Water Mike Robertson A guide to deep water soloing in the UK, Europe and selected venues across the World

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Cover: Mike Robertson on the colourful second pitch of Devon's amazing Rainbow Bridge (7a+) - page 102 - Berry Head, Devon. Photo: Mark Glaister

This Page: Elinor Currey sampling the superb rock of Mallorca. Photo: Ruth Taylor

Fiona McGowan on (off!) Freeborn Man (6c) BOCK Conner Cove, Dorset (see page 49). BULGING WITH CLIMBING GEAR Many shops claim to be climbing specialists. At Rock On we sell Climbing/Mountaineering equipment & Books and absolutely nothing else. NOTHING ELSE. Now that's specialist.

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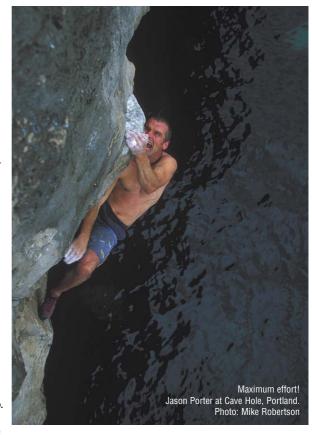
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Conner Cove, 1992: what a place! I had the audacity - me, an E2 climber - to attempt the glorious E4 line of Freeborn Man, today perhaps one of the best-known solos in the deep water solo world. I battled up that steep, pocketed mid-section, got through that stretchy crux undercut move by sheer good fortune and willpower, did that funky wild traverse left, dead pumped now, then promptly got shut down on that funny little rockover move, to gain the upper slab. Damn it! And as I plummeted towards the sea, I thought of the folk who'd been there before me, all falling in much the same way. Because that's the thing, once off the rock, we're all the same, and grades are irrelevant, we're merely airborne, we're adrift and heading down towards the subterranean green room, the place of bubbles, and of silence. And we all get wet in much the same way.

Time marches on. It's now 2007, and this guide is so very close to being finished. I went back to do *Freeborn Man* after that first fall, and I've now done it more times than I can admit to. But it's still the same, every time, that vital stretch for the open undercut, the



gripping span left for the big pocket, the final wild step-up to gain the easy top slab. It's just divine, and those moves still inspire me to travel the world in search of more, and more. Since then, deep water soloing (DWS) has taken me to every corner of the UK, to the islands and obscure coast-lines of Europe; even to Asia and Tasmania. It's been a journey of unimaginable contrast and beauty, and this guide is a product of that experience.

You have in your hands the ticket to so many places I didn't have when I began: the historical DWS crags of Dorset, the wild traverses of Devon, the craglets of Cornwall, the crazy, mammoth tidal venue of Pembroke. Even North Wales and Scotland are introduced here - madcap places indeed! In the rest of Europe we have the stunning cliffs of Mallorca, the absolute serenity of Portugal's Sagres, and the sunny stretches of the Costa Blanca. Add to this Asia and Australia, and all those endless possibilities; barely-developed islands, projects and suchlike ... and, quite frankly, I really do think you need to get out more ... and so do I.

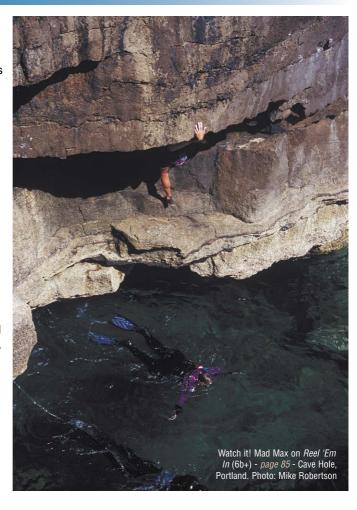
So here it is: Deep Water. DWS, as it stands right now. The shifting currents of life are ever-changing, and who knows where we'll end up tomorrow: I can only hope that this guide will inspire you to go and find more, and to never stop exploring. DWS is the purest form of climbing known to man: take a hold and see if it grabs you. And let me know how you get on.



The Guidebook

Rockfax publish full colour guidebooks to UK and international climbing areas. This is our 25th guidebook and the first that covers deep water soloing venues in the UK and beyond. Rockfax utilise state of the art publishing techniques and are dedicated to presenting essential climbing information in a clear, easily understood and attractive format, that both informs and inspires.

This book presented a unique set of challenges. not least the immense task of collecting sea cliff photographs. Usually crag shots are relatively straightforward to take. As you can imagine, a salty, wet and sometimes stormy approach is not straightforward. The author Mike Robertson is not only a world authority on DWS but is an enthusiastic sea kayaker and with his highly sensitive and expensive camera equipment in a dry bag, he had many adventures taking the crag shots that illustrate this book.

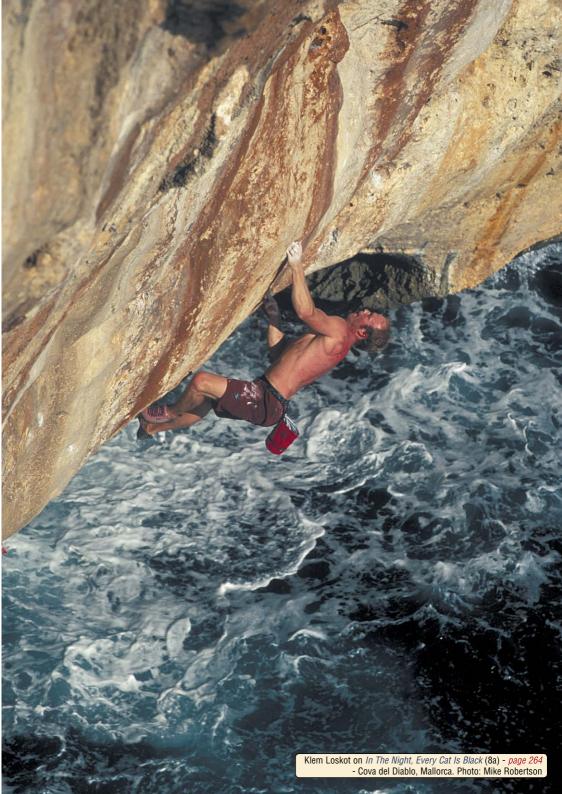


There is one new Rockfax symbol, Atlantis man, you'll have to follow him after your spash-down to regain terra firma. Another first for this guidebook is the sport grade combined with the DWS adjectival grade: S0, S1, S2, S3.

As is now standard in all Rockfax guidebooks, great care and effort is taken in selecting inspiring action photographs. We hope you enjoy them.

Web Sites

For further information on DWS exploration worldwide, go to www.dwsworld.com (see page 15). Daimon Beail, who's been spending time off Mallorca's south-east coastline, has been branching out and giving his website a global spread, so expect a lot of worldwide projects and information, as well as a kind of DWS hang, where folk can drop tips and pick up a little guidance and knowledge. There are future plans for information on Croatia, Summersville Lake - USA, Squamish - Canada, and Malta. The Rockfax website too will have a section dedicated to deep water soloing information - www.rockfax.com.





This is the hardest of the lot. Mallorca's Es Pontas arch: the scene of Chris Sharma's mega-route, which took the U.S. strong-man a total of four visits and some 80 attempts. The crux is an overhanging 2.2m dyno, and this desperate move alone saw 50 splash-downs. This lower crux, coupled with the difficulty of the upper section, gives the line first prize in the 'most-fallen-from new DWS route! Sharma has declined to grade it, but, in view of his similar efforts on Realization in France, the grade appears to be around 9a/9a+. Sharma is a true convert: "Since I started deep-water soloing," Sharma said, "I've wanted to find something that's at my limit - that's really a project ... I wanted to find something comparable to Realization, taking it to the highest level possible."

Photo: Corey Rich/Aurora Photos



Like all forms of climbing, there are general guidelines for deep water soloists that govern how you go about things when at the crag. The following pointers are advice/good practice - adherence to these ought to keep you safe and sound, but always use your own judgement!

Tides

WARNING: checking tides and depths is the most important safety aspect of DWS. Crag tide requirements are covered extensively on page 16 and are a factor that should never be ignored. Realising this fact will also save you time, petrol and much angst.

Make a point of getting the tides on your side, especially at venues such as Pembroke, Cave Hole and Devon. Remember at these venues that the S grades will tie into the correct tide levels, and ignoring this WILL leave you short of water.

Height and Depth

The higher you get, the more risk you'll be taking; and the shallower the water, the more risk you'll be taking. So get used to DWS by way of S0, and not S2 or S3! Get your solo head on by doing plenty of mileage on the classic S0 and S1 routes, and do a little jumping practice, too. Check page 14 for more about S grades.

Currents and Rough Seas

The ideal soloist's day will include a calm sea, with no currents or swells. But life's not that straightforward, and you will find yourself climbing above a bit of roughness from time to time. So, to increase your safety, stay within sight of your pals, remember your own swimming limitations, and ALWAYS plan your exit in advance. Bear in mind that exiting onto boulder beaches or reefs can be much more difficult in heavy seas, and always take into account the possibility of currents, particularly around headlands and promontories. Remember that a hanging rope can be a life saver, as can a pal who can throw one.

Reefs and Boulders

Sub-surface boulders and reefs are never an exact science (they've been known to shift around in the winter) and my efforts to reveal them in this guide are bound to be flawed, despite my best attempts. So know your depth before you set off, and always swim your landing zone if you are unsure.

Water Temperature

Here's a working example: the sea temperature in Dorset is around 9°C in early April, thereafter building through the summer to around 19°C in early September. So it doesn't take a genius to work out that late season is going be the best time to work that project ground-up. The same annual temperature change timing applies to the Mediterranean, albeit with slightly higher temperatures overall. Remember that cold water saps your strength very quickly, as well as interfering with your breathing.

Guidebook Footnote

The inclusion of a climbing area in this guidebook does not mean that you have a right of access or the right to climb upon it. The descriptions of routes within this guide are recorded for historical reasons only and no reliance should be placed on the accuracy of the description. The grades set in this guide are a fair assessment of the difficulty of the climbs. Climbers who attempt a route of a particular standard should use their own judgment as to whether they are proficient enough to tackle that route. This book is not a substitute for experience and proper judgment. The authors, publisher and distributors of this book do not recognise any liability for injury or damage caused to, or by, climbers, third parties, or property arising from such persons seeking reliance on this guidebook as an assurance for their own safety.





Swimming Ability

Deep water soloists who are strong swimmers tend to be the most confident with falls and exits. So hone your swimming skills if you fall into the category of 'nervous around water'.

Floats and Boats

These can be utilised for situations where you may be unsure about currents, or maybe your (or someone else's) swimming strength. Manned boat use is self-explanatory - less obvious is the concept of a rope dangling down into the water, with an inflatable boat or a rubber ring attached to it. This could also be thrown with a rope, in the same manner as the classic seaside rescue rings.

Abseiling into the Route

This generally presents a relatively safe situation - you'll usually be above water (see page 18 for info on the quick-release tape harness arrangement). It's also worth remembering that jumars are regularly used by deep water soloists - it's a great way to clean and investigate routes, and will give you the option of climbing back up the rope if you have a change of heart, or if you find the sea state to be too spicy. But always remember that it is worth practising the art before you need to do it! Also bear in mind that on steep crags, clipping bolts or threads or runners will often facilitate reaching that start ledge!

Topping Out

Top-outs can vary from a solid crag top at 10m, to a pre-placed rope finish on looser ground, to a 'climb to a small cave and jump' scenario. The best advice is to know exactly what you're getting into before you set off and make adequate preparation if it is needed.

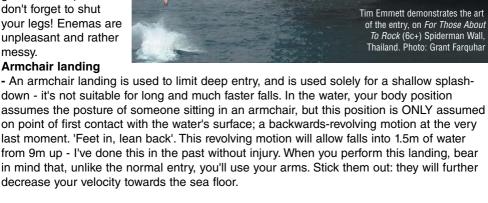
Don't go Solo!

This is important. Although many confident soloists do solo 'solo' (as it were) from time to time, I'd recommend that you stay within earshot or sight of a mate. If you did pull a hold and fall badly, the sight of your pal jumping in to sort you out would be a very welcome one indeed.

Splashdowns

Regular - A normal splashdown into deep water is well-illustrated in the sequence to the right. The climber stays loose just about all the way down, then assumes a good entry position in the last few metres of the fall (or jump). This initial 'looseness' of the body is important, as it prevents that 'tightening' of the body, which so often results in an offkilter landing. So stay relaxed and wriggling almost all the way to the water! It's also worth remembering that 'wheeling' your outstretched arms in small circles provides a way of rotating the body forwards or backwards whilst in the air (just try it whilst sitting down).

Upon entry, keep your arms tightly in, and your head upright (don't look down during entry, you'll get a face-full). And don't forget to shut your legs! Enemas are unpleasant and rather messy.







Rest of Europe

'S' Grades

Devised over one (or three) pints of Ringwood Best by the Dorset crew in 1995, and (considering its beginnings) has stood the test of time admirably. The simple S Grade consists of a 0, 1, 2 or 3. S0 gives relative safety, with S3 offering considerable possibility of injury in the event of a fall.

- Safe at most tides, not particularly high crux moves. Avoid bottling out of an S0 if possible. These are essentially safe, so climb until you fall. Commitment normally pays off!
- Care required; either the tide or the water depth needs checking, or maybe there is a highish crux on the route. Remember that, in big tide venues, a huge tide and good timing can turn an S1 into an S0.
- A little more care than S1 required. Possibly spring-tide only (higher water levels). Check your tide timetable carefully. 'Landings' can be more significant maybe a crash landing into shallow-ish water required, or a slight 'push' to clear rock or a slight slab/reef below. Likely to have a high crux.
- S3 without a large measure of control or timing. Failure on the route might require a full body length crash landing into the deepest water available, or a long and scary downward flight. If you're operating in a tidal venue, wait for the biggest high tide possible.

Sport Grades - why?

The mixing of various grades in the UK has always caused a high level of confusion, and with good reason. The Brits seem obsessed with making things as complicated as possible! This is especially true in the game of deep water soloing, where historically we've used a combination of three grading systems. These are:

Extremely Severe 'XS' grades - These were often used for deep water solos with many references in the 1996 Climbers' Club Dorset DWS Guide. The XS grade prefixed the hardest English technical move. The problem with the XS grade is that it doesn't tell you how sustained the climbing is: it only tells of how hard the hardest move is.

English grades - (As in E4 6a). These weren't so bad for DWS, but the problem was the 'E' bit of the grade, which all too often denoted the danger element, due to the lack of available wire protection. A further difficulty was that you don't drag a full climbing rack up a deep water solo! A deep water solo just doesn't need this 'E' grade (we thankfully don't have to fumble endlessly with wires), which was why more and more new routes were being put up using the Sport, or 'French' grade.

Sport/French grades - Adopted wholeheartedly for this guide, and universally understood - the World's favourite grade. The sport grade was initially used in DWS for areas such as Dorset's Stair Hole, where the routes were put up as sport routes, then later soloed. The grade quickly picked up momentum within the grading of new DWS routes, especially at venues such as Mallorca's pumpy Diablo. This grade gives an overall impression of difficulty, and fits the DWS genre almost perfectly, although it's not quite as fitting for boulder-problem solos.

For more on grading systems - www.rockfax.com



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Throughout one lunar month there are two spring or high range tides, and two neap or low range tides. Spring tides occur during the 'full' and 'new' moons, when the sun and the moon are in line and the combined gravitational pull causes the highest tides, which then ebb to the lowest level. During the first and third quarters of the moon (found in most diaries), when the sun's and moon's attractional forces are at right angles, we experience the lower neap high tides, along with the higher low tide levels.

Here's how it all relates to the deep water soloist:

- > The majority of the routes in this guide are best enjoyed at high tide, but it's important to understand the tide levels concerned. Sometimes too much water can affect your approach to the route, especially if the sea is a little rough. The lower sections of traverses can particularly be affected by water levels.
- > Venues with big tide variations, or 'swings' (such as Pembroke) will need extra savvy and knowledge, so always buy a tide timetable before you visit. Areas in the rest of Europe and the Mediterranean are almost unaffected by tides.
- > The high spring tides ALWAYS fall early or late in the day (don't ask me why!) So, if you need a decent spring tide, you'll be climbing your chosen route before 10am, or after 6.00pm. To clarify this: you will get high tides at midday, but they'll ALWAYS be the smaller, neap high tides.
- > If that neap tide is sufficient for you (ie. at Conner Cove, or Lulworth Cove), that's a HUGE bonus this means you can climb at a more civilised, midday hour!

Swanage	The tides are usually unimportant here. Dorset's average tidal swing is about 1.7m, and the water is so silly-deep that an average neap tide is probably your best bet. An afternoon high tide would be about ideal.
Lulworth	Absolute neap tide territory. Neap tides will give plenty of water to climb just about all the routes, and all of the time. The extra bonus: all those low-level traverses at Lulworth are accessible with neaps: most definitely not with springs.
Portland	Big swingers required! Portland has the same average Dorset swing of 1.7m or so, but you'll need to pick some hefty spring tides to tackle most of the routes safely, as the water depth is crucial here. This means climbing early and late. A morning spring tide gives you the best conditions for the east-facing Cave Hole.
Devon	Devon's 'swings' can be as big as 5m, so if your priority is climbing those lengthy traverses, a neap tide will suit you better, giving an even spread of water. For the up-routes, you'd be better timing a spring-like tide with sunshine on the crag. Now that's a challenge.
Cornwall	Nare Head has plenty of water, so don't worry too much about your precise timing, although a high-ish tide would be ideal. Access is generally pretty much the same whatever the level. Take a good high tide for all routes on the Lizard.
Pembroke	A tough one. Pembroke's tidal swings are vast (up to 8m) so timing is EVERYTHING! A high-ish tide is a good idea for a lot of Pembroke, but remember that lower access ledges during massive tides can be greatly restrictive, especially at venues in the Penally region. For the taller venues, such as Stennis Ford and Blind Bay, take a big spring tide. North Pembroke's Barrel Zawn is a perfect neap tide venue, so you can loiter there all day with your sandwiches.
Vivian Quarry	Consider this venue fully tide-free! The only UK fresh water venue.
Mediterranean	The Med's tide swings are usually less than 0.5m, and Portugal's aren't much bigger. Consider these venues as pretty much non-tidal.
South-East Asia	The Andaman and South China seas have a tide much like Dorset's in size.
Tasmania	Considering Tasmania's global position on the very edge of everything, the tides are amazingly minuscule; expect a maximum of less than 1m, much like Portugal.
Double accounts the	at his tides are abusing good house DIC ALCO MEANC LOW! Lat ma

- > Don't assume that big tides are always good news. BIG ALSO MEANS LOW! Let me reiterate: big tides swing very low! For example, a high spring tide in Dorset will mean insufficient water to climb at Lulworth Cove at midday.
- > Remember that spring tides always generate stronger ocean currents.
- > If you arrive at your chosen venue and find yourself unsure as to which way the tide is going, choose a 'marker', such as a horizontal crack. 20 minutes later, the tide's progress should become obvious. This method is also used when you've made a decision about the minimum level for that venue - simply choose a 'marker' that reflects this ideal minimum level, and refer to it on future visits.
- > High tides, regardless of their actual level, occur roughly every 12 hours and 20 minutes. This means that an 8am high tide on a Saturday morning will give approximately a 8.40am high tide on the Sunday morning etc, etc.
- > Tide times for all UK coastal areas are available on www.bbc.co.uk/coast/tides/. Tide timetables are often available close to your chosen crag - check out Post Offices, fishing tackle shops and diving centres.

Tape Harness Arrangement

Highly useful on abseil-in routes, it's both light and quick, and with a little practise, it'll be possible to arrive at any decent hold, even a small crimp, and get off the rope quickly. Use a 2.4m (8ft) sling to give you the (very) basic harness (see photo right) and arrange a big pear karabiner/grigri so that it's possible to lose 2 loops of the 'harness' swiftly. After abseiling, simply pop those loops (it can be set up to favour a start hold for either hand, if required) and let the whole thing go. Use of a 'clean nose' notch-less karabiner will greatly facilitate detachment of the tape itself, which is by necessity a one-handed task. If possible, abseil into your chosen route slightly 'off line', which means that you can throw the rope away from the route once you've let it go (or ask your mate to do that job for you).



A belay seat/chill-out zone, from where you might contemplate your fate ... especially useful for times when you are pushing your limit, and feel the need for a little comfort prior to your ascent. Take a plank of wood (or plastic), drilled both ends, and fit a triangular rope cradle. Make it wide enough to get comfortable on, and use double holes at either end - this makes it more stable. The rope cradle should be tall enough to allow you room to sit 'within' it. Simply abseil down to the seat, get your harness off, and chill on the seat before departure. It's a bonus to have someone to pull the seat up when you've got on the rock - it's not a good thing to hit, should you take a fall! The down-side is that the seat arrangement, whilst great in actual use, is guite bulky to lug around.

Wet Suits

The use of wetsuits in DWS is still not especially widespread, and for good reason - it does tend to inhibit your movement, and also smacks of non-commitment! The real bonus in wearing a suit is probably that, when you are climbing something highball, you are less likely to be injured in the event of a fall. A wet suit can also be useful when you're taking repeated falls in early season off a

project. The knowledge on wet suits is that you'll need a full-stretch version for climbing. Salomon make exceptionally elastic wet suits in 2mm, and these (or something similar - 3mm maximum) are the business, allowing good limb movement and not 'cooking' you prior to your ascent!

Chalk Bag Elastic

A simple idea, but an improvement over the usual chalk bag string. To replace your normal chalkbag waist cord, buy a length of 6mm shock cord from a boat suppliers' (chandlery) and tie it permanently into your chalkbag. This makes taking your chalk bag on and off much easier, and avoids that maddening moment on a dry-bag ledge, when you find yourself dropping your chalkbag into a puddle whilst tying your knot.







Chalk Bag and Boots Advice

As a general rule, you need to carry enough boots and chalk bags for your day's climbing, and in the event of all your gear getting doused at some point, you need to consider a means of getting it all dry enough for the next day! Hot summer days present less of a problem (set up a clothes line!) but extra chalk bags are always recommended, as these, unlike boots, really do have to be completely dry before further use. Bear in mind that, after a dousing, chalk bags should be completely flushed through BEFORE exiting the water! This clears the bag of all chalk residue, as this wet chalk will never dry off properly, and makes your chalk bag somewhat slimy and uninviting for its next excursion. Further tips include tying your gear to the car when travelling between venues (or trap it in the window) and remember to climb with less than a full bag of chalk, especially if you're expecting to fall in! For a trip to Portugal, I took 3 pairs of boots and 5 chalk bags - this amount, combined with good sunny weather, meant I never ran out of usable gear.



Dry-bags

A dry bag is a fold-top waterproof bag that can be used to keep your gear dry. Here's a run-down on dry-bag uses and possibilities:

- > Fold-top dry-bags are available in both lightweight and heavyweight options. Use the heavy-duty ones for multiple excursions and boat trips, and use the lighter variety for climbing with (avoid barnacles with this type). For the lightest dry-bags on the market, try the super-light products made by Swiss manufacturers Exped www.exped.com will give the relevant details on where they're available. Try the 8 or 13 litre variety for clipping to your chalk bag elastic.
- > **Dry-bag rucksacks** are a brilliant idea and these lend themselves beautifully to the intrepid soloist, especially when embarking on boat jaunts and getting dropped off in outlandish places you'll be able to swim around/in with your day's requirements on your back!
- > **Lightweight dry-bags** are useful for the growing number of routes which terminate on ledges and terraces, and are finished off with a jump into the water. This can now be achieved without soaking your boots and chalkbag (and even your clothes). Climb with your dry-bag clipped around your chalk bag elastic, and when the route is over, pack your boots/chalkbag/clothes into it. Throw it into the water and jump in after it!

There is only one...



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www.awesomewalls.co.uk

St Albans Church, Athol Street, Liverpool, L5 9XT. Tel 0151 298 2422

Portugal

Armchair landing (page 12) - A controlled landing used to limit deep entry, and used solely for a shallow splashdown.

Barnacle line - That crunchy, barnacle-built piece of crag that is sometimes encountered on low-level traverses, especially in big tide areas such as Devon and Pembroke. Weight your feet gently!

Bench seat arrangement (page 18) - A hanging wooden seat, from which your chosen route is tackled. Most often replaced with the excellent tape harness arrangement these days, but still useful, esp. in-situations when you feel the need to chill and get your thoughts together.

Chalking stick - Not often used: a long stick with a sponge or similar on the tip, which is used to chalk holds prior to your attempt. Stair Hole's diminutive inner West Cave is a good example of a venue where this is handy.

Diablo - A fabled place: a close-to-perfect crag. Rumoured to already exist in Mallorca; some folk believe there might be another 'Diablo' out there.

Dry-bag (page 20) - A dry-bag is a lightweight fold-top bag that keeps your gear dry during a swim, or when kicking about in the bottom of your boat. The expression 'swim in with your dry-bag' denotes taking along your boots, chalkbag, clothes and a small towel.

Dry-bag ledge - A start ledge for your chosen route, gained by swimming in with your dry-bag. This ledge might be affected by the tide level or rough seas.

Early breakfast venue - Cave Hole is a prime example; morning sun, and with a good early spring tide a necessity. You'll need to get some early grub down ya' and get on with the climbing.

Exit - Your method of escaping the water after a fall. Mostly refers to a swim to an easy exit, but can sometimes be an escape by way of a pre-placed rope on steeper ground (often knotted).

High water mark - Usually abbreviated to 'HWM'. This is the usual scoured mark on the cliff that indicates the approximate level/height of the average high tide at that crag.

Kiddy boat (page 11) - Any small inflatable craft that will suffice for fun/viewing/your journey to the route of your choice. Usually less than £30 including paddles, and most often bought by a team upon arrival at their chosen foreign destination. Usually quite useless, and regularly overmanned/half-sunk/thoroughly wet inside.

Piscodbloc - The original Welsh term for deep water soloing; sometimes misspelt as 'Psicobloc'.

Tape harness setup (page 18) - This is an arrangement that gives you the chance to abseil in on a rope and get off it very quickly and easily, and all without using to a climbing harness.

'S' Grade system (page 14) - This was devised in a Dorset pub in 1995, and has stood the test of time admirably! A grading system of 0, 1, 2, 3: S0 provides the soloist relative safety, with S3 offering considerable possibility of injury in the event of a fall.

Splashdown (page 12) - This is what happens when you fail to reach the top! Seen by some as failure, and others as fun.



Bit of fun this, so don't take it too seriously (especially if you didn't quite make it onto the list). With much heart-searching and thought, I've come up with a top ten listing of deep water soloists. The list takes into account these three basic qualifications:

- > Long-term DWS track record, including foreign trips.
- > Numerous splashdowns mandatory.
- > Enthusiasm for DWS surpasses all other forms of climbing.

So - do you qualify? The track record takes some time, the often-burly grades mean a certain strength, but bear in mind: it's not just the grade and the history - it's the getting wet that counts, as well. Without literally dozens of arse-to-the-wind, on-sight splashdowns, you're just not on the list. Do you get the picture? Ok. so here we go:

1. The Wadfather

Once referred to in the British climbing press as one of the UK's great visionaries, the highly adventurous, often madcap Crispin Waddy has a DWS history no other mortal can equal. From his early first ascents at Conner Cove in the mid-eighties to his wanderings all over the south-west, Wales and Europe. There's been many a globe-trotting soloist who's climbed a new route - to be later told "ah, yeah, I think Crispin's probably done that one already." Never the outspoken self-publicist, the legendary, quietly-spoken Waddy paved the way for the rest of us loud, crowing types! His new routes are many and diverse; particular mention is due to the brilliant Fathoms (6b) at Conner Cove (way back in 1986), the incredible One-Eyed Man (7a), at Pembroke's Blind Bay, and the first solo ascent of Devon's stunning 12-pitch Rainbow Bridge (7a+).



Photo: George Smit

2. The Linesman

International off-shore rigger Julian Lines is a veritable seal. He's almost at home in the water as he is on land. Veteran of hundreds of new and established DWS's both here and abroad, he's the textbook deep water soloist - steely, handsome, and full of boisterous charm (women have been known to fall softly at his feet). After some crazy years soloing the Aberdeen sea cliffs above chilling, glacial seas, he's recently put highball DWS's at Pembroke to the top of his substantial list. Hits include the first ascent of the amazing Abyss (7b) at Mother Carey's. After numerous trips to the DWS hotspots of Europe and beyond, his plans for the future include the 'Linesman Manual' - the working title of his forthcoming book on solos around the world. Just don't ask him about walking around Rio De Janeiro with 25 thousand dollars in cash in his back pocket - that's a secret.



3. Those Cook Bros

Now these guys have been around since way back, before it got really notorious. Witness the Cook brothers' explosion onto the DWS scene back in 1992, when they both shaped the genre and kicked it into the next generation's laps. Tall man Joff gave us Captain Blood's Cavern (6c+) at Conner Cove and first solo ascents of sport routes such as the brilliant Gates of Greyskull (7b+) down at Stair Hole. The slightly younger Damian provided us with classics such as Octopussweed (6c) at Portland's emerging Cave Hole, and Leap of Faith (6b+) at Conner. The third of the brothers (there were actually eight) even jumped the Swanage cliffs with a car-cover parachute - that'd be **Dominic**, the wackiest of the lot. Between 'em, they've fallen in zillions of times - and that's what counts: commitment at its best. They are the original water babies!



4. Kenny Palmer

Ah, that cuddly Devonian **Ken Palmer**. What a chap! Acres of new solos all over Devon, more falls into the sea than hot dinners, and with a mad hairdo to match. Most often seen cruisin' along the brilliant traverse of *Rainbow Bridge*, and usually before breakfast. His harder DWS ascents include *Christine* (8a) down at Devon's Long Quarry Point, the ultra-steep *Hairbear* (7c) in Mallorca and 'that' *Barrel Traverse* extension of *Rainbow Bridge*'s crux pitch, which has yet to receive an on-sight; what grade is that, really?!

5. The Muppet Show

Oft-described as a walking one-man show, boy **Timmy Emmett** generally has his fingers in at least one pie too many - although, for this man, the concept of a 'pie too many' could be lost. He's been responsible for audacious solos all over the UK, including Pembroke's mean *Hunter Killer* (7b) and the first ascent of *Jaws* (8a). As well as scores of DWS's all over the world, he's proved adept at the great game of base jumping, clocking up 50 jumps in his first year (that's about 5 lifetimes' of adrenalin, to us mere mortals). The curly hair has now been updated, the venues never stay the same, but for this tinker, the stakes are always gonna be raised. He's the ultimate junkie, and the prize is sweet life itself.



Local legend tells of a blowhole-dwelling, be-muscled beast that inhabits the remote edges of the craglets of the southern shoreline. There are some that have witnessed it and lived to tell the tale, and they speak of devilish screams and mind-bending powers of levitation. Whatever the truth about the legend, it's worth noting that Dorsetian **Gavin Symonds** is more often than not in the vicinity during sightings of said beast. Cool-as-you-like ascents of classics such as *Mark of the Beast* (7c) and new grabs such as the desperate *Thieving Gypsy* (7b+) at Stair Hole pay credence to the fellow, but don't ask him about that day he 'touched down' on the *Hermann Borg* slab at Conner Cove ... oops!

7. Neil Gresham

Globe-trotter **Neil Gresham** is one of those rare commodities - described once by a fledgling journalist as the 'complete man', he's gotta be close to that. Winter stuff, hard trad ascents, sport routes and bouldering. But what concerns us here is DWS, and he's right on the money, with the first ground-up ascent of a new 8a solo *The Wizard* in Pembroke and numerous new lines all over the world, including Spain, Portugal and Vietnam. He's even turned into a fine DWS cataloguer and photographer! From his first splashdown at Conner Cove in the summer of 1997, he's come a long way - and shows no sign of hanging up his chalk bags yet.









8. Ladies from up North

All those DWS trips to venues as far away as Mallorca and Portugal have shown who really cares about the genre, and the ever-cheerful team of **Ruth Taylor** and **Elinor Currey** have shown their considerable mettle, with a concerted effort to travel and to repeat the test-pieces of the south coast and beyond. They are the ready smile at the crag, they often carry out the wettest clothing (yep, proper committed water babies) and they even manage to keep a steady check on the dubious, hideously unfashionable outfits of the Linesman and the author (no mean feat). We luy 'em!

9. The Pickford Files

A first meeting with **Dave Pickford** leaves you gasping for brain cells, as he both educates and baffles with his all-encompassing knowledge (I once became convinced he had a babel fish in both ears). But under that scholarly exterior lies a DWS heart of gold, and a generous nature to boot. Dave's exploits in the world of DWS are manifest, with 'nipping in' repeats of hundreds of routes all over the south coast and beyond. Last seen looking for his glasses somewhere underneath *Mark of the Beast*.

10. World Class

DWS has officially taken off. Witness the participation of some of the world's best, including our very own Steve McClure, and U.S. convert Chris Sharma. Steve has been rapidly turning into a mean repeat machine, with fast ascents of just about every classic solo in the southwest, and has even been spotted falling off a project in Pembroke's Breakfast Zawn - watch this space! Whilst Chris spent a few months in 2006 trying a radical new line at Mallorca's amazing outcrop of Es Pontas, finally succeeding after a zillion or so splashdowns. The grade? Don't ask, as he's neglected to grade it - but expect something around the 9a+ mark (see photo on page 8). As for Austrian Klem Loskot - you'd think a man once known for the world's first V14 might lack stamina - but you'd better think again. That boy has both the guns and the desire, with first ascents of such test-pieces as Loskot and Two Smoking Barrels (8a+) in Mallorca.

... and last but not least ...

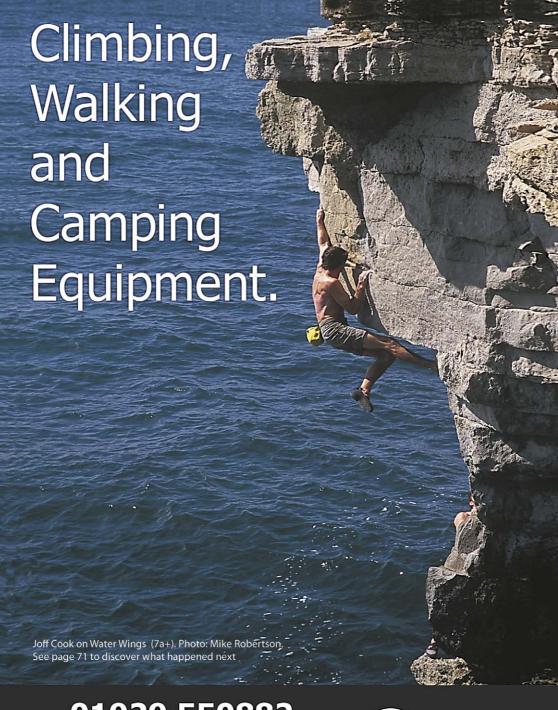
There was once this scruffy bloke that used to cycle and play table tennis. Then, one day in 1990, he watched a documentary of Catherine Destivelle soloing, high up on the sandstone cliffs in Mali. The scruffy bloke was inspired, and decided to give it a bash. His name was **Mikey Robertson**, and little did he know that what he was about to try would change his life for ever. He's still scruffy, he does a bit of writing and photography these days, and he asked me to tell you that his favourite new route is *Crab Party* (6c), at Cave Hole.











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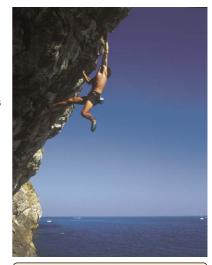
utdoor Sports & Leisure

6 North Street, Wareham, Dorset, BH20 4AB.

The evolution of DWS, or, simply, how it all started. Make no mistake: this great game came to be for a reason, and it wasn't because of lack of equipment or money, nor was it because of some sort of lofty moral high ground. I'll stick my neck out here: DWS came to be because it's the purest form of climbing. Let me clarify this: I mean climbing as in fingertips-on-rock, as in aesthetics of movement, as in un-encumbered, as in FREE.

You won't get the same feeling from dragging a full rack and two ropes up a classic trad pitch, and you won't find the same experience on a hard sport route, with a harness and rope always to hand. Even conventional free soloing, with all its thrilling but ultimately too-serious dangers, must play second best to the sheer joy of hanging above the ocean on a glorious summers' day.

So now we've established why we do it. Next is the when, that crazy slice of history, the gradual creeping and intermingling of disciplines. Short trad routes are perfect for DWS, and so are small, steep sport routes.



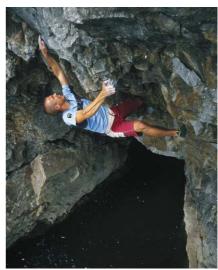
Once a sport route... Damian Cook ignoring the bolts on the brilliant *Mark of the Beast* (7c) - page 67 - Lulworth Cove. Photo: Joff Cook

Take a look at the history of Lulworth Cove in Dorset - from a steep sport crag in the early nineties, to one of the UK's top DWS crags - and all in the space of some eight years. These days, a rope in sight is an exception! And you need look no further than Dorset's Conner Cove to see the absolute invasion of DWS on some of the UK's traditional sea cliffs. There's natural protection in good supply on Conner Cove's routes, but we made a simple choice back in the late eighties, and finally left our ropes in the car.

The final touch is the development of DWS cliffs all over the UK and Europe, and rope-free from the very start. This is the future for DWS - take a look at this guide's section on Mallorca's stunning Diablo to see the genre at its cutting-edge finest. 2001 saw climbers working projects at Diablo ground-up, content to fall, drying off, and going again. This is the last word on the development of DWS, and what makes this great game so very special.

The S3 game

Final mention here must go to the S3 grade. This constitutes the deep water soloist's upper limit, that grey area. S3 is the very edge of the S grade scale, and takes us gradually closer to other places, those more serious disciplines. S3 is most often too shallow or too tall, and provides the dedicated DWS addict with something just a little more heady. The picture opposite shows the author on *Rocket USA*, down at Swanage's Smokey Hole. The route was originally an E6 6b trad route, and it constitutes around E8 6b for the solo: yet another crazy twist on the DWS theme.



Neil Gresham on Pembroke's *The Wizard* (8a) - page 186. The route was first climbed ground-up, with some 10 splashdowns before success - this makes it the UK's first 8a done ground-up as a new DWS route.

Photo: Mike Robertson



Rest of World

Rockfax is very grateful to the following companies who have supported this guidebook.

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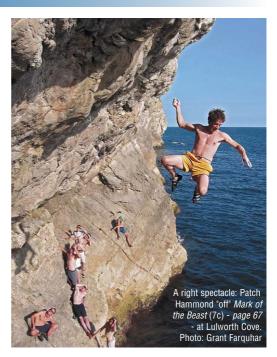
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Foracorda - Page 257 Palma, Mallorca Tel: +34 971 463 004 www.foracorda.com



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Black Diamond - Outside Back Cover Tel: 0162 958 0484 www.blackdiamondequipment.com Where do I start... Firstly, I owe the biggest thanks to all the people with whom I've shared the great game of climbing over the years since 1990. A huge thanks to my early mentor John Sharratt, who somehow taught me how to climb on Swanage's big sea cliffs; to Joff and Damian Cook, who've given me both inspiration and smiles in equal measures; Mark Williams, Steve Taylor, Dave Pickford and Gavin Symonds, who've provided me with unfailing friendship over the years; and to local legend Pete Oxley - bound for New Zealand as I write - best wishes, Pete. Thanks to the Climbers' Club for their support with the original 1996 Dorset DWS guide - *Into The Blue*. And to all the other local dudes, surfers and friends: Barry Clarke, Ju Walker, Neal Heanes, Danie Rushmer, Jon Biddle, Libby Peter, Robbie Dixon, Amy Colson, Charlie Woodburn, Meilee Rafe, Ben Stokes, Zoe Lee, and that rascal of a sea dog, Scott Titt.

For DWS elsewhere in the UK and the world, I owe a massive thanks to that true solo master Julian Lines, who has been a source of constant inspiration, a partner in crime, and has supplied me with endless information - thanks Ju! To Crispin Waddy, that man who was there right from the start - a big thanks for all your help and advice. And to Neil Gresham and Seb Grieve, who took me on those 'team boiling' trips as photographer all those years ago...huge thanks to you guys for being such pals. As for all those other DWS crazy-types such as Ken Palmer, Nick Hancock, Timmy Emmett, Ruth Taylor, Elinor Currey, Johnny Woods, Jason Porter, Klem Loskot, Miquel Riera, Adam Wainwright, Martin Crocker, Mike Weeks, Anthony Alexander and Matt Maddaloni - what an amazing bunch of folk; please keep up the good work!

There have been a number of photographers who've added flavour to this guide; thanks to all of you, with special gratitude due to Joff Cook, Grant Farquhar, Dave 'Cubby' Cuthbertson, Dave Pickford, Julian Lines and Simon Carter.

This guide wouldn't have been possible without the valued and capable support of Alan James at Rockfax - Alan, a big thanks for your faith in me to come up with the goods. And it's been a sheer pleasure to work with Mark Glaister on the many intricacies of the guidebook's layout - many thanks, Markie. A big tata to Daimon Beail for his great work with the Mallorca section, thanks to Chris Craggs and Graham Hoey for their proof reading, and tata to Sam and Rich at the Blanca's Orange House, who showed us all where the treasures were hidden in Spain. Lastly, a really huge debt of thanks to Bernard and the team at Climber magazine, who've unflinchingly taken and dealt with my pictures and words for almost a full decade now - thank you!

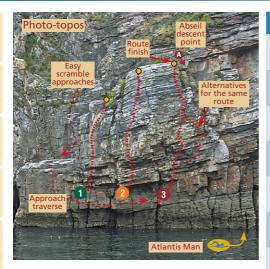
But, quite frankly, none of these DWS antics would ever have happened to me without my Mum and Dad. It's a fundamental thing. Dad nearly despatched my Mum and himself on Porlock Hill in the west country in 1956, whilst on a motorbike journey; brake fade on a grand scale. They survived the event, sold the bike, and promptly dropped three mischievous kids; I was the middle one, and I owe them the gift of life itself. Thank you.

I must save a few moments silence here for the memory of my pals Damian Cook and Brian Tilley, who are still very sorely missed in our small Dorset climbing scene. This guide is dedicated to them, and to the memory of my older sis Christine, who left us all far too soon. But I'm going to be indulgent here and pay heed to young blood: this book is also dedicated to my very young and noisy niece Amelie, daughter of my sis Caz and her partner Ken. Amelie, you are the future, and one day soon we're going to show you the sea and the sun.



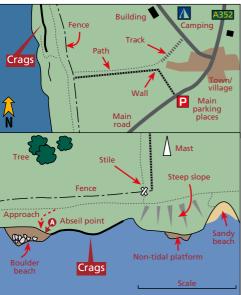
Devon





Atlantis Man - Swim Outs

Each topo has a yellow 'Atlantis Man' who indicates the best place to swim out to should you happen to fall. This is not necessarily the only place to regain solid ground, but is generally the easiest exit. In some cases the swim out is guite long, and this is indicated on the topo with a swim distance. Also pay careful attention to the text on the topos, and in the introductions, which indicate certain special considerations when planning your exits.



Route Symbols

{1}}

A good solo which is well worth climbing.

{2}

A very good solo, one of the best on the crag.

{3}

A brilliant solo, one of the best!



Technical climbing requiring good balance and technique, or complex and tricky moves.



Powerful climbing; roofs, steep rock or long moves off small holds.



Sustained climbing; either lots of hard moves or steep rock giving pumpy climbing.



Fingery climbing with significant small holds on the hard sections.



Fluttery climbing with big fall potential; S2 or S3 climbing and/or a high finish.



A long reach is helpful or even essential for one or more of the moves.



Some loose rock may be encountered.

Craq Symbols



Angle of the approach walk to the crag with approximate time.



Approximate time that the crag is in the direct sun (when it is shining!)



An absell rope is required to get to the starts of some or all of the routes.



An access restriction because of nesting birds is sometimes in place; check craq introduction.

Craq Popularity



Deserted - Currently under-used and usually quiet. A long walk-in and/or less good routes.



Quiet - Less popular sections on major crags. or good routes but hard to get to.



Busy - Places you will seldom be alone, especially at weekends. Good routes and easy access.



Crowded - The most popular sections which are always busy.

Venue Guide	Routes	up to 4+	5 to 6a+	6b to 7a	7a+ and up	Significant tides	Summary	Page	
Swanage	75	5	19	33	18 ///	Tidal	Where it all started. The marvellous Conner Cove heads the line-up, with some smaller venues waiting in the wings.	34	
Lulworth	41	1	5 ✓	12 //	23 ///	Tidal	Steep, solid, and brilliant. Mostly tough grades, but on rock crammed full of pockets and jugs.	54	
Portland	97	6 ✓	28 //	38	25 ⁄√	Tidal	Mostly short, always good, and lots of fun! A terrific spread of routes, and at all grades.	68	
Devon	115	11 ✓	28 ///	51 ///	25 ///	Tidal	Long traverses on excellent rock, and on great, multi- coloured limestone. There are plenty of 'up' routes, too.	94	
Cornwall	25	3 ,	7 /	13	2	Tidal	A little serenity guaranteed. Some great lines, especially in the mid grades.	134	
Pembroke	159	6	41	79 ///	33 ///	Tidal	The UK's most tidal venue, but with a massive and varied spread of great routes.	146	
Scotland	36	1	3 ,	25 //	7 //	Tidal	Get exploring; more diversity than you can imagine. Cool water and utter calm.	188	
Rest of the UK		n for more					, North Wales. Other limited stline, the Scilly Isles, more in	202	
Portugal	74	4	15 ✓	42 ///	13 ///		Sun, sea and brilliant soloing. Great rock, and an amazing place to hang out in late season!	210	
Costa Blanca	42	2	17	18	5 ⁄		Warm water, a great climate and ace soloing make the Blanca a terrific visit.	232	
Mallorca	88	1	18	31 ///	38 ///		A stunning island, and with routes of all shapes and sizes. Cova del Diablo is utterly extraordinary.	252	
Rest of Europe							oformation on the West Coast of as Malta, Italy and Bulgaria.	282	
Australia	15			6	9		Crafty's is the ultimate fresh- water venue, and Tasmania provides more exploring than you can fit into a lifetime.	294	
Rest of the World	there and	obtain the	goods! In	fo include:	s Bermuda	ı, North Am	deas; it's up to you to go out erica, Oman, and the amazing the Andaman Sea.	306	

Swanage

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