

**Perth Rock – A Guide to the Best Rock Climbing
and Bouldering around Perth**
review by Ross Weiter, Oct 2013

In December 2002 I edited and co-wrote the Perth Rock Climbing Guide (“PRCG”), later in December 2010 I did the same with the second edition. Both were published by CAWA, which means that CAWA funded the printing and pocketed all the profits. For me, this was a labour of love, firstly a chance to be involved in producing a book. Also, having roamed these hills for 20 years and authored 100 climbs near Perth, it was a chance to give back a bit.

PRCG2010 is still the definitive guide to Perth routes (stuff over 6m high), as it covers all the crags, and all the climbs, and there has been next to no development in the last three years. It has some issues. What it does not cover is any of the bouldering, other than the inner city areas of Blackwall, Cottesloe and Peppy Grove. This has been covered by PDF mini-guides, created by various enthusiasts and available for free from the CAWA site. The reason for it is simple – I don’t boulder outdoors except for Blackwall (I do plenty indoors though) and I don’t believe in writing guidebooks about places I don’t personally know. No one else raised their hand for this work and so it was not covered then.

It was with great interest that I have obtained Shane Richardson’s Perth Rock (“PR2013”) which hit the shops in late September this year.
<http://www.climbwest.com.au/PerthROCK.html> As someone who knows a bit about Perth and guides, I figure I would write a review.

My first impression was – wow, landscape format! That is some out-of-the-box thinking, this is the first climbing guide I have ever seen utilising it. Climbing topos are mostly landscape anyway, so this is probably a good way to go, especially now that glues (for books) have been improved to the point where the whole thing no longer falls apart like it used to. Second thing - the cover has my own route *Sundance Crack* on it! Not that it is representative of Perth but neither is Kate on *Power Play* in the PRCG2010.

Step two - I got home and started counting and comparing - OK I am an engineer so shoot me. PRCG2010 covers 969 climbing routes, and just a handful of boulder problems. PR2013 covers 666 climbing routes and 493 boulder problems. Then I started thinking, what is missing from PR? The answer is - 17 crags. The next question was which ones? Well, few will miss the delights of Gobby Road, Gooseberry Quarry, Jumperkine Hill and a few other dodgy affairs with poor rock, few climbs or featuring a death-march approach. But the surprise omissions are Boya Quarry, Barrington, Eaglestone

Rock and Wellington Dam. All of these are some of the best places near Perth, although not in the top tier.

Then I noticed that there is no index of climbs or grades in the back. If you wish to find a two-star grade 14 for your first lead, start searching the 200 odd pages. Weird.

Then I actually started to read the book. I noticed that the 2002 edition of the PRCG is acknowledged, but not the 2010 edition. Why not? That’s where information on the Lost World crag came from! (It is not published anywhere else.)

The graphic design is very good, and a massive improvement on what I was able to generate in 2002 and 2010. Quite frankly, the graphic design of the PRCG was embarrassing; it belongs into the 90s at best. But it is not a coffee table book for visiting inter-staters or freeze-dried Euros; you’d be mad to come to Perth for the climbing, right? No commercial graphic designer meant lower costs, which is why the PRCG retails around town for \$35-40 while PR goes for \$50.

CAWA deserves a couple of square centimetres of space on page 14 and a web reference on page 15. I think that it deserves a lot more than that after 40 years of fighting for climbers in this State but opinions differ.

Similarly, the listing of shops and gyms on the same page would be well served with a magnifying glass, but the iPhone generation will be well used to size 3 font. The rest of the introductory sections paints a good picture for the first time user. Entirely missing is any information on history or the players, which means that the guide has no historical context. The routes and boulder problems are just there, never mind how.

Some of the photography is excellent; the book clearly sets out to be visually pleasing and motivating. For example on page 16, through a picture of a child, the book conveys the kid that exists inside of every climber.

The dark side of the book lies in the climbing route descriptions; many of the route descriptions are plagiarised straight out of the PRCG, with attempts at rewording ranging from passable to next to none. Neutrino on p. 51 is an example of the bad stuff:
PRCG2010: *The face just L of the chimney. Hard to place wires above the BR, a pumpy lead. Do not use chimney edge for assistance.*

PR2013: *The face just left of the chimney. Hard to place wires above the bolt. Do not use chimney edge of assistance. A pumpy lead.*

Co-incidence, eh? Most of the “adopted” text is slightly less blatant, like the description of *Heart of Stone* on page 43. We have copyright laws here in Australia, yes? I suggest that author considers that if he is going to make money out of publishing guides, maybe he should bother to climb the routes and write his own descriptions? I

mean instead of using the free labour of a person who wrote this (there are many examples just like this) for free? Or alternatively the author could change his copyright statement on the bottom of page 2 to by adding....."unless I have plagiarised your descriptions in the first place".

Even the CAWA web site states on the bottom of the page - *Permission is granted for like-minded groups to use material from this website (except photographs and except where stated)*. People looking to make thousands of dollars in profit are not like-minded to a volunteer organisation!

One could ask why am I whinging about this stuff? I mean who cares, it is a guide, it promotes climbing, full stop, get over it, right? The answer is this: it costs a lot of money to run CAWA, most of it goes on insurance which has gone through the roof since 911, some on the AGM, annual comp, dinner, some hardware like bolts. CAWA does all the tedious ferreting around to keep crags open or open new ones. Most of this, my dear reader, makes super-boring reading so it happens behind the scenes. The PRCG raises as much money as all of the membership fees put together. PR, by covering 2/3 of the routes in the CAWA guide, will have a considerable effect on the revenue the PRCG will generate. That money will be diverted into the pocket of the author of PR for private gain.

Then there are some errors.

Compare the descriptions of *Major* at Churchman's: **PRCG2010:**keep the two triangular niches on the right.

PR2013: ...keeping to the right of two triangular niches....

If you follow the latter you may take a big dive as going R of the niches is quite a big deal. (I know because I took that dive and decked out here from 15m or so in 1995).

Some changes of the last 3 years are not captured: For example the number for quarry bookings is no longer 9295 2244 but 9290 6100.

Some information is out of date. The PR access to the Lost Word crag is the same as in the PRCG2010 and hence likely to cause more trouble. This is because in 2010 I did not realise that we were directing people across unfenced private land. In September 2012 there was an angry complaint from the land owner (on the CAWA web site), and a response from CAWA directing people around the private property. <http://www.climberswa.asn.au/topic/fern-road-access-issue/> The landowner was right, we located the property corner from Landgate GPS information. Feeling a bit guilty I charged out there late last year and marked a path with streamers but some dodo has

now removed these. And now people are being directed over private property again, so now there may be more conflict.

But wait, there is more on Lost World! The property boundary crosses the creek 30m right (south) of *Get a Grip*, which means I got lucky and the crag is on national park land. It also means that the new 2011 routes *Reach for the Sky* and *Blood and Carrots*, (by guess who) stated to be 50m right, are almost certainly on private land. Aaaargh.

Dena Rao had nothing to do with *Raindance* at Lost Word but cutting and pasting did. I soloed that in June 2011, after rehearsal and before bolting.

Turbodiesel Excavator is to the left of *Crazy Horse* (Mtn Quarry) and not to the right. *Bumble Bee* has lost all its jugs in the last 10 years and is now a fair bit harder than the grade 11 it was in the PRCG2002. I am pretty sure there is a new climb (about 2 years old) right of *Aerobics with Alan* (also MQ). And so on.

The routes between *Vader* and *Urban Ethics* have become death traps with yet another massive block falling out of the *Skywalker* roof a year ago, but PR says nothing.

Bare Necessities and *Anorexia Crimposa* at Darlington have the same grade in PR. OK, that is what I put into PRCG2002 but due to much feedback (and some wear) there now is a 2 grade difference between them in the PRCG2010.

In summary, on the plus side, it is a pretty production with nice photos, which may well motivate people to buy it, get out and climb outside. It is also Perth's first bouldering guide and serves the growing grunting market.

I have no comment on the coverage of bouldering, for obvious reasons, others in the know can cover that. I have noticed that some of the photos of boulders are tiny, e.g. bottom of page 106 and top of page 113 - these are the smallest photos I have seen in any guidebook (thumb size), so good luck squinting.

On the negative side, ugh, the blatant plagiarism in route descriptions is a shocker.

That aside, the coverage of climbing routes seems to be just to increase sales appeal – it adds no new value to the Perth climbing community.

If it was *Perth Bouldering*, it would be A1. As *Perth Rock* it is two stars out of five.

Enjoy climbing
Ross