

TSUEN WAN BOULDERS

General

Situated on a hillside overlooking Tsuen Wan, these boulders give some excellent technical problems (at nearly all levels) on high friction tuff. The setting and quality of the problems make the slightly arduous approach walk well worthwhile.

Approach

The easiest approach via public transport is to take the MTR to Tsuen Wan and then get a taxi to the end of On Yat Street (ask for Tsuen Wai Fa Yuen). From the end of the road, walk along a concrete footpath which heads left until you reach a small bridge. This point can also be reached by taking the 39M bus from Tsuen Wan to the TL Adventist Hospital and walking up the concrete staircase opposite the hospital entrance.

Once you've crossed the bridge turn right and continue up the hill to a catchwater (this point can also be reached by car - limited parking). Continue up the concrete path for about 1/2km until a path breaks right. Contour the hillside a short way on this path before continuing all the way up the hill to small shelter at its top. Turning right on to a small dirt track leads to the Ha Fa Shan Boulders (approx. 5 minutes away), whilst breaking left off the main track and following a dirt path leads to all the other areas (all approx. 25 minutes away).



With all those spotters, Lau Kung Hing most definitely isn't 'Billy No Mates' (V3).

Photo: Stuart Millis

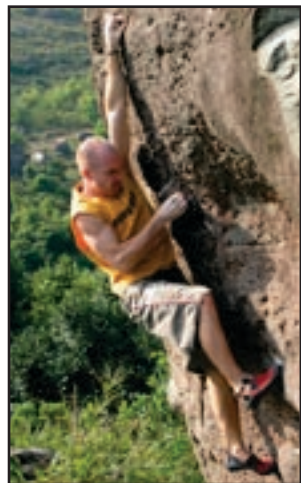


A Brief History

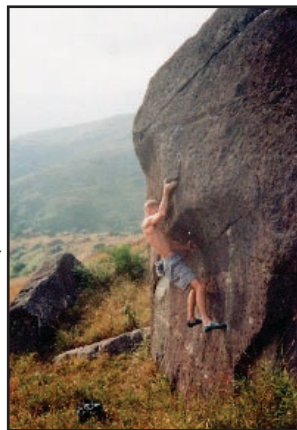
The boulders at Tsuen Wan were discovered, in the climbing sense of the word, around 1996 when Geoff Breach spotted the Shek Lung Kung boulders from his flat window. Spurred on by a panging for some quality bouldering, Geoff began his explorations and established nearly all the lower grade classics at Shek Lung Kung, Ha Fa Shan and Lin Fa Shan.

In the late 1990's he made the first edition of a bouldering guide to the area and the spread of information resulted in a committed set of ex-patriates making regular trips to the boulders. These trips largely focused on the three developed sets of boulders and notable classic problems put up included The Stretcher (V4), Jon's Traverse (V4), Dave's Traverse (V5), Stretcher Direct (V6) and the V8 traverse at Ha Fa Shan. It was also during this time, 1998/9, that Colin Spark and Dave Hessledon explored the area of Colin's Boulders, although the only notable ascent made was of Sparkies Amazing Technicolour Dream Roof (V5).

In 2000 Geoff made a second edition of his guide to the area and then, like many of the 'old guard', left Hong Kong. Following his departure the boulders suffered from a period of neglect until the summer of 2002 when Stuart Millis explored the hillsides between Ha Fa Shan and Lin Fa Shan and discovered Radar Rocks, where he promptly established classic problems such as Supersonic (V2) and Pockets of Resistance (V2). Development of this area continued throughout 2002 and several fine new lines such as Crouching Tiger (V5) and Angels Wall (V7) were climbed. About this time Rocky Lok also added two high quality problems at Shek Lung Kung, making the first ascent of the old Geoff Breach project 'The Undercling' (V5) and quickly dispatching the arete to its left to give Rocky Road (V6).



Mitch LeBlanc high up on Hong Kong's hardest 'Seamless' (V10).
Photo: Stuart Millis



Dave Hessledon repeating his own 'The Overlap' (V3).

Photo: Geoff Breach Collection

The winter season of 2003/2004 was probably the most significant period since the initial development of the area. The arrival of Mitch LeBlanc in the territory, fresh from the boulders of Canada and the US, saw a change in attitude towards new problems. Where previously attempts had mostly been made only on obvious lines, things like sitting starts now became 'the norm'. Regular weekend visits saw numerous new classics climbed at the established areas, including Dislocator (V7) and the long standing project So High (V9). Ha Fa Shan also saw renewed interest during this season with Rocky and Angel Lok exploring the boulders lower down the hill and adding Rocky's Traverse (V8) and the fiercely crimping V Ten (V7).

It was during this period that Stuart and Mitch began re-exploring the overgrown Colin's Boulders and, after a few weekends exploration, notable classics such as Trainspotting (V6), Raging Bull (V7), Taipan (V7) and Gaijin (V8) had been unearthed. In the spring of 2004 Mitch also managed to unstitch the sequence to Hong Kong's hardest problem, Seamless (V10).

HA FA SHAN

General

By far the quickest and easiest of the boulders to get to, and with one of the more varied circuits, these are the boulders most frequented by Hong Kong's climbers. Having said this, it's very rare that you'll actually meet other climbers up there unless you've already arranged to do so!

Approach

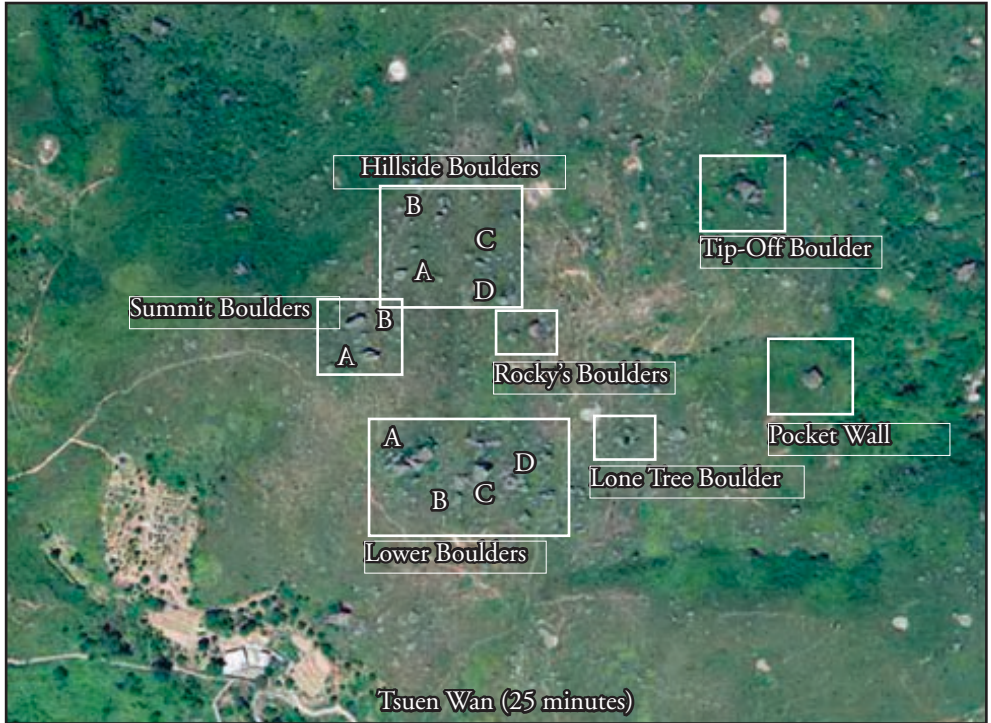
From the small shelter described in the general approach section, break right and follow a dirt path rightwards up the hillside. The Summit Boulders are reached in about 5 minutes and make a convenient point to base yourself.



Ray Sun on a superb V3 at the Summit Boulders.
Photo: Stuart Millis

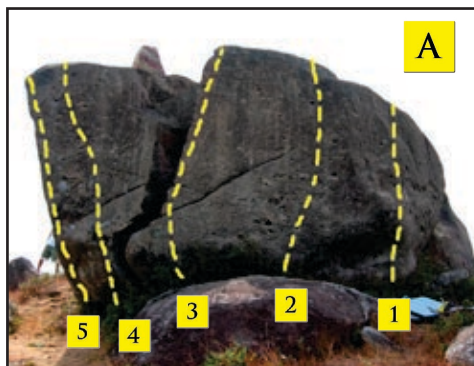


Ha Fa Shan Map

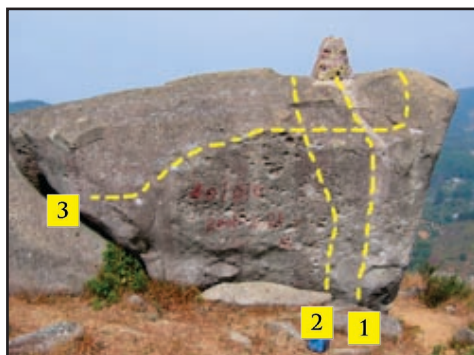


Pauline Chow on 'The Groove' (V2), Summit Boulders. Photo: Stuart Millis

Summit Boulder



- (1) **V0 - 5a** * Pull through the small overlap and continue up the pockets above.
- (2) **VB - 4c** * Follow the line of shallow pockets up the slabby main face of the boulder.
- (3) **VB - 4b** ** The delightful sharp arete.
- (4) **V1** ** Start with both hands in the thin flake and pull up onto the wall above (without using the right hand arete). Finish the wall on small pockets.
- (5) **V4** * **Aretenophobia**. The right hand arete of the slightly overhanging face gives a testing problem. Stay true to the arete for the top out.



- (1) **V4** * (**sds**) From pockets on the wall reach up to small holds on the sloping shelf above.
- (2) **V4** * **North of America** (**sds**). Start on two good pockets and launch upwards for good holds at the lip. Mantle to finish.
- (3) **V2** *** From pockets on the far left hand side of the boulder traverse rightwards along the lip, via an assortment of pockets, jugs and crimps, to the large slopey hold on the far right of the face. Mantleshelf this to the top. A problem which defines the word Classic!

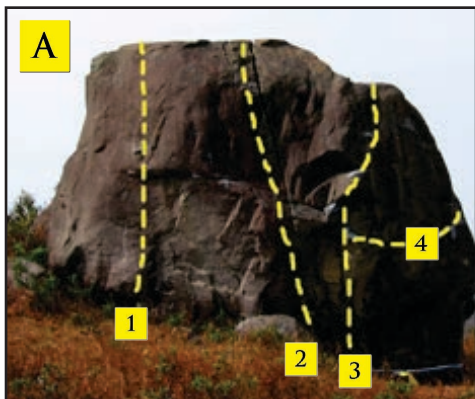


- (1) **V3** * The thin crack on the lefthand side of the face is awkward yet strangely satisfying.
- (2) **V1** ** The middle of the face (**sds** - **V5**).
- (3) **V2** * The righthand side of the face. Start at an undercut and use small pockets and slopey side pulls to make upwards progress.



- (1) **V1** * **The Rib**. The rib on the left of the face.
- (2) **V2** ** **The Groove**. The prominent lefthand groove line has a tricky start and an exposed end.
- (3) **V3** *** **Ramp and Wall**. The ramp and wall to the left of the arete. The crux is at the top when you're a long way above the floor!
- (4) **V3** ** **Billy No Mates**. Starting left of 'The Arete' attack the narrow face right of Ramp and Wall.
- (5) **V1** *** **The Arete**. A gem of a problem up the rounded arete.

Hillside Boulders



(4) V8 ** Starting on the good jugs at the beginning of Nose Direct, traverse right (keeping relatively low) on tiny holds to join a diagonal line of small sharp holds and slopers. Finish up these.

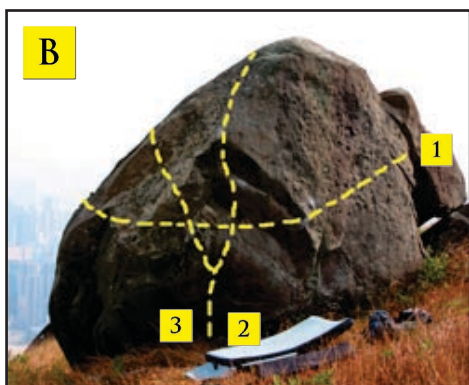
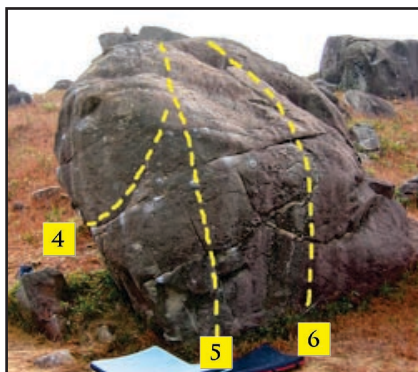
(5) V2 * **Slapper**. Start on the large undercut and climb the wall above via some rather poor slopers.

(6) VB - 4c ** **Flake and Mantle**. The righthand side of the face using the large flake.

(1) V4 * **Dirty Slapper**. Start on a poor side pull with the right and a small sharp pocket for the left. Lift your feet off the floor and then slap high and left for a sloping ledge and good side pull. Rock over and mantle to top out. A harder (V6) start is possible traversing in from small crimps to the right.

(2) V2 ** **The Crack**. Follow the diagonal crack line.

(3) V2 ** **Nose Direct**. Start on the good jugs and pull up and right onto the nose above. Top out using sloping holds.

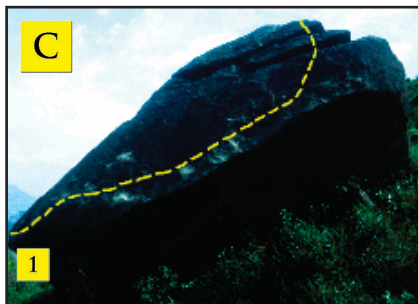


(1) V5 *** **Dave's Traverse (sds)**. A full body pump of a problem along the rounded boulder. From the short overhanging arete on the left of the boulder fight your way rightwards along the lip, pulling onto the slab only when you can traverse no more. A slightly harder variation (V6) is possible avoiding feet on the lower block just past half way.

(1) V4 *** **Jon's Traverse**. An excellent problem. Start on the righthand side of the boulder, at the arete, and traverse left (feet just above the floor) to finish on the slab.

(2) V4 ** **Sick Puppy (sds)**. Start on two good crimps left of the arete. Move right to a good sidepull on the arete and climb straight up from this via the rounded arete and pebbles. Stay true to the arete higher up for maximum satisfaction.

(3) V4 * **Nipple Grazer**. Start at the good side pulls approx. half way along Jon's traverse. Climb straight up from these. A dyno from these holds to the top has been oft attempted but seldom latched!





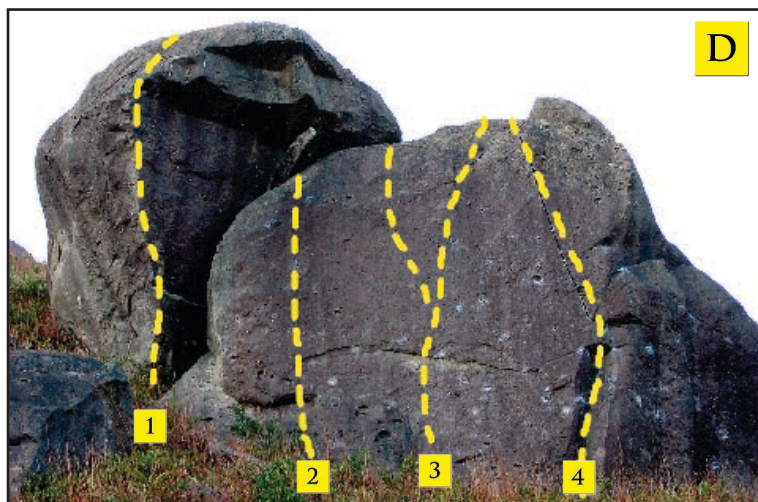
Rocky Lok on 'Daves Traverse'''''' (V5), Ha Fa Shan. Photo: Stuart Millis

(1) V4 * **Horror Arete**. The striking tall arete yields via small sharp pockets and lay aways.

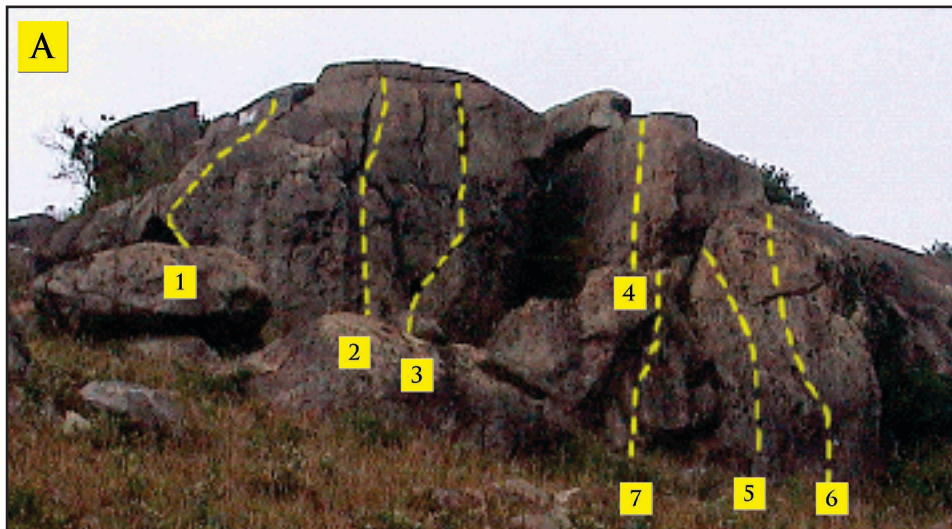
(2) V2 * **The Slab**. The left-hand side of the slab.

(3) V3 *** **The Black Streak**. The centre of the slab, veering slightly right near the top. A slightly harder variation is possible (V4) continuing directly up the slab and finishing through the rounded bulge (avoiding the crack to the right).

(4) V3 ** **Thin Crack Rib**. The leftwards trending thin crack on the right side of the wall provides a tenuous and technical line.



The Lower Boulders



(1) VB - 4b * Start right of the overhang and follow the faint crack in the slab above.

(2) VB - 4b ** **Wall and Flake**. Start up the pocketed wall and finish up the slab and crack above.

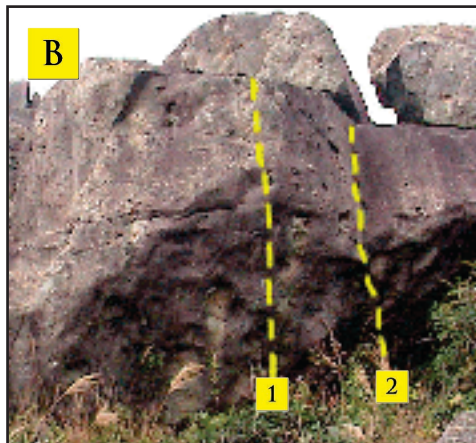
(3) VB - 4a * The largest of the crack lines, finishing up the righthand most flake.

(4) V0 - 5a ** **Gully Slab**. The slabby arete on the righthand side of the gully.

(5) VB - 4a * The thin crack above the large pocket.

(6) VB - 4b ** The leftward trending flake.

(7) V2 **The Groove**. Climb the hideous thin groove on the small boulder in front of the large wall.

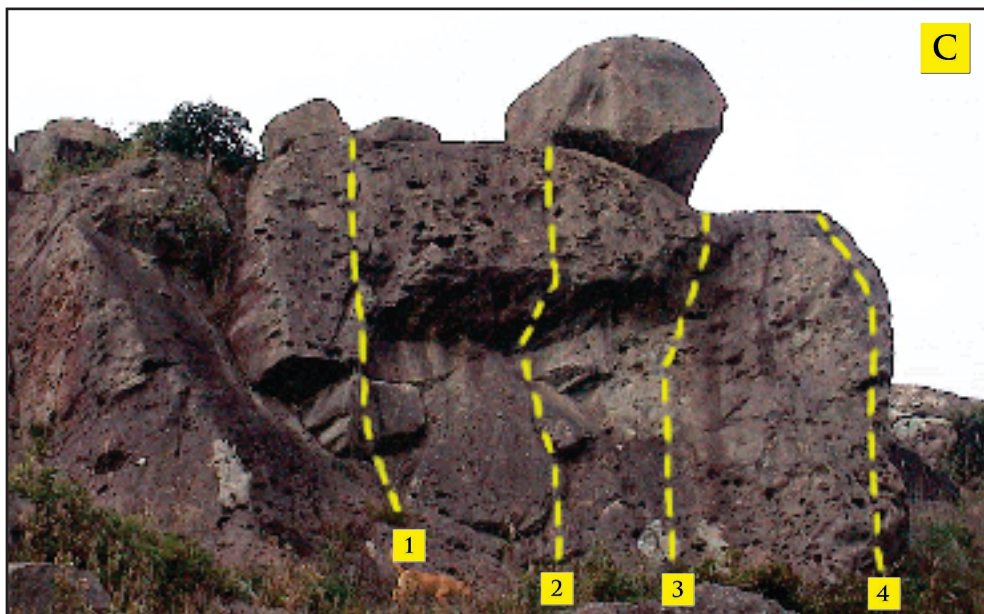


(1) V2 **The Bulge**. From a standing start off the V-shaped pocket and crimps, reach up and mantle the lip.

(1a) V3(sds) From a sitting start off a sharp sidepull and small crimps reach up into the starting holds of the Bulge and finish as for that problem.

(2) V1 **Cave Roof Layback**. Start on a sharp pocket on the lip of the overhang and a good sidepull. Pull up and mantle onto the slab above.

(2a) V6 (sds) The sitting start to the previous problem gives a fierce and not particularly pleasant problem



(1) VB - 4a * **Twin Tree Groove**. The groove at the lefthand end of the wall. Finishing right through the overhang adds some interest.

(2) VB - 4b *** **Scooped Wall**. The centre of the wall, going straight through the overhang on huge pockets.

(3) VB - 4a * The vague groove line at the righthand end of the wall.

(4) VB - 4a ** **Slab Arete**. The slabby arete at the righthand end of the wall.

The next three problems are located on the steep wall right of the arete.

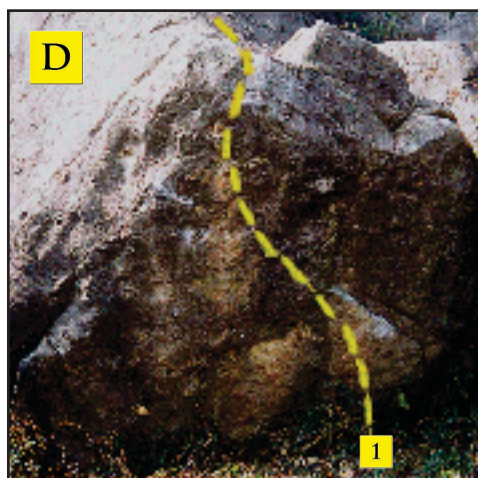
(5) V0 - 4c *** **The Money Shot**. Climb the steep side of the arete on an assortment of pockets.

(6) V0 - 4c * Take a line up the centre of the wall on good but spaced pockets.

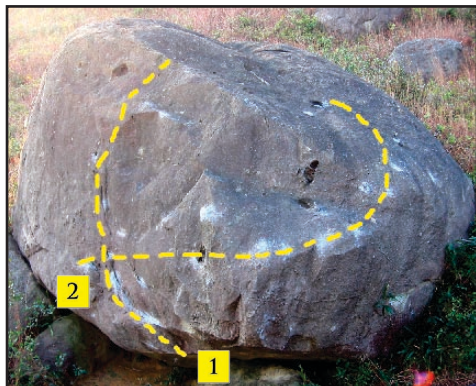
(7) VB - 4a Climb the flake and groove at the right end of the wall.

(1) V3 *** **Twelve Monkeys (sds)**. From a sitting start on the good flake make powerful moves out left to gain a poor hold near the arete and then a good jug on the lip.

(1a) V6 ** **Van Halen (sds)**. Start on the good flake as for Twelve Monkeys and finish on the good hold on the lip, just miss out all the holds in between!



Rocky's Boulder



(1) **V4* Air Jet (sds)** Start on low crimps and make a rising traverse left and up via positive sidepulls and pockets.

(2) **V8 * Rocky's Traverse (sds)**. Start on the triangle shaped hold at the left end of the boulder. Make thin powerful moves right to the arete and continue around this on sloping holds to finish where the face steepens up.

(1) **V5 * Angels Traverse (sds)**. Start on the right of the small overhanging face and traverse the sloping shelf.

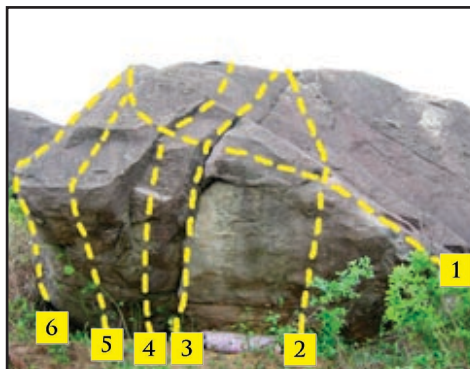
(2) **V7 * V Ten (sds)**. From small crimps low on the wall, crank to the lip and mantle to finish.

(3) **Project (sds)** The sit start to the crack line.

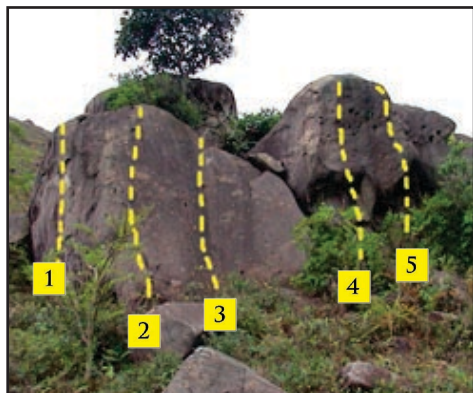
(4) **V7 * Slope Direct (sds)**. Left of the crack is a horizontal sloper, start on this and finish directly above.

(5) **V6 * Claw (sds)**. Sit beneath the left end of the wall, realise how the problem got its name, and climb straight up with assistance from the left arete.

(6) **V5 * U Four (sds)** The other side of the arete.



Lone Tree Boulder



(1) **V3 *** From two small pockets, reach up and right to a sloping ledge. Finish directly above via the large pocket.

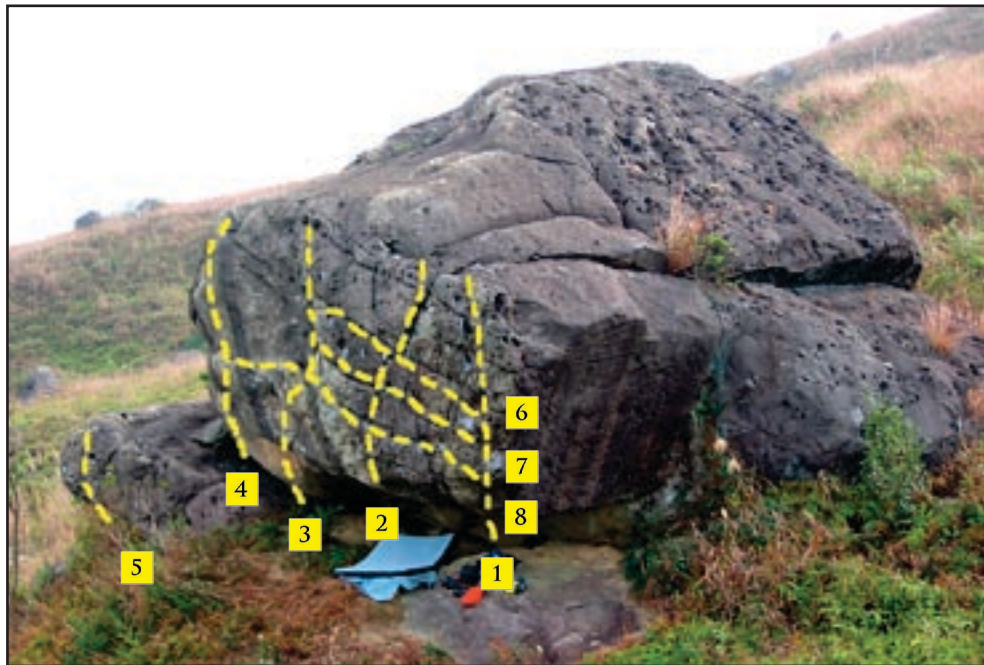
(2) **VB - 4b **** The left arete of the slabby face.

(3) **VB - 4a *** Follow the slabby groove. The centre of the slab can be climbed avoiding both the arete and the groove at about V0 - 5a.

(4) **V4 *** Follow a line of small pockets and crimps above the roof, avoiding both aretes.

(5) **V4 (sds) **** A tricky sit start leads to delightful climbing up the steep arete.

Pocket Wall



(1) **V3 * Pacman.** The right arete of the boulder yield to determined pocket pulling.

(2) **V2 ** Manic Miner.** Roughly follow the line of the thin crack splitting the wall, using good pockets and holds around it.

(3) **V1 * Jet Pac *** At the left end of the horizontal breaks is a large flake line of questionable stability. Follow this.

(4) **V2 ** Spectrum.** The slabby arete at the righthand end of the wall.

(5) **V4 * The Barrel.** Just beneath the main boulder is a low roof with numerous sharp pockets in it. Crawl to the back of this and follow the line of pockets out through the steepest part.

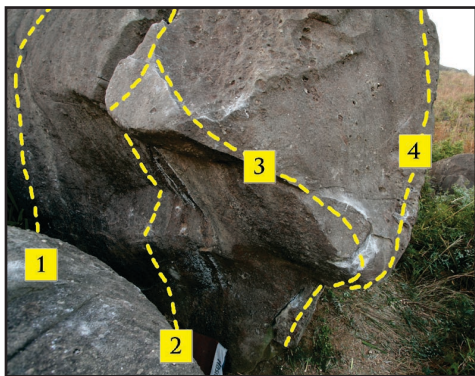
The next three problems all start on Pacman and finish as for Jet Pac. It is also possible to continue all of them past Jet Pac to finish up Spectrum, adding about one grade to each problem.

(6) **V2 * The Rail.** Climb the first few moves of Pacman before breaking out left along the highest of the three horizontal breaks.

(7) **V2 ** Breakdance.** Start as for the previous problem but follow the middle break line. More satisfying to continue across the whole wall and finish as for Spectrum (making the problem V3).

(8) **V5 ** Chi Wai's Traverse.** From the starting holds of Pacman, follow a line of pockets and poor crimps along the lowest of the three breaks. Finish either up Problem 3 or continue left to finish up Problem 4 (V6).

Tip Off Boulder



(4) V2 *** The Tip Off (sds).

The awesome arete from a sit start.

(5) V6 ** Little Women (sds).

Sit start at the arete and make a big move for the huge jug on it's right side. Using this and a flake out right, aim up for the pocket above before making big moves right to a pocket / flake combo. Finish up the wall and crack above.

(6) V6 *** Obe Wan.

Attain the flake / crimp combo on Little Women in a more direct fashion from small crimps and flakes in the centre of the wall. Finish up the wall / crack above.

(7) V7 ** Obe Wan Extension (sds).

Start at the big pocket low down on the right side of the wall. Make thin, and slightly painfull moves left (hence only two-stars) to reach the start holds on Obe Wan, which is then followed to the top.

(8) Project - Klignon (sds).

Start as for the previous problem but continue directly up the wall on small pockets. From a good pocket at two-thirds height (current high point), slap out right to a small hanging crack and finish above this.

(1) V3 - Sideshow Bob.

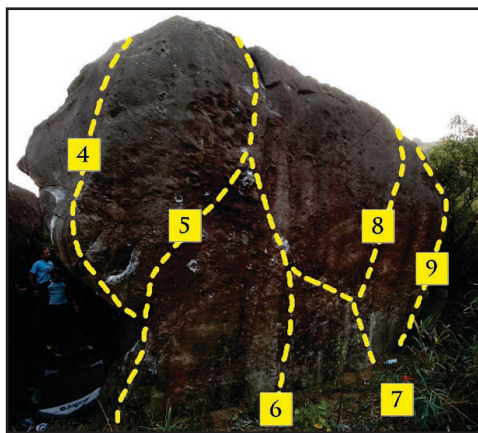
A relatively poor, in comparison to the other problems, line up the thin pockets immediately left of the scooped wall, finishing over the suspiciously hollow flake.

(2) V5 *** Scoup de Grace.

A delightful problem that feels frustratingly desperate for the grade until you've unlocked the sequence. Start directly beneath the flaired hanging crack and somehow attain it.

(3) V4 ** The Riceman Commeth (sds).

Sit start at the arete and make a big move for the huge jug on it's right side. From here launch out left to good sidepulls before continuing left along the slopey ramp to more big moves out to the lip. Continue left along the hanging ramp to a daunting rock over finish.



(9) V5 * Bellybutton (sds).

Start beneath the right arete of the face with an undercut pocket for the left and pockets / sidepulls (depending on what you can reach) for the right. Slap your way up the arete using an assortment of pebbles and flakes.



Stuart Millis eyeing up the crack on 'Scoup de Grace' (V5).
Photo: Marijn Mees