

CATHEDRAL ROCKS

A climber's guide to CATHEDRAL ROCKS

(New England)

By Al Stephens, 1996.

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New Routes

If putting up new routes is your thing then please feel free. However bolting in National Parks is actually illegal so don't.

Any new route descriptions can be sent to:

UNE Mountaineering Club

University of New England

Armidale, NSW, 2351

Or visit the club website:

<http://www.une.edu.au/unemc/>

History

Due to the popularity of other crags in the Armidale/New England area, Cathedral Rock hasn't produced many new routes since its discovery as a climbing area in 1979. The history of this crag spans only two years. In the first of those two years, 1979, access to the cliff was more reminiscent of a minor bush-walk. For the second part of this history, 1984, access was greatly improved with a picnic/camping area and a pleasant track leading to the crag.

In 1979 Ed Sharp convinced Al Stephens that there was a huge amount of rock to climb at Cathedral Rock. In those days there was a locked gate at the aqueduct. Bushwalkers parked here and walked several kilometres down the road, then cross-country to the rock. Ed and Al, being very cunning, phoned the D.C.A.(who administer the Radar on Round Mountain) and convinced them to leave the gate open for them. They drove to the bottom of the hill (the site of the current gate) then walked across to the rock. After some exploring they found and completed Morlock (14), a climb that goes from one side of the rock to the

other. They realised the great potential of the place but didn't return until several years later.

1984 was quite a huge year for Cathedral Rock. Stephens convinced Larry Dixon of the possibility of new routes waiting in the warm winter sun. Stephens led Soft Touch (17), in May and they returned in June for Dixon to lead Day Dream (12), while Stephens did the big chimney We Won't Get Fooled Again (16). Stephens returned the same month with Richard Curtis to put up two climbs on the isolated pillar to the left of the walk-in track. Curtis glided up Tontons Macoutes (22) while from the same start Stephens went up, did a backward somersault off, then up again, Street Cafe (21). In August Stephens led Brian Birchall up the chimney Instrument Of Revenge (17). Paul (Animal) Colyvan got wind of the possibility of new routes and in December, with Birchall and Simon Gay put up the very scary and dangerous Cheap Regrets (22). The same month Colyvan returned with Stephens and Dixon to do Bangin' Beava (24).

Well that's it for now. There are still some cracks left but the best routes will be the walls and faces littered with chicken heads. Protection will require the use of modern technology. It's all there waiting for you!

Access

From Armidale take the Grafton/Dorrigo Road for approx. 79km to the turn-off to the park. Follow the dirt road for 7km. to the Barokee Rest Area. Park here then follow the walking track for approx. 2km. to the walls of Cathedral Rock. All climbs, except Morlock, are on the sunny Northern side.

The best time to climb here is autumn, late spring or on a still, sunny winter's day. Take out all your rubbish and no fires please.

Warning.

Rockclimbing, like dodging Kangaroos on the road at night, or eating magic mushrooms, can be hazardous. The author of this guide-book accepts no responsibility for inaccurate or incomplete information, nor for any controversial gradings of climbs, or reliance on fixed protection, all of which will, hopefully, be reliable. The editor also assumes users of this guide have a high level of climbing ability, will have received training from a skilled rockclimbing instructor, will properly use appropriate equipment and will have great care for their and others personal safety.

The Cliff

As you approach the main cliff from the track, you will see a wide crack up high to the left of the track. This is the second pitch of Tontons Macoutes and Street Cafe. To get to the start, scrub bash across to the base of the pillar.

22Tontons Macoutes 35 m

Start: A very loose and chossy-looking start crack that leads to superb climbing out left.

27m. (crux) Carefully up some choss then up the crack to a small roof. From here swing left to the V-groove. Up this to belay on ledge.

8m. Straight up the large corner/crack. Abseil off the back via a very large bollard.

- R.Curtis, A.Stephens,(alt leads) June 84.

21Street Café 30 m

Start: As for T.M. The chossy crack, then move out right onto the wall. Stephens performed an excellent backward somersault, with pike, when a chicken head snapped off the slab.

22m. (crux) Up choss and good crack to small roof of T.M., then move out right and up juggy wall and fine short slab. Belay on ledge as for T.M.

8m. As for pitch 2 of Tontons Macoutes, The wide crack/corner. Abseil off large bollard at the back of the pinnacle.

- A.Stephens, R.Curtis, June 84.

If you follow the track to the main wall you will come to two long chimneys. The left-hand one is Instrument Of Revenge, a chimney in a right-facing corner.

17 ... Instrument Of Revenge30 m

Start: The chimney approx. 10m. left of We Wont Get Fooled Again.

30m. Chimney then jam to the top.

- A.Stephens, B.Birchall, Aug. 84.

16 ... We Wont Get Fooled Again.....35 m

Start: Approx. 10m. right of W.W.G.F.A. A left-facing chimney that gets wider higher up.

35m. Easy chimneying leads to harder chimneying at half height. Pro is spaced out on the top half. Take large gear.

- A.Stephens, L.Dixon, June 84.

24 .. Bangin' Beava40 m

Start: The crack 2m. right of the big flake on the overhanging wall.

1. 25m. Up overhanging crack (crux) , move into crack on left, and up corner, step right to a big flake. Up flake to belay on top of it.

2. 15m. Up crack on left and step right and easy ground to top.

- P.Colyvan, A.Stephens (alt leads),L.Dixon, Dec. 84.

12Day Dream 20 m

Start: Up on a ledge on the right-hand end of the main cliff, past Bangin Beava. A great introduction to hand jamming.

1. 20m. A short chimney section leads to a classic hand crack.

- L.Dixon, A.Stephens, June 84.

17Soft Touch 22 m

Start: Start in a gully at the right-hand end of the main cliff, just left of Cheap Regrets 5m. right of Day Dream.

22m. 4m. Up the gully, then step left around the tree, then up the diagonal crack, with a short delicate slab finish.

- A.Stephens, L.Dixon, May 84.

22Cheap Regrets..... 20 m

Start: Just left of Soft Touch, a rounded low-angled arete, harder than it looks. Take a sling for a nubbin runner. A very serious lead.

20m. Giggle at the grade and motor up to a stance above steep section. Shake shit from your pants and go for the top. Stop shaking and set up a suss belay.

- P.Colyvan, B.Birchall, S.Gay, Dec. 84.

All the above routes are on the Northern side of the main cliff. On the Southern side there is only one route to date. This is Morlock. It follows a crack that goes from the Southern side of the rock to the Northern (main cliff) side. The potential for many other routes on the Southern side is endless. However you'll need electronic technology to protect most new routes.

14 ... Morlock63 m

Start: Best do this in summer. A chimney with a chockstone at about half-way. I can't remember where it starts. Not far from the Western end of the cliff.

1. 40m. Up twin cracks then left to base of chimney. Out and around a squeeze then deeper into chimney. Up the crack deep in the chimney (crux) , move up to and squeeze inside the chockstone, then up to belay where chimney becomes horizontal.

2. 23m. Follow the horizontal chimney through to the other side of the mountain.

- A.Stephens, E.Sharp, June 79.