



Rock Rendezvous: Volume 13; Issue 12: December 2003

Rock Rendezvous

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November Meeting Notes

Carolyn Dent

In Simon's absence Kevin chaired this months meeting, and the scrap of paper he gave me to write the notes on contained his agenda for the meeting, so I kinda left him high and dry. However, when I read these notes they contained just two items (1) Christmas party and (2) any complaints to be addressed directly to Simon, so I realized I had not really deprived him of much!

Kevin started by welcoming us to this meeting of our drinking club with a climbing problem, and then went on to thank Kathy Nerud for hosting in her warm home. Thanks Kathy! We had a good attendance this month, and quite a few faces who were new to me (that does not necessarily mean they were new to Rock Rendezvous... or even necessarily to me as dementia slowly sets in)!

The evening was got underway with a round of introductions (well, actually it was really got underway with a round of drinking and eating, but that goes without saying)... Some of the newer faces at this meeting were: Claire, a new arrival in San Francisco only 2 weeks ago, a climber who has climbed in Boston, New Hampshire, The Gunks and California. Chelsea, who I had

met at Courtright Reservoir, who was enjoying an evening people watching (no comment)! Ryan, who has been climbing for 6 months and had been bullied into providing this months slideshow. Paul, who climbed his first aid pitch the prior weekend, Greg, Hamid, Vanessa, who is recovering from a dislocated shoulder and itching to get back on the rock again. Sam had just started leading, and a discussion on protection ensued, and was ended by Bruce recommending used car parts (I suppose the only thing that will fit into those offwidths)!



The discussion then moved on to recent trips and events. Bruce reported a recent 7 day road-bagging road trip with Em. He had wanted to do Hair-raiser Buttress for 2 years, and was determined to do it in good style. However this was thwarted by his being unable to stick-clip the first bolt! He scrambled up onto a rock, and still couldn't reach the bolt with his cheat-stick... In the

end he shamefully resorted to actually *climbing* to the first bolt! Shame on you Bruce! Further up the climb he recalls having been unsettled by the presence of a slight breeze, but was determined to continue regardless. However, a second puff of breeze was enough to make him leave a bit of tat and bail, rescheduling the afternoon for the pub instead! Hair-raiser Buttress is in the Eastern Sierra, but is not in any of the guidebooks. Em has copies of the topo if anyone is interested - a 5.9 face climb featuring a scary start... The rock is a lot like Joshua Tree in appearance, and it is about 40mins from Lee Vining up a dirt road (cue Bruce's impression of a crapped out old car struggling up a hill)!

Kathy, our hostess, was just back from a trip to J.Tree, which she described as 'outrageous'! She met up with Inez, who lives in San Diego these days. Being Halloween weekend they all climbed in costume, Kathy taking on the identity of a cat! Maike suggested that that counted as aid climbing! It was a large group including Alan Steck of Steck-Slathe fame - who Kathy described as being 'better than a puppy for getting the hard-man climbers to come over and talk to you'!

Greg had just got back from Middle Cathedral, and was asking for beta on Corbet! (??my hand-writing is getting worse by now, so that may not be correct!). Bruce helpfully suggested that it is a route graded at 5.7, even though it was really 5.12 - but then that happens all the time!

Scott had climbed the right couloir of Mendel (again, spelling??) in a long almost 24 hour day. He reported good ice, but apparently the route ended in a heinous steep rock chimney. Bruce's comment - 'so the route was melted out after all'!

I also mentioned the weekend we had in Yosemite, where 13 of us from Rock Rendezvous hosted 14 Brits from my climbing club in the UK - the Hertfordshire Mountaineering Club. Great fun was had by all, and there were a few fragile heads on Sunday morning... Someone had made a

comment in the introductions that I don't climb - I only party! It's not true - honest!

So onto oncoming trip proposals. The Thanksgiving Soiree in Red Rocks of course. This trip has now happened, and was from the reports I have heard a resounding success. I missed it as I was sipping cocktails with a friend in Jamaica. What me climb?

Maike and Simon got all excited at the mention of SNOW! Boreal had opened, Mammoth was about to open and the 80 had already been subject to chain controls... As I write this Maike and Simon have probably skied 5 out of the 4 weekends since the meeting!

Saturday the 13th was voted as a good date for the Christmas Party at Ricardo's, and Ricardo later confirmed that date was good for him. Scott was falling asleep in the corner of the room by this stage, 'so cute' according to Kevin!...

Em added in a warning that some thieves may be targeting climbers trucks near Placerville. In a recent incident some climbers on a road trip had their truck stripped while climbing at Bucks Bar, and this was apparently not an isolated incident.

Claire reported that Planet Granite in Belmont is offering half-price for women on Friday nights. Guaranteed to get the guys down...

Finally, Ryan did an excellent job of a slideshow which he called '3 easy climbs in 3 easy days' - a title which was proposed to have come from Scott who 'walked' the lot... It featured a weekend in September when Simon (Kenney), Ryan, Scott and myself headed to Yosemite to climb Royal Arches, and then link Tenaya Peak and Matthes Crest, the latter two in a two day bivvy trip. Ryan had been lured to the meeting by the promise of beer, but then had the presentation landed on him! Good on ya Ryan!

The group headed up to Yosemite on Thursday night, arriving late at Hardin Flat for a short nights sleep, before getting onto Royal Arches at 8am the next morning. The first photo showed Scott in the chimney on the first pitch (this was the crux for me!), wearing short trousers which Bruce reckoned added a grade to the pitch. The show continued with a moment of controversy as to the grade of the aid traverse when done free... Ryan then proceeded to show slides of us simul-climbing on Tenaya peak, and our bivvy at Echo Lake. Comments were made regarding the wind problem at the bivvy site – suffice to say we were fighting over the sleeping spot furthest from Simon!!! Scott was quite lonely at the bivvy site, but

managed to find a large boulder shaped like a perfect breast for comfort as the night drew in! Scott then relived his moment of triumph, when he bootied a near brand-new camalot on Matthies Crest. I knew I should have led that pitch!!!

Simon then went back to Royal Arches a few weeks later, with Jeff Pfleuger, and the two of them proceeded to solo the route in an hour!

So it just remains for me to say THANKS to Ryan for an excellent slideshow, and THANKS to Kathy for her hospitality.

See you all at the Christmas party, where I will once again attempt to climb nothing!!!

Ray Battling the Elements!

Photo and comments from Peter Monks



Here's a photo from a recent abortive attempt to climb at the Far Side crag on Mt St Helena (which we've now dubbed "Mt St Himalaya"!!).

This is Ray Lassman halfway up the 5.7 on the front of the main buttress - probably a lovely climb when it isn't soaking wet from the thick heavy damp fog and lashed by gale force winds!!

I haven't written up a TR for it, but if I did it would go something like:

"Drove for 2.5 hours to Mt St Himalaya. Walked for 1 hour to get to Far Side crag. Raced up soaking wet, but quite fun 5.7 sport route. Went hypothermic on belay waiting for seconds to follow route. Walked for 40 minutes to get back to car. Ate pastries in Calistoga (on account of all the pubs being shut!). Drove for 2.5 hours to get back to San Francisco. The pastries were pretty good though!"

Another Day in the Office

Yosemite Trip Report from Peter Monks

With the wife in Vegas for a hen's party, I took the opportunity to head up to Yosemite for the weekend. Although it was a bit of a last minute plan, Ricardo (of Zodiac solo ascent fame) was without a partner and keen to head up too, so after a bit of a late start from San Francisco, we hit the road and got to the by now standard Friday night camping spot at Harden Flat Rd by midnight.

After spending much of the trip up working out where our tick lists overlapped, we'd decided that "Commitment" (3 pitch 5.9) linked into "Selaginella" (4 pitch 5.8) would be a good combo for Saturday. Between us we'd done both routes but neither of us had done both, and with all accounts saying that this is a fabulous outing, it was an obvious choice.

The crack of dawn start never materialised, and after finally getting to the carpark for the 5 Open Books crag at 8:45am we resigned ourselves to be stuck in the middle of a vertical pack of bumbling humanity. Amazingly, by the time we got to the base (about 9:00am - late by Valley standards), no one was at the crag, let alone on Commitment!

Ricardo started up, cunningly avoiding the initial difficulties with the help of a convenient tree. Having led this pitch last year and scrupulously avoiding touching the tree, I had no qualms about using it this time, particularly since it made the initial moves about 2 grades easier! ;-) A delightful crack above this led to the first belay.

Commitment Pitch 1: ** 30m grade 5.6 (with tree) or 5.8 (without tree)

I then led off on the second pitch (which I hadn't led before). It involves some easy but flaky unprotected face moves up to a roof, then a lovely series of low angled laybacking up some delightful sharp edged corner cracks.

Commitment Pitch 2: * 30m grade 5.6

Seeing as I'd led the crux third pitch last year, Ricardo was keen to have a lash and after a short breather, off he went. This pitch involves one or two slightly tricky moves up a thin crack to gain a cramped stance under the massive roof. From here, the crux move is a long reach to the right hand lip of the roof with smears for feet, then a short crank to get around the lip and up into the final book corner. Ricardo had a few goes at the move, but couldn't seem to commit to the delicate smears. After commenting on the appropriateness of the route name, he set off once more, but after getting a little tenuous, he grabbed a cam and got the reach he needed that way. Funnily enough the next move is almost as hard, and he did that with no problems, so with a bit more thought I'm sure he would have nabbed it.

Commitment Pitch 3: ** 30m grade 5.9 (no aid) or 5.7 A0 (aid)

By this point Ricardo was feeling the full effects of a rather dodgy subway sandwich the night before, and the unfortunate fact that American trees and bushes don't produce large leaves had him preparing to bail back to the carpark in a great hurry. Luckily some bloke had just topped out on a route nearby, and he had a paper towel that he'd used to wrap his sandwiches in, so we didn't have to bail after all!

;-)

A 5 minute scramble up the hill deposited us at the base of the next tier of cliffs above the 5 Open Books, and the corner crack that is the start of Selaginella. Now the guidebook shows the first pitch as being a 25m grade 5.7 handcrack leading to a ledge (optional belay), then another 20m of 5.7 handcrack topped off with a 5m section of awkward 5.7 offwidth. It was my lead, so up I went. The first 10m was straight forward climbing up a ramp / flake just to the right of the main corner, then it joins the main corner and the fun begins.

This section involved 15m of sustained straight in jamming in a corner, and although the jams are sinker, it's one of those flared cracks that means you have to get your hands in deep to get the good jams. Plus it's a corner crack, so front-on jamming can be a bit awkward at times. In any event, that section passed without too many hassles (even though I got a bit pumped from all the back cleaning I did to save mid size gear for the second half of the pitch).

The second half of the pitch also turned out to be very sustained, and the difficulties began straight off the ledge. 20m or so of sinker, but sustained front-on jamming (again slightly awkward due to it being a corner crack) led to the final 5m of (reputedly nasty) sentry box offwidth cheese grater slot thrutching (can you tell I was drooling as I read the guidebook description? ;-). Funnily enough, after 35 odd metres of sustained hand jamming, I found this section a bit of a doddle, mainly because I could get my feet in onto some chockstones in the slot and stand upright instead of having to jam them - pain mingled with pleasure as the blood rushed back into my battered feet! With a bit of grunting I could also face directly into the slot, squeeze my shoulders together so they popped inside, and then flex them so that I had a hands free (but completely jammed) rest stance. Quite entertaining really! ;-). The slot also had sinker hand jams and a finger lock or two in between the blocks at the back, and with their help I cruised this section without too many worries at all. Fat bastards might have trouble however! ;-). Ricardo battled his way up the pitch clean and commented that he couldn't believe he'd led it last time he'd done the route.

Selaginella Pitch 1: ** maybe even *** - the climbing is excellent although the position isn't anything special, 50m grade 5.8 (only technically grade 5.7, but gets extra points for being so sustained)

The topo for the next pitch mentioned a 5.7 chimney about 2/3 of the way up the pitch, and after the "5.7" on the first pitch things looked a bit serious. Ricardo led off and struggled a little on the initial, easy looking section, but then cruised the rest of the pitch (including the chimney), commenting that it was more like 5.4 than 5.7! I followed up and also found the first section deceptively tricky, but once I got in and jammed it head on (instead of trying to layback) it went without too much hoo-hah. The rest of the pitch was an absolute doddle, but enjoyable nonetheless.

Selaginella Pitch 2: * 25m grade 5.7

The next pitch started with some steep shenanigans up a series of huge shattered flakes, and I got a bit pumped out from hanging on the hardest move of that section trying to place gear. The next challenge of the pitch is a nasty looking V slot, complete with large, loose looking chockstones. After contemplating that for a few moments, I noticed a line of chalk heading right, and following it brought me to a lovely series of balancy, exposed face moves up the front of the flake that makes up the V slot. After a couple of metres that blanked out, so I swung back left into the V slot by hanging off one of the (thankfully solid) chockstones. Quite a tenuous move that, although the rest of the slot proved to be a doddle. 15m of easy territory then led to the final excitement of the pitch - a "wild" 5.8 step left to gain the belay ledge. This move was great fun, with some preliminary undercling and sidepull shenanigans, and then a series of waist-high jugs and smears on the lip of a sizeable overhang to pull left onto the ledge. The massive exposure, terrible rope drag and thought of the manky piton and hangerless bolt protecting the move also added some extra spice! ;-). Ricardo started off well but accidentally slipped on the tenuous swing into the V slot and took a small tumble. The rest of the pitch didn't phase him although the step did inflict a rather large grin on his face! :-)

Selaginella Pitch 3: * 45m grade 5.8 (but not very sustained)

The next and final pitch was a rather intimidating looking thing, being both steep and offering a few overlaps that blocked most of the pitch from view. Ricardo cranked up the initial section of steep jugs and before too long was lost to view. All I could hear were shouts of joy as he cranked his way up and out of sight. Soon enough it was my turn and all I can really say is that this is a superb final pitch to an awesome route - not technically very hard, but steep, strenuous, juggy and super exposed. Although the safest exit is a 5.7 step up onto a flake then yarding over the

top with the help of a low hanging tree branch, on second I could enjoy a much more delicate series of moves up a seam to the right. An awesome way to finish an awesome route (although I wouldn't lead that section due to lack of pro).

Selaginella Pitch 4: *** 50m grade 5.8 (but feels easy to us gym climbers! ;-)

In summary, both routes are great by themselves, but together they make an absolutely classic link up. And one of the best things is that the route tops out about 50m below the popular Yosemite Falls trail, so unlike most long Yosemite routes, descent is both quick and easy.

After taking only five and a half hours to get up the seven pitches (including Ricardo's pit stop on the half way ledge), we almost contemplated running up "Munginella", a cruisy 5.6 route that heads up one of the other 5 open books. But sanity prevailed and we headed back to Curry Village for a pizza and a window shop in the mountaineering store instead! ;-)

Sunday dawned bright and early, or at least I assume it did – after having "a few" beers with the large group of Poms in the site next door and crapping on about the cricket and Rugby world cups, I wasn't in a hurry to wake up! ;-)

Ricardo had organised for a new member of the club (Geraldine) to join us for the day, and she finally kick started us into gear and got us thinking about the day ahead. After a bit of umming and aahing we decided to roll the dice and venture out onto the stunningly impressive but potentially dangerous Glacier Point Apron.

Important note: climbing at Glacier Point Apron is not a decision to be made lightly! Before venturing out into this veritable death zone, we consulted the entrails of a number of animals before deciding that the omens were favourable for our visit. Actually to be precise, we consulted the stomach contents of a visiting Pommie climber, who'd drunk a little too much "social lubricant" on Saturday night and kindly deposited the contents of his stomach (and part of his upper intestine too, by the looks of things) in front of my tent very early on Sunday morning, ready for us to use for our divining! ;-)

Having had it catch my attention any number of times in the guide, and with various RRs recommending it to us, we decided to head up and do the "Harry Daley Route", a 2 pitch 5.7 crack climb.

With Geraldine's influence, we managed to get up to the start by the shockingly early time of 10:00am, and again had the place to ourselves! That didn't last long however, and within 10 minutes of arriving two groups comprising 7 people all arrived eager for us to start. Ricardo started up the first pitch, which had about 3m of delicate finger locking and slippery smearing before gaining a good sized crack. From here up the pitch was a charming doddle up a dihedral finger crack (which I did as a foot traverse rather than a hand traverse!) and then a short fist crack.

Harry Daley Route Pitch 1: * 30m 5.7

Geraldine headed up next, and although she'd only climbed a couple of times outdoors, the audience commended her on her fine technique up the initial tricky section. Not that I'm sexist or anything, but I suspect it was a girl thing, because when it was my turn to cruise up this section the only comment I heard was "Now see how he's doing it? That's not as good as how she did it before!". Pah!

The second pitch starts with a short jam crack then a 1 foot roof. Good jams up to and under the roof led to a very worn and rather slippery dihedral crack just above the roof. After a false move or two I worked out where my feet needed to be and cranked on up. From here the climb follows a series of absolutely stunning hand and finger cracks that weave their way up the slab for 35 odd metres. Just gorgeous! The only problem was that the only hand size piece of gear we had (a #2 camalot) was in the belay, and I'd used both of our next smallest pieces (a #1

camalot and an orange alien) to protect the roof. But the climbing was so engaging and the locking and jamming so secure that I didn't feel too uncomfortable about running it out and putting in small gear where I could (mmmmm.....love those wires....).

Ger and Ricardo both cruised the pitch, although Ricardo had to hang on the rope at the roof to clean a cam that had twisted and jammed. I offered to lower him back to the belay to do the pitch clean, but he seemed to prefer to do the roof in two halves! ;-)

By this point the route was swarming with climbers (10 people spread over two pitches!!), and while Ricardo and Ger abseiled off I chatted with the leader of the second group who'd joined me at the belay. He took some photos with the 5 Open Books off in the distance and is planning on emailing them to Ricardo, so with any luck I'll have some good piccies at some point.

Having done that route we decided to head over to Church Bowl to join the rest of the RR crew (who were planning a big lunch up on the Bishop's Terrace). Geraldine was still keen to climb, but Ricardo and I were feeling pretty shagged by the heat, so we thought we'd play it by ear and maybe do one or two of the short one pitch routes at the crag if they were free. The first time I climbed in the valley was at Church Bowl, and there was one route I'd wanted to do that day that I didn't end up doing - the "Church Bowl Layback" (5.8). Some guys were top roping it, but they were moving pretty quickly so we decided to wait and jump on it once they were done. After lolling about in the shade for a while I was feeling a bit more energetic by the time they'd finished, so I racked up and headed off, with Ricardo helping Geraldine with her first experience of lead belaying. After about 5m I was out in the blasting afternoon sun, and started sweating bullets and greasing off just about every jug in sight. Luckily the route wasn't too hard, and after a nervous move or two down low (where the rock is quite polished) I got into the swing of things and sweated and slimed my way up the rest of the pitch. Geraldine followed me up, with Ricardo insisting that she lug up the #5 camalot we'd used as an anchor. She won't fall for that trick again! ;-)

Geraldine cruised the pitch in style, although one of the wires had twisted around in the crack and she was unable to clean it. Having been fried by the sun, we both sat in the shade of the belay tree for a while, procrastinating about the hot and sweaty abseil descent. Geraldine rapped off first and after a lot of frigging about I managed to free the stuck wire and return to the ground with my rack intact.

By that time we were all pretty buggered and the RR crowd had left too (they'd been roasted off of Bishop's Terrace too - so much for their picnic lunch!), so we called it a day and started the long, boring drive back to the Bay...

Northeast Buttress of Higher Cathedral Rock

Photo's from Allen Currano and Mei Xi...

Mei racking up for the first pitch



Allan and Mei on the belay ledge waiting for the party ahead to 'get a move on'!

Right – Mei meeting Nathan at the 6th belay.



Aaah, Oh! I'm Stuck!

Right – the view from the ridge the following morning.



Rock Rendezvous Christmas Party, Saturday December 13th, 7pm

We will be having this years RR Christmas party at the palatial residence of Ricardo Lagos ('Novice solo of Zodiac' fame).

This is a pot luck so bring with you your favorite food indulgence (Something fattening, high in cholesterol, or sugar is preferred). And your favorite drink.

RR will be providing some of the party goodies to ensure that there will be plenty to go around. Like me; if any of you intend to get soundly drunk, then Ricardo has graciously offered his hardwood floor to sleep on ;) so don't forget your bag and mat.

We will be having several 10min hot "Best of" climbing slideshows from:

Allen Currano
Carolyn Dent
Ricardo Lagos
Ryan McClain

(Some of these people have even already volunteered!!)

I will also be revealing next years masthead and be talking about some plans for the club for next year (All good stuff I promise).

I am sure I will think of something else, but until then...

the address is

1082 Pennsylvania Ave #301
San Francisco CA 94107

From the south bay

take 101 north

merge onto 280 north (towards PacBell park)
exit at Cesar Chavez Ave
Go straight through light at end of off-ramp onto Pennsylvania.

From the East Bay

go across Bay Bridge
exit on Cesar Chavez East
turn left onto Pennsylvania (where Cesar Chavez goes under the 280)

From the north

use map quest ... :-)



Warning/Disclaimer

San Francisco Rock Rendezvous is not a teaching organization and does not endorse or insure rock climbing. Trips advertised in the newsletter are private and are only listed to allow for the co-ordination of car pooling and camping. Each participant on a trip is solely responsible for his or her safety during the entire trip, including the transportation to and from the climbing area and site, and any necessary insurance.