

Blaina



The quarries on the eastern side of Blaina contain a jumble of boulders caught up in man-made hillside scoops built to protect the houses below from catastrophic soil subsidence. Unfortunately, although there a lot of them, most of the boulders here are just too small to make worthwhile problems (although countless 'one/two move wonder' problems & mantles remain to be done!), but a few larger blocs help form a small circuit around the quarry justifying the steep walk-in. Note that starts and landings can be awkward here, and great care is required to negotiate the boulders when moving around.

Approach - from the A467 going north continue to a roundabout just as Blaina is reached. At the roundabout turn right (east) and then right (south) again into Station Road, now continuing parallel to the A467 but heading south into High Street/Abertillery Road. After passing The Queens Hotel turn left into Henwaun Street (NP13 3PD) and continue a short distance to where this bends left meeting Maeshafod (NP13 3HU). Parking is possible around this corner. From here a track heads north east uphill (the continuation of Henwaun Street before soil subsidence works forced local residents to move away as their houses were demolished to prevent a potential landslide disaster) then bends sharply right. Follow this a short distance until it is possible to head uphill, passing a small farm and metal style to reach open hillside. Head upwards (20 mins) towards the large quarry workings, going left for North Quarry or right for South Quarry.

North Quarry



Sandstone - west facing - 20 minutes

Entering the quarry in its lower corner there is a small dip which contains the first few boulders.

1. **Pit and the pendulum** [5, ss] A rounded boulder [A] in a pit, starting face on to finish rocking around to the right [O.Keynes 13/6/21].

2. **Frustration** [5, ss] Sit start the undercut arête of boulder B and rock up left on to the slab. A good little problem [H.Beaumont 29/5/21].

3. **Why does it need a name?** [4, ss] The slabby west facing side of the cubic boulder B [H.Beaumont 29/5/21].



4. **Tucker's arête** [6a, ss] There is a larger more rounded boulder (C) opposite. Sit start the left arête (P.Tucker 2019).

5. **Old farther time** [6a, ss] The curving sidewall 1m right of the arête (P.Tucker 2019).

6. **Pleasant mini-slab** [4, ss] A one-move-wonder slab [D] just below boulder E [H.Beaumont 29/5/21].

7. **The angle of the dangle** [6b+, ss] Boulder E forms an obvious square roof that is bigger than it looks from afar. The rounded left arête, starting from the slot at the back, is a really good problem (O.Keynes 26/5/21).

8. **The slip** [F7a, ss] The rounded right arête of boulder E is a fantastic problem. Start beneath the roof from the slot at the back (P.Walker 16/10/21).

#southsidetour

9. **Irritated** [5, ss] Immediately behind the roof is an obvious taller boulder [F]. Climb the bulging front from a juggy low start above a bad landing (O.Keynes 2019).

10. **Irritating** [5, ss] The right side of boulder F forms a slab (O.Keynes 2019).

11. **Something of nothing** [3, ss] L-R traverse across the small slabby bloc [G] perched above the dip, a few metres nw from D (O.Keynes 2021).

There is a handful of hidden problems [H] tucked away out of the dip a few metres north east from E:

12. **Squared or cubed?** [3+, ss] A poor one-move-wonder on the north face of a small cubic bloc (O.Keynes 2019).

13. **Lichen project** [F?, ss] A bulging arête further above the cube (project).

14. **Lichen project** [3, ss] The side of the same boulder has very positive edges (project).

15. **Roof project** [F?, ss] Just above is a hidden roof which forms a small cave (project).

Out of the dip and a short scramble further north is another cluster of bigger boulders and problems. The first two two of these [I] rest side-by-side.

16. **Subsidence** (6a, ss) Start low in the overhang and pull over the lip. The low foot bloc is out [O.Keynes 30/6/19].

17. **In the valley** [4+, ss] The west facing side-slab from a good slot, using pockets to reach the top (O.Keynes 30/6/19).

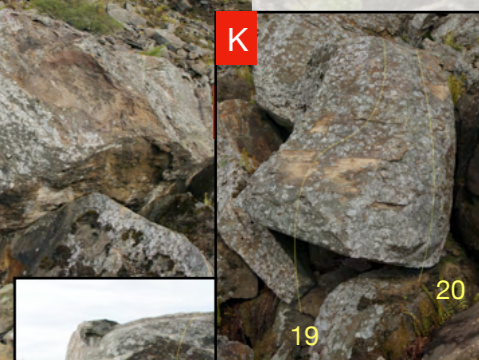
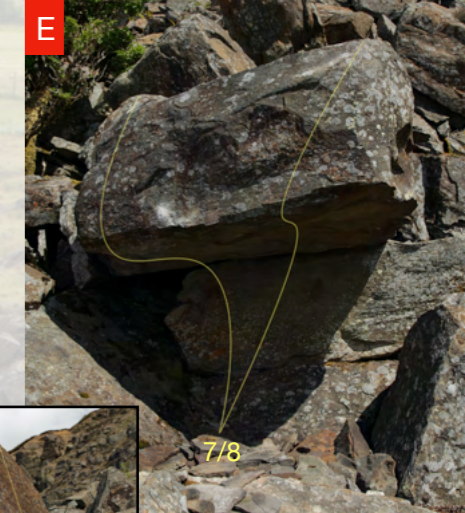
18. **Hot & sunny days** [4, ss] A few metres north is another bloc [J]. 'Squat start' the rounded left arête using a left hand side pull and a small right edge, and the thin foot bloc beneath the boulder (O.Keynes 30/5/21).

19. **Project** [F?] A problem might be possible on this bloc a few metres further right, up the sloping west face (project).

Another few metres north is an attractive curvy boulder with a short black slab to its right [K].

19. **Project** [F?] Hang the lip to gain the sloping face above (project).

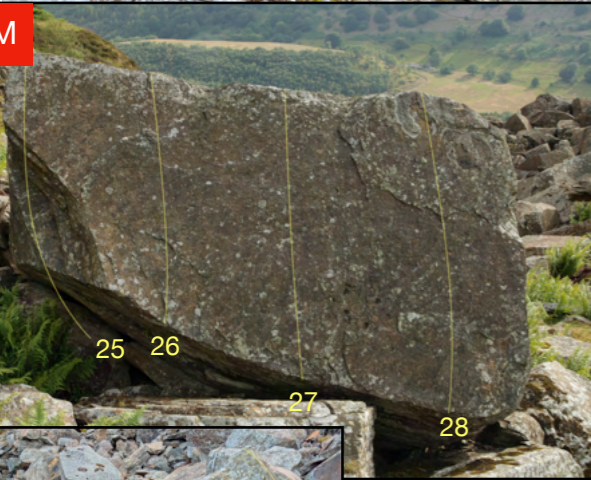
20. **Shinned** [6a, ss] A fun little problem up the rounded arête just right of problem 19 (O.Keynes 30/5/21).



21. **It's coal** [2+, ss] A one-move wonder using edges on the black slab (*H.Beaumont 29/5/21*).

22. **Heave-ho** [5, ss] The right end of the black slab forms a rounded arête with a slopy top. Start low around the back on edges using the foot bloc then tackle the sloping top (*O.Keynes 30/5/21*).

23. **Nosey horses** [4+] Immediately above **K** is a rounded boulder. Stand start the nose. A sit-start may be possible in the cramped hole (*O.Keynes 30/6/19*).



There are two larger horizontal boulders [**L** & **M**] slightly higher up the quarry.

24. **Ripples in time** [F?, ss] A small problem using crimps on the right end of boulder **L** (*O.Keynes 30/6/19*).

25. **Slants project** [F?, ss] Sit-start the overhanging north arête of boulder **M** using slanted holds (*project*).

26. **Slab left** (3+) Unfortunately the distinctively slabby north face of **M** is not as big as it appears. The shorter left hand side of the slab is another one-move-wonder [*P.Tucker 30/6/19*].

27. **Slab middle** (4) The middle of the slab offers yet another one-move-wonder [*P.Tucker 30/6/19*].

28. **Boris Badenov** (5) The right side of the slab is a much better problem than its neighbours [*P.Tucker 30/6/19*].

A bit higher up the hillside (east) above boulder **M** is an obvious upright boulder [**N**]:

29. **Impermanance** [5+] The centre of the slab using crimps. Finish direct (*O.Keynes 5/21*).

30. **Cwtch** [6a, ss] A good problem. Sit start a low good hold on the overhanging south side of the same boulder and finish moving leftwards (*O.Keynes 5/21*).

31. **Impossible slab project** [F?] Just above boulder **N** is this horizontal bloc. Somehow pull on to the slab using bad undercuts then reach for the top (*project*).

32. **Diamond in the rough** [6a, ss] High up right is an obvious diamond-shaped bloc. The aesthetic, though snappy, central line is a quarry classic [*O.Keynes 30/6/19*]. #southsidetour

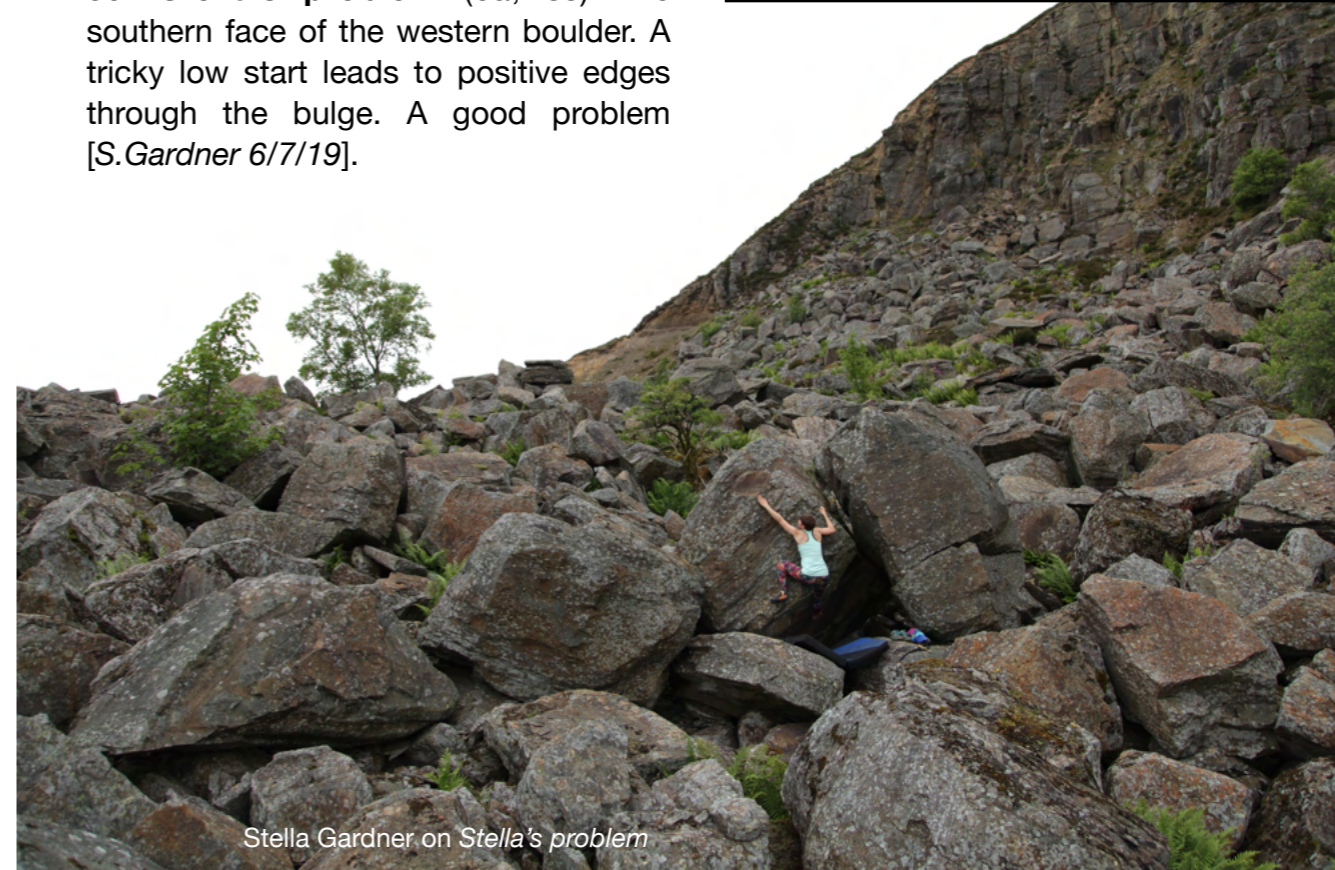
From boulder **K** scramble north over boulders to reach:

33. **Pit project** [F?, ss] An arête in a hole [**O**] a few metres scramble away. Start low in the hole from a juggy hold and use the arête or crimps to reach the top. Would be a lot better if nearby rocks didn't make it feel so cramped (*project*).

34. **Horizontal project** [F?, ss] Across the boulders is an obvious horizontal boulder **P**, forming an undercut face with some positive holds low in its middle (*project*).

There are two large and obvious boulders [**Q**] resting side-by-side in the middle of the boulder-field:

35. **Stella's problem** (6a, ss) The southern face of the western boulder. A tricky low start leads to positive edges through the bulge. A good problem [*S.Gardner 6/7/19*].



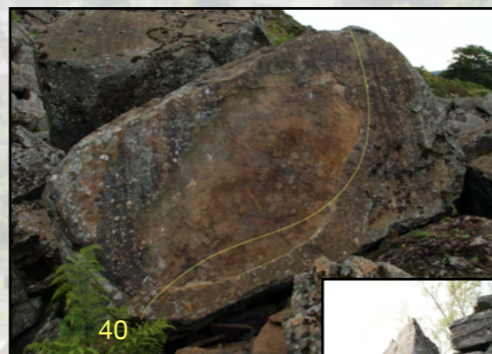
Stella Gardner on Stella's problem



Paddy Walker on the Blaenau Prow

It is a bit of a scramble from the central boulders [Q] to reach the next big boulder [S], which is located further north beside a large tree.

36. **Valley lessons** [3+] From the break direct up the south facing side of the big boulder between arêtes (*P.Tucker 30/6/19*).



37. [4, ss] From the break direct up the boulder passing an obvious pocket (*P.Tucker 30/6/19*).



38. **Stanford** [6c+] The shallow groove 1m right of the pocket (*J.Sykes 7/5/22*).

39. **Blaenau prow** [7a, ss] Just right again is this great problem. Sit-start the break using the foot block and reach the top using a righthand crimp (*P.Walker 30/5/21*). Starting without the footblock from a LH undercut/RH pinch is considerably harder and just as good (*7c, M.Preece 21/4/22*).

44. **My horse goes eyore** [4] The north facing arête (*P.Tucker 30/6/19*). A low start off the lip is much harder (*7a, M.Preece 21/4/22*).

45. **Morgan's climb** [7a, ss] Sit-start the lip of the undercut south facing arête just left of *Jody 808* (*M.Preece 21/4/22*).

40. **No hands traverse** [4] The back of the boulder has a distinctive ramp. Can you traverse this left-right without using your hands? (*O.Keynes 30/6/19*)



41. **Sharp arête** [5, ss] A few metres further north is a good-looking sharp arête [R] which is disappointingly short (*O.Keynes 5/21*).

Scramble further north about 50m to reach a big cubic boulder [S] near a tree, on the edge of the shaped catchment.

42. **There's something wrong with my horse** [F?] The left side of the north facing slab (*P.Tucker 30/6/19*).

43. **I want to return my horse** [5] The right side of the north facing slab (*P.Tucker 30/6/19*).



46. **Jody 808** [6a, ss] A good problem starting from two big holds in the south side of the boulder just right from the arête (*O.Keynes 30/5/21*).

47. **Project** [F?, ss] The lower north face of the boulder is overhanging. Just around the arête are some sloping shelves, then mantle up onto the sloping lip (*project*).

The quarry's northern upper corner has a few more worthwhile boulders and more potential. Boulder T stands alone on a flat platform.

48. **Bones** (6a, ss) A tricky start from two sidepulls leads to a sloping break. A good little problem which is harder than it looks [*O.Keynes 6/7/19*].

49. **Stella's slab** (4, ss) Pull on, stand up, from two obvious holds low in the centre of the slab [*S.Gardner 6/7/19*].



50. **Project** [F?, ss] The bulging southern arête of the boulder (*project*).

The Quarried Edge

The hillside above Blaina contains potential for a lot more problems. The quarried edge itself above the boulder fields is currently undeveloped. There are areas of good rock and possible problems amongst its mostly crumbling walls, although these require some effort to access, particularly during the summer when bracken growth is thick.



Across the Hillside

There is a scattering of worthwhile problems to be found across the hillside although these are hard to locate. The easiest approach is to aim south from a small drainage lake beside the ascent for North Quarry and walk for around 5-10 mins roughly at the same level (good luck!).

51. **Hazel's slab** [3+] The slabby face of boulder **U** can be climbed using its left arête, direct up the middle, or right arête (*H.Beaumont 5/21*).

52. **Combined tactics** [6a] A good problem which is hard to find. Hang the lip of boulder **V** and then climb the undercut arête, without use of any low foot blocks (*Keynes & Walker 5/21*).

53. **Easily missed** [4] The slabby face of this slumped boulder **W** is a fun problem (*Keynes & Walker 5/21*).

54. **Sideshow** [6a, ss] The arête of *Easily missed* climbed on its more vertical right side, from a low start (*Keynes & Walker 5/21*).

South Quarry

The south quarry features an area of bigger boulders at its far end but has yet to be developed.

