

Climbing with Johnny Dawes

Johnny Dawes, conqueror of the all mighty Indian Face graded E9 (6c) on Cloggy, came to Gloucester Climbing Wall to offer a series of courses for those wanting to improve their climbing. I was lucky enough to get my self on his course. As I was told by my father that I was on the course, I was massively excited. I thought to myself that it would be full of people and I wouldn't have much time with him. The only embarrassment was that my granddad, who provided the transport from Monmouth to Gloucester, was personally invited by Johnny to come and climb as he was sat watching.

We were around five to ten minutes early. To my amazement there was only one other person on the trip. It was a man around the age of 24 and he was relatively shy. He didn't ask many questions.

The session started by having a coffee and a discussion on our climbing ability and what we would like to improve on. We drunk up the last of our beverages and walked up a rather large staircase to the top of the complex ending up in the bouldering area.

We started by showing Johnny what we could do. He then asked us to do a route that we were working on or a problem that we would like to do. He then took us on a little tour around the room showing us the most efficient way to use particular holds. He showed us how to jam in a crack. Obviously we didn't have a proper crack so we found a gap in one of the roof supports. We then moved on to a big slab. Johnny stressed how important is to use your feet properly. Your feet are generally a lot stronger then your arms, he told us that we should take the weight off our hands and use your feet as much as you can. He also said that it is important to stand on the holds properly.

We then moved on to the campus board. The aim of a campus board is to climb up the slats using only your arms. These are mainly used for training. He told me and the other man to see how high we could get. The man went first up the fairly big slats and made it to the top and jumped down. It was my turn. I went on the small slats as I thought I would give it a go. I made it up four slats out of eight. I was thoroughly chuffed with my attempt. He went up and down with great grace.

We then tried some hard problems around 6b-6c+; indoor climbs are a bit over-graded. Most of our time was spent trying to "send" a 6c+. In only a couple of attempts Dawes topped the route. I later worked it out and realised that

Johnny had done it in some random trainers. I was impressed, not like me in my stickys. The night was almost over.

Johnny and my granddad got chatting. We then found out that he is raising funds for a project. £40.000 to be precise. That is why he is doing the sessions. We then went downstairs and I managed to con granddad to buy me a Johnny Dawes book Called "Full of Myself". It's a brilliant read I highly recommend it. I got it signed and a picture with him. It was a brilliant experience.

If you are interesting in a session please e-mail: dawesjohnny@gmail.com

Thomas Finn



Johnny Dawes with me and my granddad