Marshall.

- 6. **Invisible Elephant** – 20 ★

- 7. **Do the Dassie** – 21 ★

- 8. **The Savant** ? – 18 ★★

- 9. **Savage** – 20 ★★

Extension through the roof.

Keith James 1996 (3B&C)

Keith James 1996 (4B&C)

Keith James 1996 (6B&C)

Keith James November 2004 (7B&C)

Keith James 1995 (6B&C)

Derek Marshall & Garvin Jacobs 2001 (7B&C)

Martin Rehm & Derek Marshall 15/01/2011 (7B&C)

Marc Scáafer & Keith James 1996 (6B&C)

Derek & Juan-dray Marshall 26/02/2011 (9B&C)



● **10. Slash ? – 18 ★★**

Marc Scáafer & Keith James early 90's (5B&C)

● **11. Burn – 20 ★**

Derek & Juan-drax Marshall 26/02/2011 (7B&C)

● **12. Émigré ¹ – 22 ★★**

Keith James 1998 (6B&C)

Re-bolted & re-directed by Derek the monster Marshall.

● **13. Paglia's Pursuit ¹⁵ – 21 ★★**

Keith James (5B&C)

Re-bolted & re-directed by Derek the monster Marshall.

● **14. Blasphemy ¹⁵ – 22 ★★**

Keith James May 1995 (6B&C)

This is the route with the hand size jug glued onto it. Re-bolted & extended by Derek the monster Marshall. Jug was removed in 2020 by Matt Grunewald.

● **15. Heresy ²⁵ – 24 ★★**

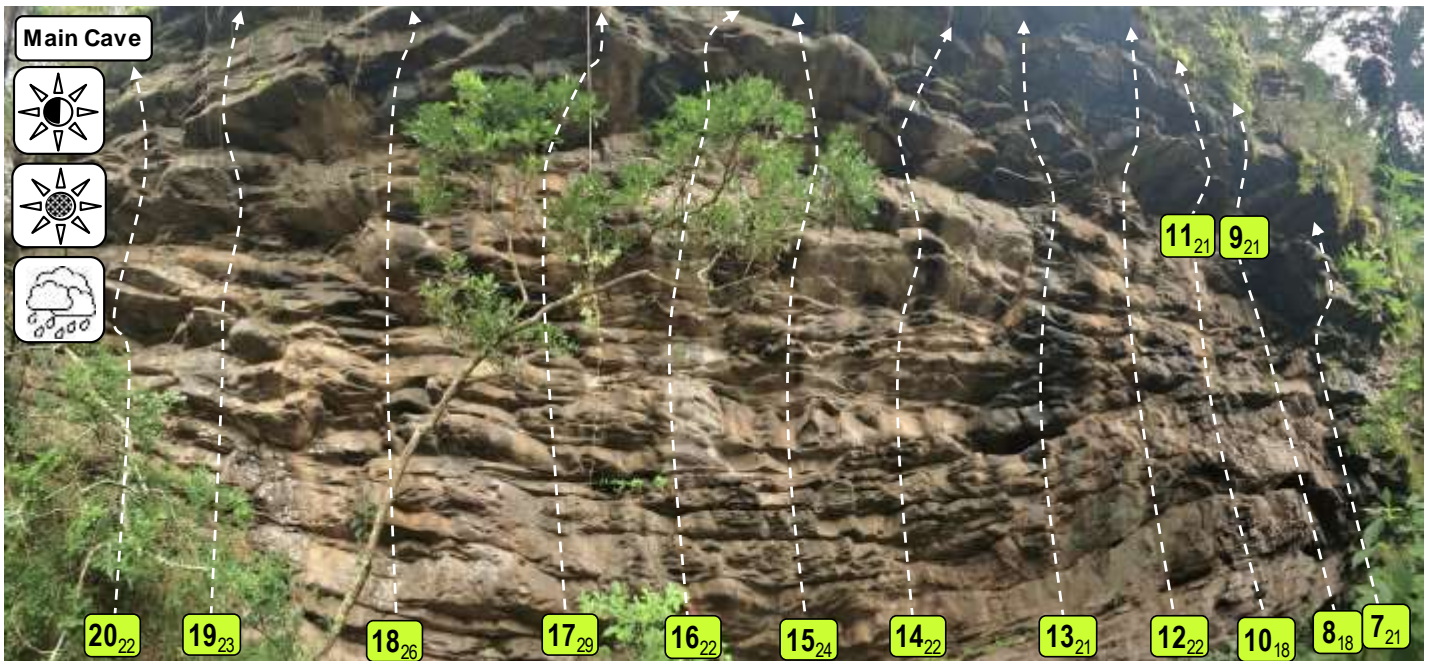
Keith James May 1995 (6B&C)

This route was opened with a glue-on hold at the crux at 23. This was later removed by Kevan Watkins, making *Heresy* a 24. Re-bolted & extended by Derek the monster Marshall.

● **16. Avatar ¹⁵ – 22 ★★**

Keith James May 1995 (6B&C)

This was the first bolted line in the *Main Cave*. Re-bolted by Juan-drax Marshall.



● **17. Fat Boys Aerobic Workout – 29² ★★★**

Jeremy Colenso & Shannon Law 1996 (6B&C)

Bolted by Keith James & Jeremy Colenso in late 1995 ¹.

● **18. Skinny Toppies – 26 ★★**

Juan-drax & Derek Marshall 19/02/2011 (9B&C)

Bolted Derek the monster Marshall.

● **19. Texas Kak Huis – 23**

Juan-Drax & Derek Marshall 23/01/2011 (5B&C)

Bolted Derek the monster Marshall.

● **20. Wake Up the King – 22**

Juan-Drax & Derek Marshall 05/02/2011 (5B&C)

● **21. Amaqwaba – 20**

Derek & Juan-Drax Marshall 05/02/2011 (4B&C)

● **22. Live Like an Animal – 20**

Derek & Juan-Drax Marshall 05/02/2011 (4B&C)

● **23. Gaan Kak in Die Mielies – 20**

Stefan Kramer & Juan-Drax Marshall 23/01/2011 (2B&C)

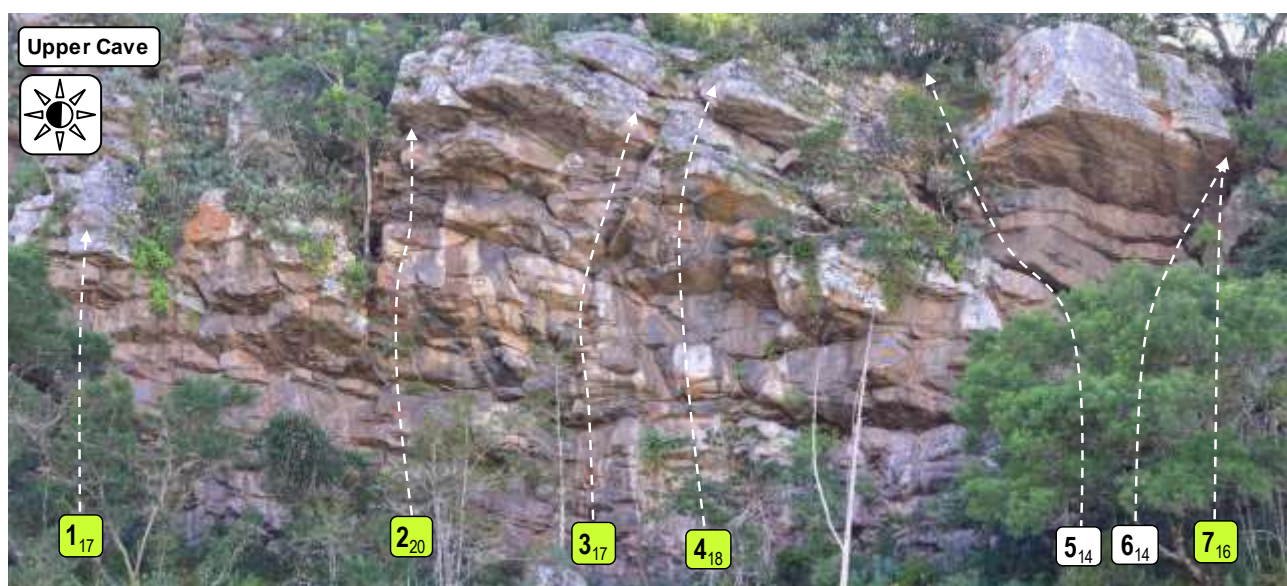


Upper Cave



This cave is on a flat ledge about 25m above the stream. A reasonable path starts at the LH side of the *Main Cave*. The routes are a bit short & scrappy. The lower caves are a much better option.

- **1. Valcross – 17** Derek Marshall & Craig Bester 22/02/2002 (4B&C)
- **2. Brighter Day – 20** Derek Marshall & Craig Bester 22/02/2002 (5B&C)
- **3. Strangers on the Street – 17** Derek Marshall & Allen Luck 23/02/2002 (5B&C)
- **4. Templar Renegade – 18** Derek Marshall & Allen Luck 23/02/2002 (6B&C)
- 5. Offal – 14** Allen Luck & Craig Bester 22/02/2002 (T)
Up shelves to a large cave slot. Traverse L under roof & out.
- 6. No More – 14** Allen Luck & Craig Bester 22/02/2002 (T)
Up groove, then R under roof & out to the R of roof.
- **7. Bring Your Jeans – 16** Craig Bester & Derek Marshall 22/02/2002 (5B&C)



References:

- ¹ Keith James Various conversation & e mails with Derek Marshall over the years.
- ² Kevan Watkins Various conversation & e mails with Derek Marshall over the years.
- ³ Jeremy Colenso Various e mails with Derek Marshall over the years.
- ⁴ Keith James Highlife, May 1996, Issue 2
- ⁵ Keith James Highlife, September 1996, Issue 4
- [?] Derek Marshall Issued this name, as nobody could provide a name.