

Devon and Cornwall fixed gear Policy.

The attitude to bolts, sports climbing, pitons etc. varies from crag to crag throughout the area. I propose that we adopt separate policies for the different guidebook areas.

West Cornwall (CC 2000) i.e. the coastal cliffs from St Ives anticlockwise around the coast, up to and including the Lizard. This area already has a fixed gear policy, agreed at a special BMC meeting 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2011, see <http://community.thebmc.co.uk/Event.aspx?id=492> . (To summarise, no new fixed gear of any sort on sea cliffs and natural inland outcrops, any existing pitons etc. to be left to rust away and not be replaced.)

North Devon and Cornwall (CC 2000) i.e. the coastal cliffs from Baggy Point to St Ives.

Belays:

Belay and abseil stakes may be placed on cliff tops whenever they are needed – that is where ever there are no other adequate belays. Existing stakes should be replaced on popular crags (e.g. Screda Point) by the BMC style stakes (as at Swanage and Pembroke).

No drilled / bolt belays should be placed anywhere in the area.

Other fixed belay / abseil points. The issue is that for some of the culm cliffs, the only sensible means of descent is by abseil, this can result in an accumulation of slings etc. An example of this is the Lunakod belay on the middle fin at Lower Sharpnose. Following discussion at the BMC SW area meetings, it was agreed to replace the slings with a stainless steel chain. It is proposed to extend this to other popular cliffs throughout the area.

General principals – such chains (or similar) should only be placed on popular cliffs where there is no easy walk-off. The chains should only use natural belays (spikes or threads), no bolts or similar should be placed. Once the belays have been placed, any existing slings etc. should be removed.

With these principals in mind, it is proposed that fixed abseil points should be set up at the following cliffs: Vicarage Cliff – 2 points on the Promontory, 1 at the top of Vicarage Tower and one at the landward end of the horizontal ridge, an airy but easy scramble. All other slings should then be removed.

Lower Sharpnose Middle Fin – in addition to the existing point at the top of Lunakod, a point should be set up at the top of Fay, then all other slings etc. should be removed.

Marsland – this will probably require the use of cables rather than chains.

If, in the future, other cliffs prove popular, then belay points may be established using the above general principals.

Protection :

It is not acceptable to place drill any type of placement anywhere in the area (i.e. no bolts).

It is acceptable for pitons to be placed on new routes and for them to be replaced on existing routes on a "like for like" basis. However when there adequate alternative protection (nuts or cams etc.), pitons should not be placed or replaced. Pitons rapidly rust on this coast, so on new routes which may well not be repeated for some time, leaders should consider removing their pitons and including in their route descriptions details of the placements and pitons required. (See for example Martin Crocker's description of Ex-Man Cometh in the 2000 guide, climbed in 1996 and not yet repeated!) If pitons are removed or have rusted away and adequate alternative protection is available this should be noted on the UKC website, Javu, the CC website's new routes section and on any other relevant websites.

Cheesewring and South East Cornwall (St Ives publishing 2012), i.e. all of inland Cornwall and the Cornish coast east of the Lizard. What seems to be the consensus opinion is stated on pages 18 – 19 of the guide. The natural

inland outcrops are bolt and piton free and should remain so. Inland quarries are generally acceptable as suitable venues for bolt protected sports climbs. The guide book includes the following list of such venues: Cheesewring (but not the natural outcrop above the quarry), Luxulyan Valley Quarries, Gold Diggings Quarry, Bearah Tor Quarry and Carbilly North Quarry (note, at the time of writing, Kit Hill Quarry did not have any bolted climbs and was not included in this list). However new sports routes should not affect existing trad routes and existing routes should not be retro-bolted without permission of the first ascensionist / first free ascensionist. (If they are no longer alive, a consensus should be sort prior to retro-bolting.)

Dartmoor Granite (CC guide in preparation and Nick White's guide)

This should be the same as for inland Cornwall i.e. no fixed protection on any natural granite outcrops. Bolt protection is acceptable on inland quarries, providing it does not affect existing routes, retrobolting is acceptable with the permission of the first ascensionist.

### **South Devon Guide Ethics**

South Devon is perhaps a more ethically complex guidebook area than most. Much of the climbing, including some of its "sea cliffs" is quarried limestone offering limited natural protection. It has a long history of traditional climbing by some very bold protagonists though it has to be said that the old practice of carrying pegs and a hammer would have been a source of comfort. Some of the later Trad climbing first ascents definitely blurred the boundaries between trad and sport climbing with extensive preparation involving numerous in situ threads and pegs. Some of these have been retro bolted to produce a similar experience to that of the first ascensionist. This has usually been done with the first ascensionist's approval but not in all cases.

This raises some interesting points for debate. Should we support the wishes of the first ascensionist over the common consensus? Does a first ascent imply some sort of ownership over the rock? Does a solo first ascent of an unprotected easy route deny all others the opportunity of a protected subsequent ascent? Many may feel a more democratic decision making approach should be considered particularly where the first ascensionist may have employed some drilled gear.

### **Bolts**

South Devon has two nationally important bolted venues in Anstey's Cove and Torbryan Quarry. Both venues currently have a mix of bolted sport climbs and trad climbs. This has not been achieved without controversy but the consensus is that most of the bolting has been for the best and has more fully realised potential of these venues.

### **Policy**

**Natural outcrops – no bolts or drilling.**

**Quarries - bolting allowed where this does not impinge on existing trad routes, retro-bolting only allowed with the permission of the first ascensionist, if he/she is no longer alive, consensus must be sort at a BMC area meeting on a route by route basis. \* Some may wish to argue for consensus at a BMC meeting to have equal weight to the FA's views (especially where some drilled gear was used).**

**Natural Outcrops include -**

Chudleigh South  
Chudleigh Black Crag  
Sanctuary Wall  
The Wake  
Daddyhole  
London Bridge (debolted)  
Saddle Point (debolted)  
Churston Sea Cliffs (but not quarries)  
Berry Head Coastguard sea cliffs  
Oz Wall

Berry Head Old Redoubt  
Cradle Rock  
Durl Head

All natural sea cliffs including all of S Hams and all of the sandstone of East Devon.

**NB. Many quarries have a trad ethic and bolting would be considered unacceptable at these venues which include**

Meadfoot  
Telegraph Hole  
Much of Long Quarry Point

#### **Venues with bolts**

**Chudleigh South** – two rogue bolts. **No further bolting**

**Chudleigh North** – some fully bolted routes were established by an adventure centre. Some were partially degeared due to a personal dispute rather than for ethical reasons. Some could be restored to fully bolted routes provided they do not interfere with good trad lines. **Garden Wall is 100% bolt free and should remain so. Further bolting permissible but if it affects trad lines the FA approval/consensus should be sought.**

**Torbryan** – The main area is fully bolted with the approval of first ascentionists. Right of this the routes remain traditional and can be adequately protected as such. **Proposal – no bolting R of Bedrock.**

**Anstey's** – All of Anstey's is quarried but each sector needs assessing separately for the nature and history of its climbing. **No bolts in previously bolt free sectors without the approval of first ascentionists/consensus.**

**Empire Wall** -Whilst the right side is bolted the left side is currently trad climbing. Some of it is peg reliant. Where these pegs cannot be replaced there may be a temptation to bolt in the future. **Further bolting possible but there are currently no plans to do so.**

**Mitre Buttress** - Currently a mixed sport and trad area. The Mitre has had a bolt added at its originally aided start and goes free but the rest of the route has been suffocated by neighbouring bolted lines. Whilst the permissions of first ascentionists were sought for most of these bolts it is doubtful The Mitre FA (Frank Cannings) would have given approval. **Further bolting is not out of the question.**

**Era area** – 2 bolted lines and some easy infrequented trad. **Nobody is likely to care enough to bolt it further.**

**Ferocity Wall** – Fully bolted with one notable exception, **Devonshire Cream** (a Devon sacred cow which is **not to be fully bolted** for sentimental reasons. The first ascentionist made a very bold ascent involving jumping off and this is celebrated by a very high first bolt where the peg used to be). **Further bolting is permissible provided it preserves Devonshire Cream.**

**The Upper Tier** – largely bolted but these are in poor condition. One trad route with pegs and threads could potentially be bolted (Tasty Snappers) as part of a restoration project? **Further bolting permissible with permission from first ascentionists or consensus.**

**St Gregory Area** – A popular new low grade sports route (Sunshine) has been added without interfering with the existing trad routes. The slab offers easy climbing but is plagued by loose blocks and the deadly Torbay exfoliating slab syndrome. Pat littlejohn would consent to the bolting of his route St Gregory the Wonder Worker but it is unlikely anyone would be motivated to take on such a huge task. **Bolting permissible with permission from first ascentionists or consensus.**

**Moonshot Area** – Trad climbing but with the occasional bolt for protection. **Proposal; No fully bolted routes permitted in this sector**

**Cocytus Area** – Mixed Trad and sport on a route by route basis. Permissions were not sought for the original bolts on Cocytus. The recent additional bolt was part of a rationalising action to turn a disjointed 80% bolted

route with no lower off into a more sustained 100% sport route with a lower off. The FA (Pat Littlejohn) admitted the battle was lost long ago. I must admit to playing a personal role in this dastardly deed – I held some ropes at the completion of the deed but had no foreknowledge or planning of it.

**Further bolting possible with first ascensionists approval/consensus. Blonde Bombshell is not to be fully bolted (adequate protection).**

**Long Quarry Point** – A mixed venue where partially bolted routes have been fully retro-bolted with the permission of the first ascensionist on Styx Wall. Old bolted lines on the seaward edge of the quarry are largely redundant with a change of style towards DWS. Other areas are generally considered trad but one fully bolted route (Thesaurus E4 6c) on the upper slab dates from 1987. In addition Renegade has two bolt belays, one of which is shared by Black Ice. Whilst there is some excellent trad to protect for future generations there is a tendency for peg decay to make many of the routes far less appealing as time goes on. **Further bolting of Styx Wall is permissible. Elsewhere is a greyer area and needs route by route consideration. Wherever possible the trad nature of climbs should be respected. A similar approach to the Avon restoration project – peg replacement where possible bolted belays where other options have been lost and any individual protection bolts should be a last resort with the FA's consent.**

**Exile Buttress** – This totally neglected venue was lost to ivy and its access paths were overgrown. It has seen a huge revival of interest since the main first ascensionist gave his permission to retro-bolt climbs which were dependent on pegs and threads. **Further bolting seems likely but must not impinge on the trad route The Exile.**

**Ash Hole** - A dank quarry with vegetation problems. One new bolted line established recently and the FA has given permission for full retro-bolting of the partially bolted original lines. **Further bolting likely.**

**Churston** – In the quarried area many routes were established with bolt belays and in some cases occasional bolt runners. Others are highly dependent on fixed gear in the shape of threads and pegs. One of these has been retro-bolted with the first ascensionist's approval. **Further bolting likely but must be restricted to the quarried areas.**

**Berry Head Quarry** – There are currently no bolts but it has been a local discussion topic. It is a neglected trad venue which discourages climbers because it is north facing, reliant on old pegs, vegetated and with a fair amount of loose rock. A few points should be noted. It would be time consuming and expensive to bolt such a big face and no one appears to be interested in such a job. It would seem logical to force bolted lines up the cleaner rock next to the old trad lines where the vegetation and loose rock prevails. It is unlikely this could be done sympathetically to the old lines.

**Bolting of the best clean rock could be a possibility in the future.**

**Landcombe/Forrest Cove South Hams** – Some bolted slate slabs on a beach. The bolts are of unknown origin and are unlikely to be viewed as acceptable on a natural sea cliff if it were ever voted on at a BMC meeting. **Proposal; no further bolting of any natural sea cliff.**

## **Pegs**

It is permissible but not desirable to place pegs on first ascents particularly if alternative protection is available (nuts cams etc). There are rare instances where pegs are placed because it would be too strenuous/dangerous without them (Sanctuary Wall etc). On existing routes “like for like” replacement is permissible where alternatives do not exist. If pegs are required on climbs where the first ascensionist managed without them their approval should be sought.

## **Abseil Stations**

Can be provided where they make the climbing safer (and have been long tolerated where they make the climbing more convenient!) Inkermans. Co Ops. Gagool. Triton. Raw Umber, and perhaps Flying Fifteen are examples.

**Stakes**

Berry Head – Bismark Wall, Martin Crocker's DWS

Durl Head

Telegraph Hole - may need them in future since the Council cut down the tree belays.

Sanctuary Wall

Oz wall trad

*Pete Saunders 2014*

East Devon Sandstone – A suggestion has been made that if anyone is daft enough to climb it – good luck, angle iron warthogs etc. are acceptable, but you are unlikely to find anything solid enough to take bolts!

Also, what are people's views on fixed lower-offs at Chudleigh and Dewerstone?