

Classic Climbs



Streaky Desroy and Geoff Turner tackling the alternative start of Perplexus E1/2 5b
Photo: Si Panton

Plexus E1 5b 138m

Area: Llanberis Pass

Crag: Dinas Mot

Style: Trad

Rock type: Dolerite

Approach: 20 minutes

Altitude: 430m

OS grid ref: 627 563

First Ascent: B Ingle, P Crew (2 pts) 14.10.62

Dinas Mot sits on the shady, southern side of Llanberis Pass; here sunlight is a rare commodity, seen only in the mornings or evenings. This can be blessing though on a sweltering summer day when the sun soaked northern side crags like Clogwyn y Grochan will be hot to touch (and as greasy as a well oiled frying pan!). Climbing on the Mot is all about timing; late spring/early summer is the best, especially if you are climbing on the wings of the crag where our chosen route can be found. The usual run of post winter sunny weather will have dried the crag out, plus the locals will have been out grabbing early ascents, in the process dusting off the remnants of winter fluff and scuzz (even classic routes such as Plexus can get dirty). Leave it until August and there is a good chance the summer holiday rains will have reinstated the seepage lines.

The other important aspect of timing to get right is the time of day. The Plexus Buttress lights up in a most spectacular fashion in the evening sun, it really is a sight to behold. And that gorgeous rock glinting in the sun is the finest Wales has to offer: an exquisitely featured dolerite,



as deliciously rough and slopy as it comes. Plexus is a magical and continuously absorbing journey through some wild territory. Standing beneath it for the first time, a little sweaty from the walk in, the exact line of weakness seems questionable. A beguiling, shadow-cast groove snakes skywards, yet a massive roof bars access to the upper cliff does it really go through there? Only one way to find out...

The normal approach is to nip up a well worn rocky section on the right and then skirt across left to reach a flake and nut belay below the main groove. This is normally soloed, which is fine, just be careful about keeping your feet dry. An alternative direct start can be made up the first pitch of the E5, Perplexus - this goes at a feisty E1/2 5b.

The second pitch presents an immediate choice of line. The original route takes the slab up left into a tricky corner before making slopy moves back right to reach a ledge below the groove proper. The same point can be reached by climbing up right (as per Ten Degrees North), then swerving back left. Either way an ancient peg is clipped on the left before the real fun starts. A stiff pull (where have the footholds gone!?) gains a flake and some more tricky moves until it is possible to move out right to the Ten Degrees North belay ledge. There is a small thread here, which is hard to spot.

Step back into the groove and perform a slippy layback up onto slabbier ground. A few bridging moves precede more delightful padding up left and a step up on the arête. An old peg belay (which should be backed up) marks the end of this excellent pitch.

Above the huge roof looms, a seemingly impenetrable barrier through which only the crazy would dare to

venture? A quick flick through the guidebook points the way and soon enough the gallant leader is off, ready for the battle ahead.

Not so long ago this route was graded HVS a fact that seems quite unbelievable when the 'weakness' in the upper roof is reached. HVS how so? The truth is that the crux section changed significantly in 2006. Prior to this there was a peg and two or three blocks and flakes on the right which greatly eased the transition onto the upper slab. These days you are faced with moves that are both harder and bolder. A couple of medium/large cams and some wires can be arranged, but it still feels very likely that a tumble would end with an uncomfortable impact with the slab below the roof. The key is to find the right sequence, which involves an awkward and slightly committing manoeuvre to get your feet up above the lip. Once done correctly the rest of the sequence does fall into place (honest!).

The position above the crux is fantastic; poised on the lip of the void a slabby ramp tempts you up right. The climbing remains interesting, not as technical as the lower groove, but enough to keep you concentrating. At the top of the slab a precariously wedged block is reached (Nexus comes in from the right at this point). Surmounting the block provides an alarming few moments, but soon enough you will be shuffling leftwards along a sloping shelf and stepping round to reach a small groove the top of which has a selection of runners suitable for a belay.

The final pitch features a steep little pull and mantel, then its steady away to the summit and an in situ belay, where you can bask in the sun and contemplate that pint of ale that awaits in the Vaynol Arms...

Top tip

Assuming you are making an evening ascent (and you should be if you want to catch the spectacular light show) you might have to share the crag with the evil midge. If

It's breezy or very sunny you may be fooled into thinking that you are in the clear. Yet Sod's Law says that half way



Streaky Desroy post crux, poised on the lip of the roof Photo: Si Panton

up the route, the breeze will drop off and the sun light will dim enough to draw in your own personal midge cloud. So, regardless of the absence of midges while you are gearing up, make sure that you splash on plenty of repellent before setting off.

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, prussic loop for abseil.

Approach: From the layby at the Cromlech boulders boulder hop across the river and walk slightly right, then leftwards to cross a stile in the drystone wall. A steep path zig-zags up to the base of the Nose (i.e. the central shield on the main crag). From here a narrow path runs over a stile and along the base of the crag. Follow it past Jammed Boulder Gully to reach the Plexus Buttress.

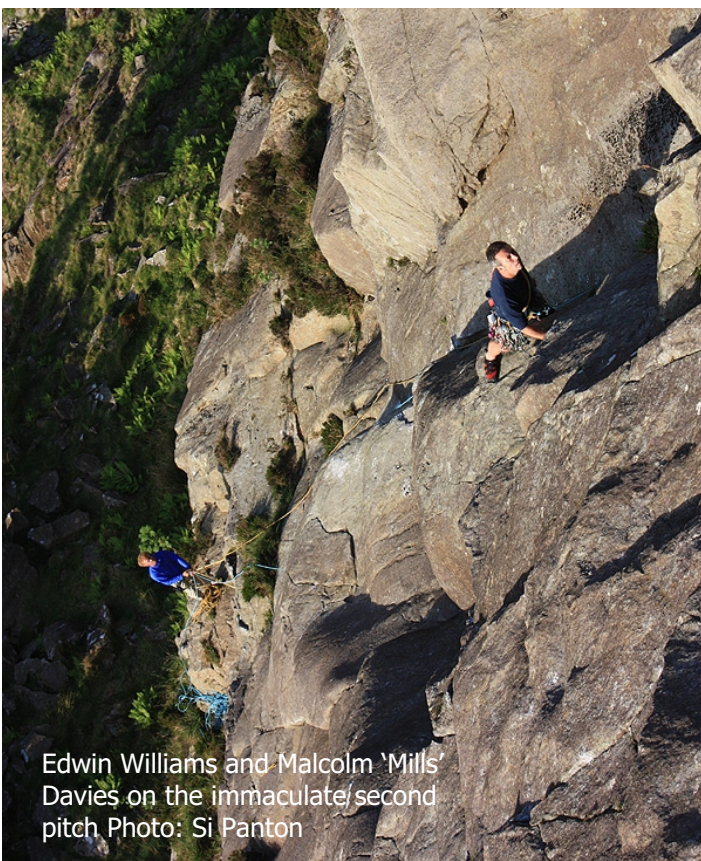
Descent

If you have 60m ropes it is possible to abseil down to the grassy ledge on the first pitch, and an easy down climb. Otherwise it is best to walk over and descend Jammed Boulder Gully which is normally done with two abseils. Do take care in the upper section of the gully, especially if other parties are below you as there is plenty of loose material liable to rattle down onto someone's head!

Conditions: This is a shady crag which gets the evening sun. It does suffer from seepage after heavy rain, so save it for a dry period. The best seasons are spring, summer and autumn.

Guidebooks, further reading and maps

Llanberis (Iwan Arfon Jones, Climbers' Club 2009), North Wales Rock 2nd edition (Simon Panton, Ground Up, 2009), North Wales Classics (Jack Geldard, Rockfax 2010), Explorer OL17 (1:25000 OS Map)



Edwin Williams and Malcolm 'Mills' Davies on the immaculate second pitch Photo: Si Panton