

Stoney Middleton...

is no place for the faint-hearted; nor are there rich pickings for those climbing in the lower grades. But given that Stoney, as the locals call it, has traditionally been a forcing ground, that shouldn't come as any great surprise. Starting back in the Fifties Stoney, bucked the trend of most limestone crags, and attracted attention more as a free-climbing than an aid-climbing venue. Continuing this early trend, the mighty Tom Proctor (aka Hydraulic Man) made Stoney his second home in the Sixties/Seventies and forced a succession of desperate routes. It's a testament to Proctor that many of his routes are still pretty sharp even today! Others (Messrs Hamper and Moffatt) continued in a similar style during the Eighties and Nineties. Now, a decade or so on, Stoney is like a mighty sleeping giant. It is entirely possible that it might yet come back into the spotlight but for now decades of cutting edge activity are there for all to enjoy.



Featured Route: Froth (VS 4c, 4c) isn't a cake walk despite its apparently easy grade. The first pitch is no prize in all honesty; much more a means to an end, ie the second pitch. This is an altogether much more splendid affair; airy, strenuous, challenging and ultimately rewarding. Despite its brevity, the whole route does have a stature that is undeniable. It also has

Ravensdale offers the closest alternative, whilst the likes of Wildcat, Willersley or Dovedale are all well-worth checking out if you have time on your side.

Rest Days: Stoney has more holes than a colander so if caving is your bag, you just hit rich! If it ain't, you're down to walking, cycling, Chatsworth House, one of the plethora of garden shops or shopping in Sheffield – joy!

a polish, which is unfortunate; but that's Stoney for you!

Tips: Persevere with the first pitch, the second is the pitch of the route. Stitch up the start of the second pitch and then launch out before nerves get the better of you.

Clips: A standard trad rack with some medium to large sized cams are well worth packing.

'Must Do's': The twin corner cracks of Sin and Glory Road, both VS, are good. Padme (HVS 5a) is harder but again very good.

Alternatives: Quality VS's on Peak Limestone aren't ten a penny.

Essential Beta

How to get there: From Calver crossroads on the A623 a dozen miles southwest of Sheffield, head up the dale to the village of Stoney Middleton then park just to the west in a roadside carpark. Allow 5 to 10 minutes walk-in.

When to Visit Any time it isn't raining and even then it's always worth a look! Stoney is remarkably sheltered from the elements and seems to attract more than its share of sun.

Where to Stay/Shop: Assuming that the timber shed isn't on the agenda, visitors can choose between camping (Eyrice Byne's at Baslow) or any of the local B&B's/hotels. Supplies are available locally in Stoney/Calver whilst climbing kit can be picked up in Hathersage.

Which Guide: Stoney is included in numerous guides including selected texts such as the BMC's *On Peak Rock* and Vertebrate Graphic's *peak district: climbing*. The most up-to-date/comprehensive guide is Rockfax's *Northern Limestone*.



Photos: Main: Rachael Crewe and Chris James on the top pitch of Froth (VS 4c, 4c). Secondary: Rachael again 'eying it up' before committing.