

# Froggatt, July 2008

## A Personal Meet Report

Inspired and given licence by Dave Toon's highly personal Adventure Climbing article, I thought I'd put finger to keyboard and write a few words on Dave Rundall's new members meet at Froggatt on Sunday 13<sup>th</sup> July.

I was coming down with a cold, but the forecast was good and there was no way I was going to miss a day on a beautiful chunk of gritstone, the ambrosia of rock types. So I got dosed up, jumped in the van and sped off to meet the others at the end of the M67. Some very nice prospective members turned up and before we set off for the peak many of us succumbed to Ronald McDonald. I had a McWeeWee followed by a McCoffee, but virtuously avoided the McMuffin (Aren't I a good boy?).

Amazingly, this was my first time in the Peak District proper, although some LMCers may say that the Chew Valley is the Peak's north-western dark heart. The weather was glorious and, whilst I'm sure everyone reading this knows already, I was struck by the Peak District's distinctive beauty, so similar to many northern moorlands but somehow different.

On arrival we started off on the Sunset Slab area. Most of the prospective new members (PNMs) had never climbed outside before, so we rallied round and "Showed them the ropes". I tried to explain a figure of eight to Barbara (a PNM) but I fear my explanation lacked clarity. Anyway, I tied her on safely and watched Dave "The Legend" Rundall solo a Diff with a rope on whilst giving Barbara clear, move by move instructions which got a novice to the top of her first climb with relative ease.

Andy Bond led me up Sunset Crack (HS), the first of many fine routes, after which I girded my loins for Sunset Slab. At HVS 4b this was definitely the loneliest lead I've done so far and despite Willy Wheale's attempts to distract me (Or let me know I was not completely alone – thanks Will) I got to the top in one piece.

With the new found knowledge that I could keep my head cooler than I had previously thought, Andy and I wandered over to Three Pebble Slab (E1 5a). But before I could start Andy had to rescue a quivering damsel (Please forward any complaints regarding misogyny to my wife) from the crux. Trying my best to be undeterred, I tied on and climbed up to the crux where I placed the mandatory wire plus friend in a pocket. With my left foot in the same pocket, trying not to dislodge the protection, and my right foot on the huge but high foothold, I spent a while trying to find my point of balance for the famous rock-over. After a couple of false starts I finally committed and before I knew it my right hand was in a pocket and my legs were straight. I tried to keep a lid on any feelings of triumph because although the hard move was behind me and the moves to the top were comparatively mild, there was no more gear. So I brushed some grit from my boots and padded up the final slab with care. The finishing jugs had me grinning like a Cheshire cat and as I sat belaying I was filled by that warm, giddy buzz that only comes from ticking an absolute classic.

Unfortunately premature memory loss means that I'm not 100% sure what we did next but I think it was Valkyrie (HVS 5a). Andy led the superb first pitch; a slightly awkward leaning jamming crack followed by a hand traverse to a belay on the arête. I started to lead the steep second pitch but chickened out due to a lack of faith in my strength (Or a firm belief in my weakness). I shuddered back to the belay with spectacles askew, and Andy got the job done. Yet another cracking climb.

Next we soloed Heather Wall (HVD) which is a strong line with really sinking hand jams; satisfaction on a stick!

Andy then took a novice up a couple of routes, whilst Dave Rundall winched me up The Big Crack (E2 5b). Perversely, I found the off-width upper section do-able but my vocal performance on the bottom section gave Maria Sharapova a run for her money. Oh well, at least it gave Dave something to cackle hysterically about.

Andy and I then followed Dave up Brown's Eliminate (E2 5b); a bold lead with fantastic reachy and crimpy moves on what could feasibly be deemed a slab.

It was late in the day by now and Andy, looking more than a little sun-kissed, began to express interest in a pint. But, being the heartless b\*\*\*\*\*d that I am, I thought we should go and do Tody's Wall (HVS 5a). This is mild at the grade with a well-protected crux but (the crux) is difficult to overcome with grace, although Dave Toon and Stuart Knott showed that it is possible. The central section is a bit run-out, though easy, and the finishing crack is a delicious well-protected jam-fest.

And that, my patient reader, was the last route of the day. I haven't counted my starred routes yet but I thank my lucky stars (Ho Ho) that I'm alive to enjoy days such as this. As this is not an official meet report I haven't interviewed the other attendants for their routes, but I know that Dave Toon and Stuart Knott tackled plenty of cracks and got one or two roof cracks in the bag. Richard Toon and Pete (...?) did a fair few routes and Ben (Dave Sudell's nephew?) made his first lead. Joe (a PNM) got a good introduction to real climbing from Will Wheale. Dave Sudell and Julie Harold were also in attendance, Julie giving me ample encouragement on The Big Crack. PNMs Linda and Lucy (I think they were their names) seemed to enjoy themselves and Dave Rundall's grandson Luke showed signs of having a bold head, possibly inherited (If his parents are reading this then worry not. He was closely supervised at all times). Apologies if I've forgotten anybody.

So thanks to Andy Bond for being a confidence inspiring belayer and to Dave Rundall for showing me the magic of Froggatt. I can't wait to go back.

Alistair Jeffcoat.