

# Classic Climbs



## One Step in the Clouds VS 4c 70m

**Area:** Tremadog

**Crag:** Craig Bwlch y Moch

**Style:** Trad

**Rock type:** Dolerite

**Approach:** 5 minutes

**Altitude:** 50m

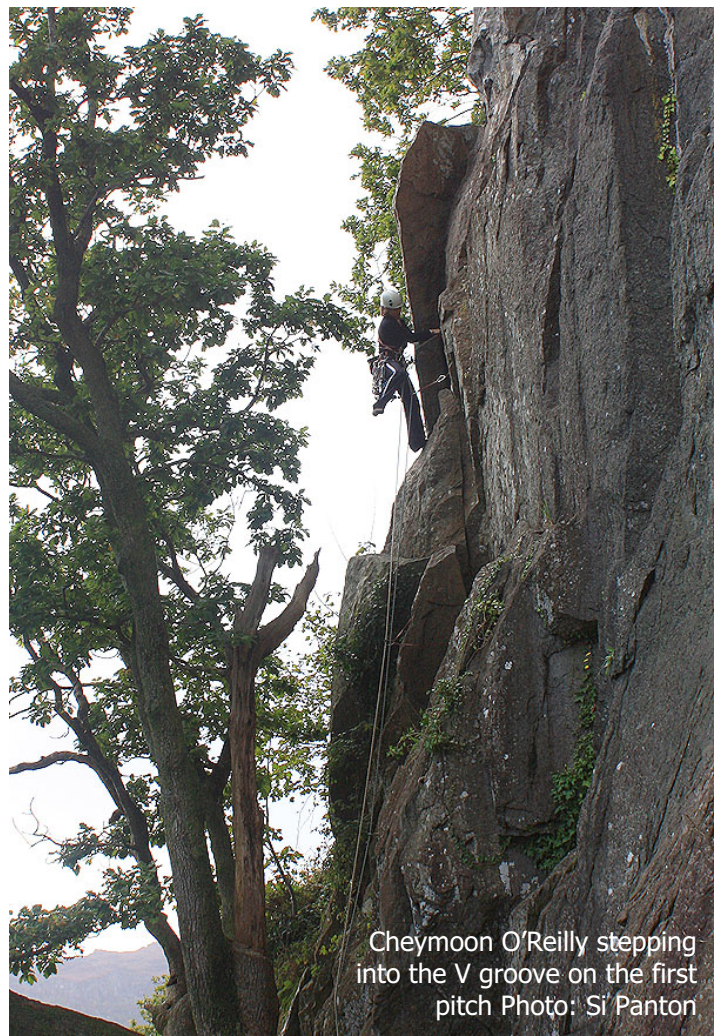
**OS grid ref:** 577 406

**First Ascent:** C T Jones, R Moseley 12.05.58

**There is a superb range of easy access crags in the Tremadog area.** All are blessed with wonderful dolerite rock and have numerous classic routes. Best of all though is Craig Bwlch y Moch, which has been owned and managed by the BMC since 1979. The cliff sits just above the road and adjacent to Eric's Café and campsite, a traditional base for visiting climbers.

The Vector buttress is arguably one of the best pieces of rock in North Wales. Its majesty and grandness is not too apparent when stood in the trees at its base. A series of ugly looking grooves run upwards through overhangs and what lies above is unclear. The only feature of any real aesthetic merit is the ochre slab on Vector. A sense of intimidation hangs in the air and anybody looking to find the classic VS, One Step in the Clouds might be wondering if they have come to the right place.

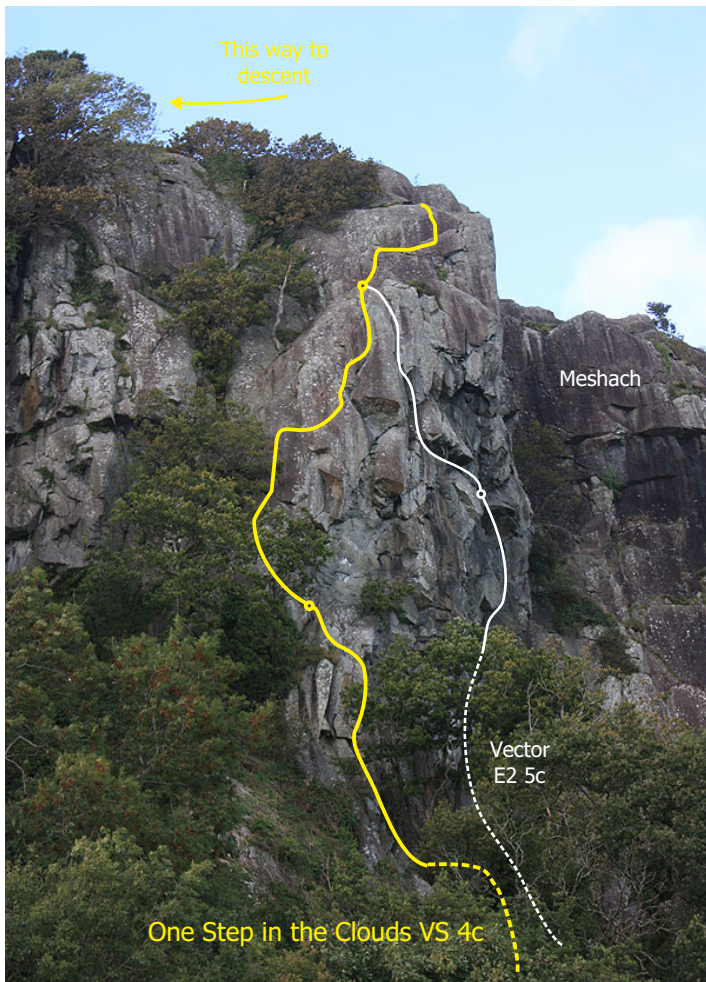
There is of course a line of weakness on the left, a series of short grooves leading up past a huge tree to a



Cheymoon O'Reilly stepping into the V groove on the first pitch Photo: Si Panton

prominent V groove. Beyond that the way forward is unclear as the upper section of the route is out of view. So off you set, squirming up an awkward groove, grasping a rounded tree root as the first ledge is gained. Squeezing past the tree and heading up a ledgy wall on the left you now have the protection of the biggest runner on the crag, not that there is much risk of testing the tree's soundness as the climbing is steady until the V groove is reached. This is the first significant challenge on the route. At first it repels and a chalky jug round to the left only adds confusion. Best to get stuck in; a few slippy jams in the back of the groove should get you to a position of balance and a vigorous pull out onto a ledgy area. Just above is a monster flake belay.

The upper part of the route is still out of view though. Even once the intrepid leader has popped their head round to the left for a gander, all is not immediately obvious. A crack leads up rightwards, but soon blanks out into a sea of seemingly featureless dolerite. Good wires are placed



Gav Foster reaching the top of the V groove on the first pitch Photo: Si Panton



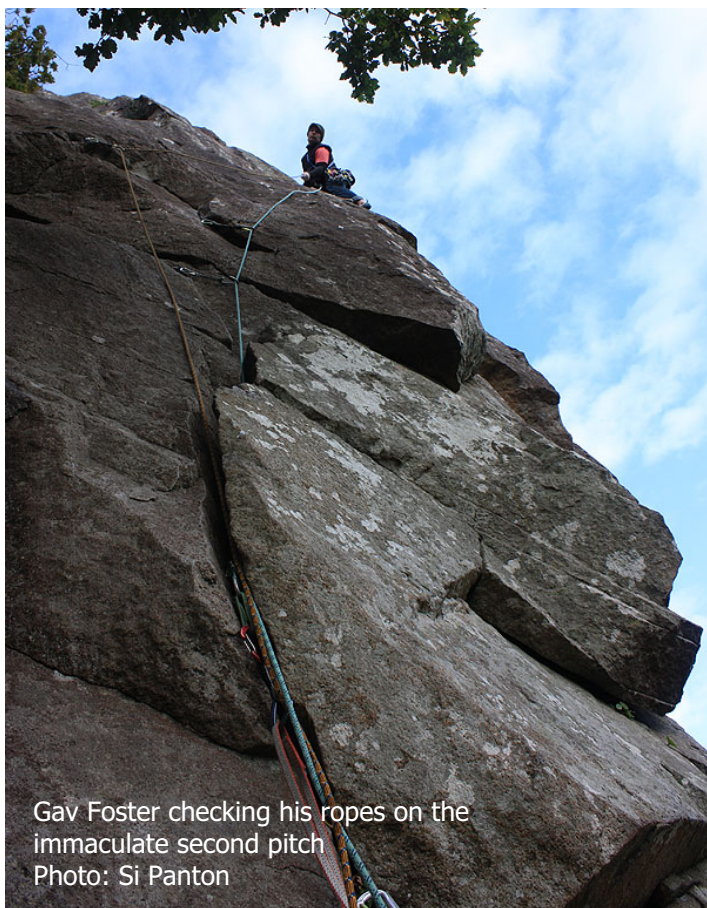
and slowly the line becomes apparent, as a trail of small holds is followed up then out rightwards with an alarming increase in exposure. This section feels a touch bold, but a large flake is soon reached and you can take stock of where you are. Below your feet the glorious void, and above more blank looking rock.

Upward movement is rewarded, if not by the appearance of jugs, at least more good runners. A leftwards escape route into Hail Bebe is possible at this point, but the true path lies up right. The climbing is quite intricate (as slabby dolerite tends to be), but in reality not much harder than what you've already done. So take a deep breath and go for it, the sanctuary of the belay ledge lies only just above. The position here, perched on the edge of the Vector buttress head wall is quite wonderful. Be sure to savour it while your second picks their way up the pitch below. The final pitch shares ground with the rather excellent Hail Bebe, which has a similar overall line and character, albeit at a much more reasonable (V Diff) standard. Pad up to a good runner then traverse right onto the huge diagonal flake. A final tricky pull through the steep wall above can be done or perhaps more naturally just follow the flake all the way as per Hail Bebe.

If you are keen for more action, why not try the nearby Grim Wall, a slightly tougher VS, or Merlin Direct, a bottom end HVS situated at the right side of the cliff.

### Top tip

For the descent it is tempting to abseil down the corner to the right of the Vector Buttress, especially if you're wearing tight rock shoes. But do remember, to 'look before you chuck' - nobody likes ropes dropped on their head. Also, bear in mind that by the time you've coiled your ropes, carried them over to the abseil station (a tree with a loop of rope and a mailon) uncoiled them, dropped them down and untangled them on the way, then pulled down and recoiled them at the bottom, the clock will have ticked well beyond the 10 minutes the walk down takes.



Gav Foster checking his ropes on the immaculate second pitch  
Photo: Si Pantan



Al Benson making the final tricky moves at the top of pitch 3  
Photo: Si Pantan

**Rack:** Double ropes (50m or 60m), 12 quickdraws, 2 60cm sling, 2 120cm sling, full set of wires 1 - 11 with double ups on sizes 1 - 6, full set of cams sizes 0.5 - 3.5.

**Approach:** The crag looms prominently over the A498 Tremadog Beddgelert road between Eric's café and the sharp bend at Portreuddyn castle. Convenient parking is available at Eric's Café, however if you are foolish enough to not want to give your custom to said establishment, there is a charge payable.

Vecror buttress is located 100m from the left side of the crag directly above a small layby (limited parking). Follow a twisting path up through the boulder strewn woodland to arrive at the base of the buttress.

**Descent:** Walk in the direction of the cafe, a stile is crossed at the far end of a flat area. Follow the steep, well-worn path downhill.

**Conditions:** The Tremadog cliffs often avoid the rain that blights the nearby mountain crags of Snowdonia. If it is showery in Llanberis, the chances are that it will be dry down here. Craig Bwlch y Moch also dries very quickly after rain; there might be the odd persistent streak of wetness, but nothing that will cause too many problems.

### Guidebooks, further reading and maps

Tremadog (Steve Long Climbers' Club 2010), North Wales Rock 2<sup>nd</sup> edition (Simon Pantan, Ground Up, 2009), North Wales Classics (Jack Geldard, Rockfax 2010), Explorer



Craig Bwlch y Moch from Eric's Cafe  
Photo: Si Pantan