

BMC Participation Statement.

The BMC recognises that climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.

Whickham Thorns Boulder Park

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Introduction

The first man made outdoor boulder park in Britain was made by Enterprise for Whickham Thorns Outdoor Activity Centre. Officially opened in October 1998 the boulder park has proved extremely popular with top climbers and novices alike. The boulder enjoys a sunny aspect and its use is free and unrestricted.

Access and Approaches

Just off the A1 Western By Pass opposite Gateshead Metro Centre. Take the Dunston/Whickham exit then turn south to the traffic lights where you need to turn right. Park in the Whickham Thorns Activity Centre car park. The boulder park is easily reached in less than a minute from the car park.

Bouldering Etiquette

Keeping your boots squeaky clean makes good sense, it can even make the problems feel easier. **NO WIRE BRUSHING & NO RESIN.** Nylon brushes acceptable to brush chalk and pebbles from the holds.

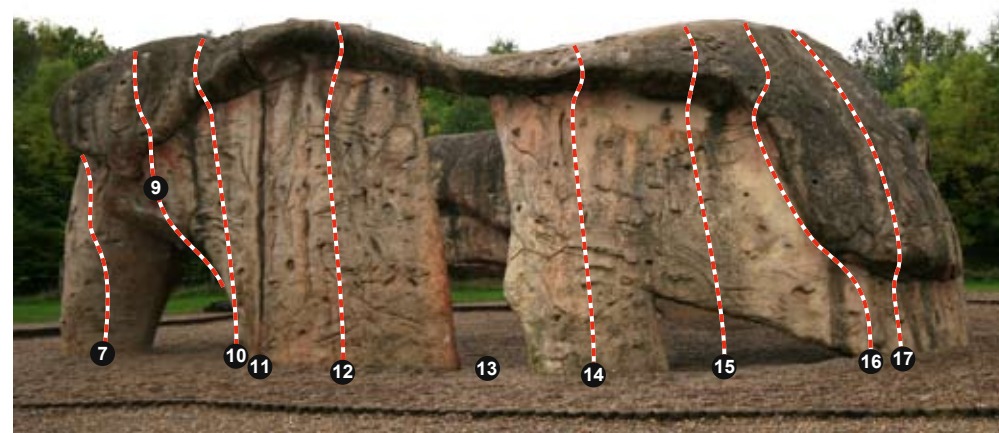
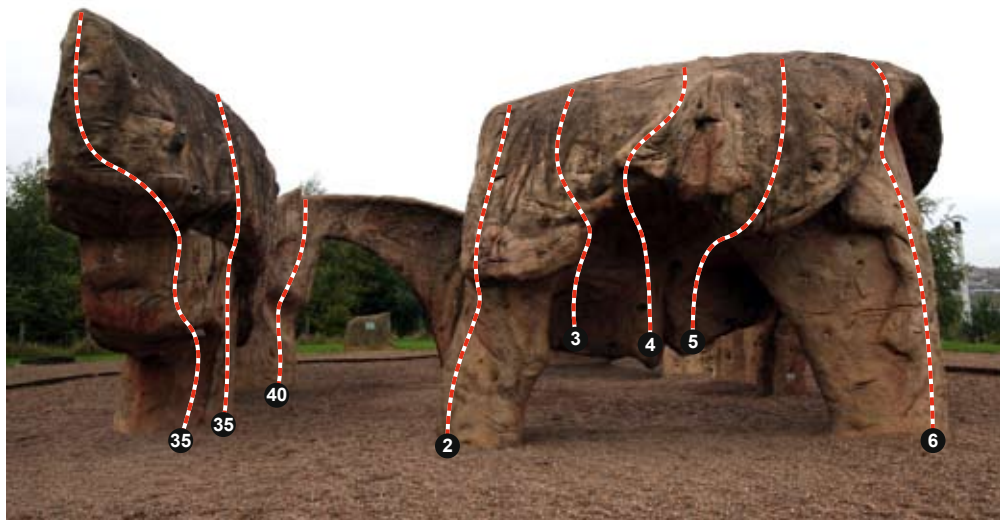
**Grading**

The grading system used here was first used in Fontainbleau near Paris and is becoming increasingly popular with climbers in the UK.

The Problems

The boulder is one complex cirque. The problems are described from left to right first around the outside, then returning around the inside. All the problems finish on the top. Finally some traverses are described. The first problem tackles the left edge of the east face and is one of the nearest problems to the approach path.

*Problem 2*



Outside - North East Face

1. The First Arête Font 2+

Follow the slabby arête.

2. The First Leg Font 3

Ascend the boulder leg, with tricky moves over the small overlap.

3. Font 4+

Start inside the leg and climb over the roof Using the left edge of the feature, continue up and right to finish via the good jug.

4. The Eastern Cave Font 5+

Climb out of the cave then follow the short hanging scoop to the top.

5. Font 6a

Start at base of crack inside the cave. Climb the roof to the lowest point of the overhanging lip then make a hard move up and right then continue direct.

6. The Second Leg Font 4

Start on outside edge of second leg. Follow the flake/ feature then pull left to gain the top.

7. Inside Leg Font 5+

Start on the north side of the second leg, trend slightly left to cross the overlap at the apex.

8. Low Traverse Font 6c

SS. in the Eastern Cave adjacent to problem 3. Traverse below the top northwards, without bridging onto the second leg, to emerge on the north face. Finish as for problem 9.

9. Font 6a+

SS. left of the main crack. Climb steeply left to pull over the overlap past the twin pockets.

10. Font 3+

The wall immediately left of the crack.

11. Classic Crack Font 3+

The crack only, to the top.

12. Font 2+

The wall between the *Classic Crack* and *The Gap*.

13. The Gap Font 3

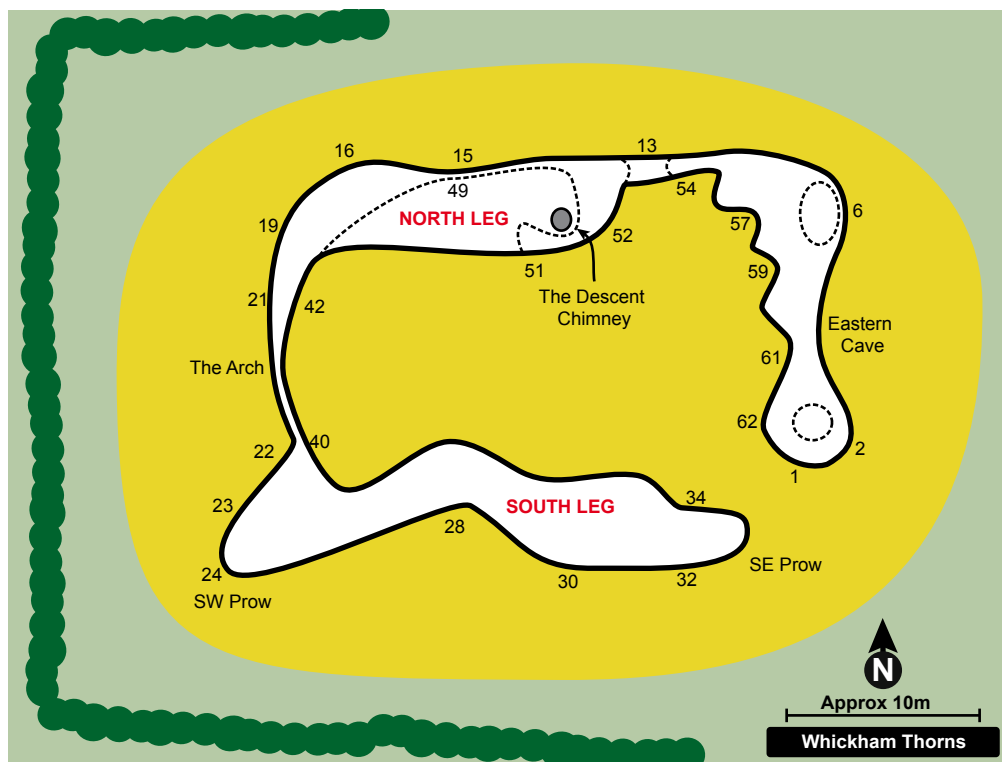
Bridge up the wide gap.

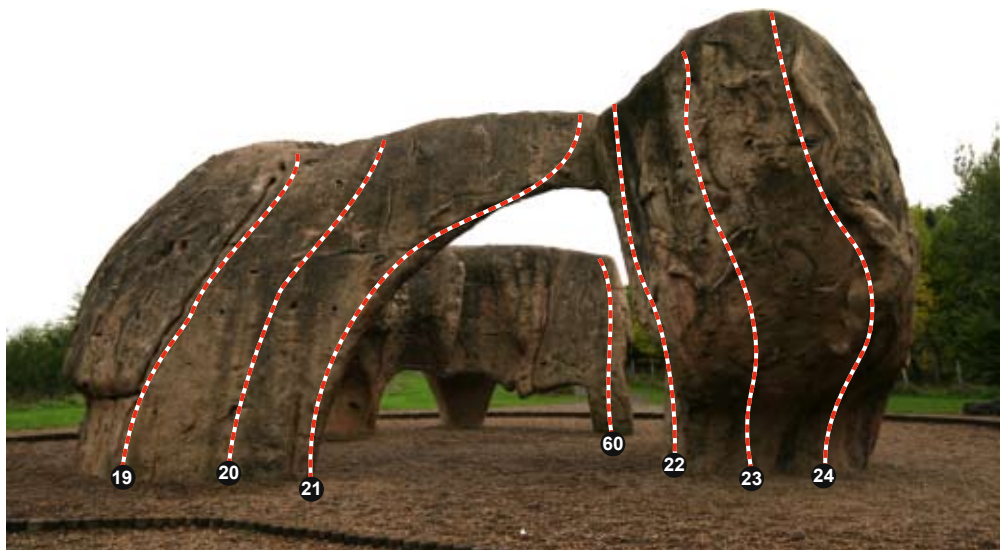
14. Font 2

Climb the wall just right of *The Gap*.

15. Little Window Font 2

Up the wall above the little window.



**Outside - North West Slab**

The next feature is on the north west face.

16. The Federation Flake Font 2

Start at left edge of the large undercut flake. Climb trending left.

17. Font 3

Up over the left edge of the undercut flake and continue direct to the top.

18. Font 3

Pull over the flake left of the crack and continue up the slab to the top.

19. NW Crack Font 2+

Climb the splendid crack.

20. Font 3+

Pad up the slab just right of the crack.

21. Under the Arch Font 5+

A rising traverse under the lip of the arch. Pinch with those knees! (Too easy? Try hands on outside only.)

Outside - South West Face

The steep prow just right of the arch.

22. Font 5+

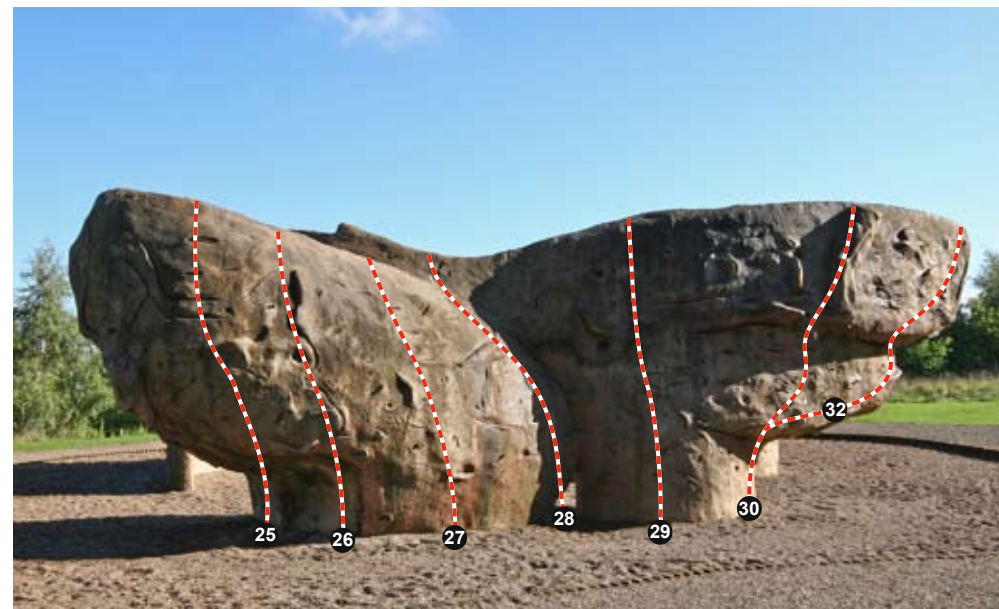
SS. Straight up the wall below the right edge of the arch, passing twin pockets near the top.

23. Font 4+

Ascend the overhang to the left side of the South West Prow.

24. South West Prow Font 6a

SS. Follow the prominent feature up the steepest part of the prow.

**Outside - South Face**

The sunny open book face.

25. Font 6a

SS. Climb the undercut wall on slopers and small crimps.

26. The Snake Font 6a+

Tackle the curving features and small edges. Hard for the short.

27. Font 1+

Delicate climbing up the wall just left of the prominent scoop.

28. Southern Scoop Font 1

Climb up the wide groove. Now try without using hands!

29. Right Cheek Font 2+

Straight up the wall 1m right of the scoop.

30. The Lug Font 3+

Awkward moves to gain the large "flake" then layback up it to top.

31. Inside Out Font 6a+

Start on the inside on jugs. Swing or pull powerfully to the outside and continue up the wall keeping right of the "flake".

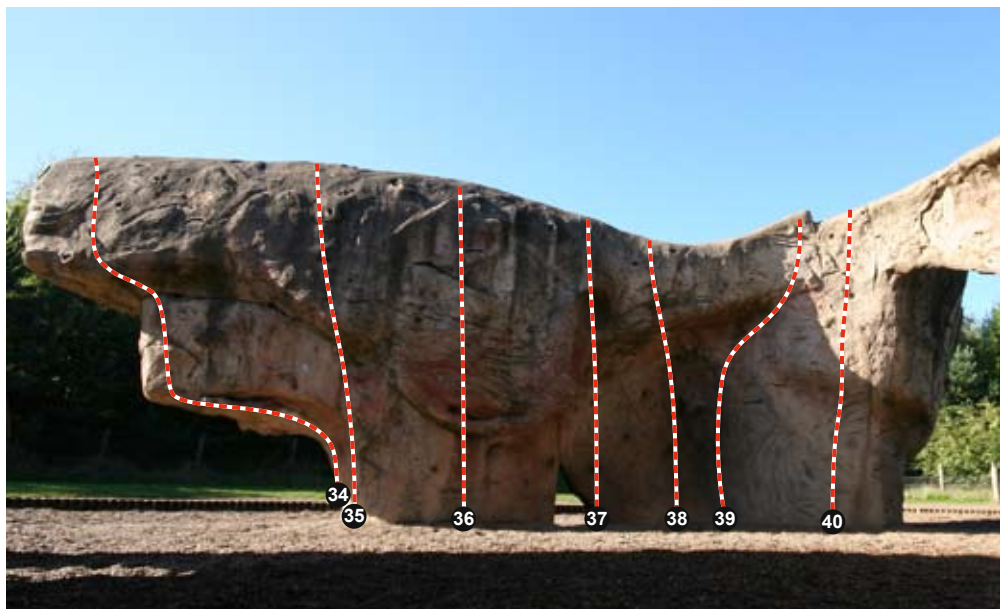
32. South East Prow Font 6a+

Start at the base of the prow, below the flake, traverse right along the edge then up the arête to the top.

33. South East Prow Direct Font 6c

SS. beneath the prow. Start on the "hueco" then climb the prow direct using inset holds only.





Inside South

The north facing aspect of the south face!

34. Font 6a

S.S. at the base of the prow, traverse left to the end of the low break then finish straight up.

35. Font 5+

Start at the base of the prow but tackle the wall direct.

36. The Smile Font 5+

Start in the centre of the curving feature and climb straight up.

37. Hollow Heart Font 6a

Start above the small window. Ascend the wall using the hollow.

38. Font 5+

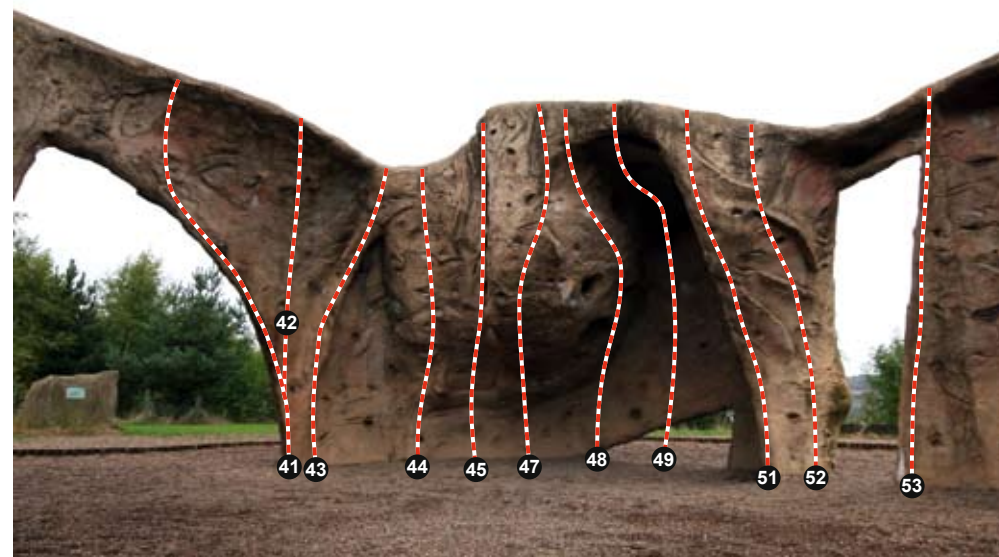
SS. just left of the prominent corner; climb straight up and powerfully over the roof

39. Font 5

Start in the middle of the wall just right of the prominent corner, trend up rightwards beneath the bulge.

40. Pocket Wall Font 5

The wall immediately left of the arch.



Inside North

The next problem starts just right of the arch.

41. The Inside Arch Font 6b+

Trend left until half way along the arch then tackle the wall above direct passing the twin pockets.

42. Font 6a+

Start just right of the arch. Climb the wall above direct, without using the "Tufa".

43. The Tufa Font 3

Climb the "Tufa" without bridging onto the bulge to the right.

44. Font 4

Climb straight up the overhanging groove.

45. Font 4+

Follow the left arête of the bulge.

46. The Bulge Eliminate Font 6c+

Powerful moves on inset holds only.

47. The Bulge Font 6b

SS. Tackle the bulge direct.

48. Font 3+

Start just right of the bulge, follow the easiest line trending left near the top.

49. Through the Window Font 6a

Start on the outside above the little window and climb through to the inside then continue up the back of the cave and across the roof. No bridging.

50. Easy

The Descent Chimney.

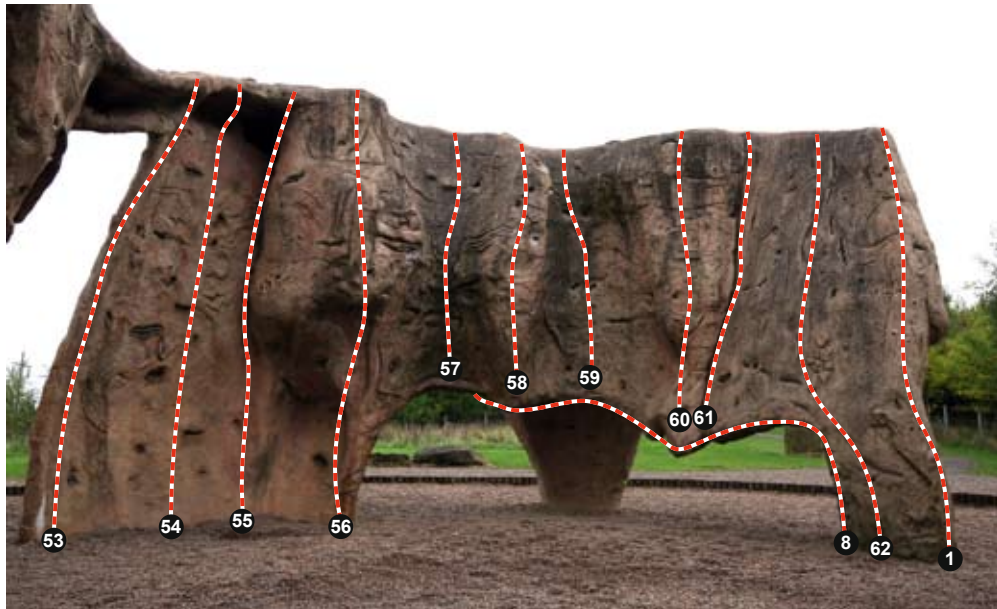
51. Chimney Arête Font 5+

Climb the steep arête of the chimney.

52. Font 4

Climb the leaning wall left of *The Gap*.





The Hanging Scoops Area

The next problem climbs the edge of *The Gap*.

53. Font 3+

Layback up the right edge of *The Gap*.

54. Pocketed Wall Font 3

The pocketed wall direct.

55. Font 3

Struggle up the bulging corner/groove.

The starts of the next six problems are undercut. The arêtes are all eliminates but they are all worthwhile.

56. Font 4+

The steep arête direct.

57. The Left Hand Scoop Font 4+

Climb the centre of the scoop.

58. The Hanging Arête Font 4

Climb the arête.

59. The Central Scoop Font 3+

Up the centre of the scoop.

60. Font 3

Climb the rounded arête.

61. The Final Scoop Font 1

Saunter up the scoop. Too easy? Try laybacking the crack with feet on smears only!

62. Font 1+

Step on to the final slab, from the right.

The Traverses

The two low level traverses are separated by the wide gap below the arch.

63. Low Level North Leg F7a+

A complicated line traversing around the entire North leg half keeping low all the way.

64. Low Level South Leg F7c

Traverse around the South Leg keeping low.

65. Low Level Combined F7c+

When combining the two low level traverses cross the arch use only one side each way as appropriate.

66. High Level Outside F6b+

Traverse around the outside, stay near the top.

67. High Level Inside F7a

Traverse the inside, keeping near the top.

68. High Level Combined F7b

Traverse outside at a high level then return on the inside staying high all the way. Puppy!



BOULDERING GRADES

It is true to say that there are only two grades, the problems you can do and the problems you can't. To the keen boulderer however, it soon becomes apparent that this can be sub divided into the problems you can do but your mate can't and vice versa! Grading boulder problems is almost an impossible task and this table is an attempt to compare the most popular systems. Boulder grading tends to measure the overall difficulty of a problem. A problem with one short hard move may get 7a and one with a sustained sequence of easier moves may also get 7a. A highball will normally get an extra half grade.

British Technical Grades

These work well for routes but have become too vague for serious bouldering.

Hueco Grade

Developed in Hueco Tanks in Texas, USA by John Sherman ('Verm' to his mates, hence the V). Principally used in the USA. It is popular with definitive UK climbing guidebooks by the BMC and Rockfax.

Font Grade

This system, which originated in the forests of Fontainebleau in France, is becoming increasingly popular with UK boulderers. It is now the grading system of choice in the majority of the UK bouldering guidebooks and is the system that has been used here.

Grading is always such a controversial issue!

Grade Table

Font	UK Technical Grade	Hueco
2+	4a	
3	4b	
3+	4c	VB
4	5a	V0
4+	5b	V1
5	5c	V2
5+	5c	V2
6a		V2
6a+	6a	V3
6b		V4
6b+		V4
6c	6b	V5
6c+		V5
7a		V6
7a+		V7
7b	6c	V8
7b+		V8
7c		V9
7c+	7a	V10
8a		V11
8a+		V12
8b	7b	V13
8b		V14

THE NEXT STEP

If you have enjoyed climbing here and would like to develop your climbing further, more information about climbing can be found from **The British Mountaineering Council** (www.thebmc.co.uk).

Other useful sources:

Climbing Books

Rock Climbing Essential Skills and Techniques by Libby Peters
Rockfax Climbing guides and Performance books (www.rockfax.com)

Monthly Climbing Magazines:

Climber (www.climber.co.uk)
Climb (www.climbmagazine.com)

Coaching:

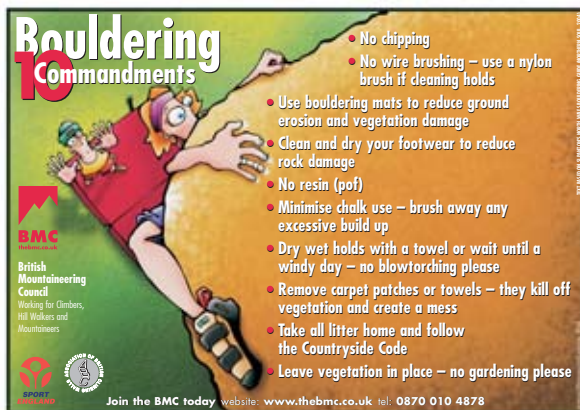
Andrew Earl (www.climbnewcastle.com)
Neil Gresham (www.climbingmasterclass.com)
Dave MacLeod (www.davemacleod.com)

Coaching DVD's

Masterclass Parts 1+2 by Neil Gresham, Crux Films, 2005

Websites:

The BMC (www.thebmc.co.uk)
UK Climbing (www.ukclimbing.com)



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