

History re-written on first grade 23 in Australia. Albatross by Ian Lewis

For the last 43 years it has been assumed that Henry Barber introduced grade 23 to Australia, officially Insomnia at Frog being the first one...though Kama Sutra at Araps on the same trip is harder. In researching a new book I'm writing on the history of Tasmanian climbing, I have discovered that Ian Lewis had free climbed Albatross at Lowdina near Hobart in 1974, before Hot Henry came in 1975. The guidebook credits Lewis with the first ascent, but gives the first free ascent to Henry, as it was reported that Lewis had a point of aid (rest) on his ascent. In recent interviews for the book, both Ian Lewis and his belayer Lyle Closs are adamant that it was done free. Albatross was the only route Henry Barber fell off on his Australian trip. I've been on it, and not many would argue with grade 24..its desperate. So there you go... Ian Lewis did the first grade 23 in Australia in 1974.