

Trashing Tassie 2.0

Myself and several others in the Tasmanian climbing community are becoming concerned about the many and increasing instances of thoughtless and inappropriate bolting on the Organ Pipes, and to a lesser degree statewide. I have compiled a list of the most egregious examples on the Pipes that I've come across, which I think are not consistent with basic climbing and route development principles, and which set a precedent for low quality route development at one of the most visited crags in the state:

- 'All the Way', a 15 m grade 20 on Circus Wall is a bolted splitter hand crack. The FA justifies it as an escape from a lower sport pitch. This pitch is easily lead on a handful of medium cams which are surely an easy thing to throw in if you want to climb the routes below it. If you can't be arsed carrying up trad gear, there are now plenty of other moderate sport routes to choose from. This pursuit of 'user friendly' climbing at all costs undermines the basic climbing ethic to use natural gear where possible. Not to mention the combination of a moderate sport pitch followed by a moderate trad pitch is not a bad day out.
- 'Quantum of Solace', a 30 m grade 23 below Great Tier which sports an additional rap station at 20 m so that those who don't want to do the crux can lower off. This might be the most ridiculous thing I've ever seen in Tassie climbing. This approach contrives two routes out of one, and the early rap off option even has its own name in the guide. Why not have a rap station at every bolt and create 20 individual routes of various grades? If you want to climb a 22 instead of a 23 there's plenty of other options around, and if the route is cruxy enough to warrant two different names that tells you everything you need to know about its quality.
- 'Major Tom', a 20 m grade 22 on Battle Cruiser wall. This route retro-bolts the top part of the first pitch of Space Cowboy, a three-star trad route which previously required a calm head above small but bomber gear. The new route is contrived and the only logical way to finish it is to climb the top of the trad route next to it and reach over and clip the bolts. This not only spoils a great trad route but adds a poxy sport route to a high-quality trad buttress. The new route has also added a rap station at the top of the first pitches of Space Cowboy and Battle Cruiser, completely altering the experience of both these routes, which previously required committing to climbing the excellent top pitches in order to rap off.
- Innumerable short, contrived sport routes have been added all over the Pipes, epitomized by 'Summertime Buttress' a sub 10 m reclaimed waterfall which now sports seven 8 m high no-star sport routes. Routes of this nature serve only to amuse the people who bolt them and actively detract from the quality of the crag by flooding it with short, contrived routes bristling with bolts.

These routes add nothing to the climbing experience on the Mountain, and I believe they dilute the quality of the crag. Facilitating inexperienced climbers to access areas like the Pipes is not an excuse for bolting cracks, grid bolting cliffs or establishing contrived

low-quality routes. This facilitation can be achieved through other means which elevate people's ability to allow them to climb quality routes, rather than lowering the bar for access to more involved climbing areas.

Some statewide examples of routes which have altered or diluted the climbing experience in other areas that spring to mind include:

'Winning Streaks' (Hazards main wall): A fully bolted multipitch route on a wall which previously required the ability to climb slightly run out trad routes, as typical of other Australian granite slab climbing destinations (Baroomba Rocks, Mt Buffalo etc). Whilst by all reports this is a quality route, it completely changes the access requirements for this cliff, and perhaps was not appropriate. The lure of the bigger, more demanding lines on the Hazards was previously a great motivator for building up your trad skills on Freycinet's naturally accessible and friendly coastal crags. This experience is diminished if there is a contrived, accessible, and fully bolted sport route up the middle of the wall, regardless of the quality of this route.

Sand River: Numerous instances of over bolting and contrived route development, bolted cracks, and routes squeezed together. Whilst Sand River has been a worthwhile edition to southern Tassie climbing, shouldn't a crag developed as an introductory cliff be equipped to a high standard reflective of existing bolting practices? For example, bolts appropriately spaced (not furthest apart at the bottom and getting closer with height, and with three within reach at the crux), only quality routes developed, and traditional placements utilised where possible. This could have been achieved while maintaining a safe and approachable feel and allow new outdoor climbers to develop their skills to the level required by most quality crags.

Cloudy Bay: While there are some spectacular routes here, over bolting of routes has detracted from the climbing experience. Many routes have so many bolts they become distracting and reduce the enjoyment of the climbing. The mixed routes here are a step in the right direction, but often have twice as many bolts as necessary squeezed into the bolted sections as though to make up for the trad section. Name tags on rap stations is a bizarre concept in a sport which is supposed to promote self-reliance and outdoor skills, especially when you can stand across the zawn from the rap lines and literally line up the topo with the cliff. While it is good to have intermediate 'adventure climbing' areas like Cloudy Bay, they should still require a degree of experience and self-sufficiency to access them. Basic skills like reading a topo and being comfortable on routes that aren't grid bolted should be necessary to visit any 'adventure climbing' cliffs, regardless of whether they are sport or trad areas.

There are numerous other examples statewide of grid bolted cliffs, excessive and unnecessary link ups, routes bolted to facilitate dogging rather than climbing, and lazy, environmentally degrading behaviour such as not removing expansion bolts from projects after replacing them with U bolts. All these practices create unnecessary impact on our climbing areas and potentially compromise the access that we in Tassie take for granted.

I'm interested to hear if other people are also concerned about these issues on the Pipes or statewide. I'd propose the adoption of a **bolting moratorium** on the Pipes to prevent further degradation of this cliff. Some **state-wide bolting guidelines** are also badly overdue, to reinforce that adding fixed protection to any cliff requires a thoughtful approach and should be done as a last resort for quality routes only. Quality sport routes can and do fit these criteria, but sadly many newer examples do not. I enjoy good sport routes as much as anyone, but I don't think we can pretend that quantity over quality is a good thing, or that carrying in a few pieces of trad gear – or an entire rack – is in anyway inconvenient if it preserves basic climbing ethics.

I'd suggest that as a climbing community we need to hold each other to higher standards, especially those who decide to bolt new routes, in order to preserve the things that make Tassie climbing special.

Some additional points:

- I'd suggest that the cliff closures in Victoria are cause for concern in Tasmania. Despite having less sandstone cliffs and cultural heritage issues (thank God for dolerite), we have an abundance of over bolted crags in reserves or national parks (Organ Pipes, Paradiso, Star Factory, Cloudy Bay etc.). Despite Parks turning a blind eye to these areas so far, they still technically constitute illegal infrastructure and **minimal impact** route development principles should apply. I don't think anyone could reasonably argue that any of these crags have been developed with that approach.
- At standout mainland crags such as Arapiles, Moonarie, Mt. Buffalo and Frog Buttress, the 'old guard' of established and experienced climbers are responsible for setting high standards of route development and ensuring basic climbing ethics are upheld. If inappropriate bolts are placed, it's the old guard who chop them. In Tasmania the opposite seems to be the case, with the old guard responsible for most of the examples above. There seems to be a complete lack of leadership in terms of setting and demanding standards for new route development, and I think it is everyone's responsibility to hold each other accountable.