



## AAC Publications

---

### Chambe, Northwest Face, Passion and Pain

Malawi, Mulanje Massif

**The high-quality, compact granite in Malawi is so impressive, it leaves one wondering why it has been largely ignored by climbers.** The northwest face of Chambe in the Mulanje Massif looks a bit like two Half Domes stacked on top of each other, with a massive ledge hosting an exotic wooded forest in the middle. [The entire northwest face of Chambe was first climbed in 1979 by local climbers Ray Baines and Frank Eastwood (Gladiator, 800m, III 5.10 A1).]

Richard Ford and I aimed to establish a well-protected, moderately rated climb up the lower Chambe wall that might match the popularity of similar climbs I had put up in Namibia and Madagascar. In late November, we drilled bolts on lead and were thrilled to establish a fun seven-pitch route: Passion and Pain (450m, 5.9). The route follows a white streak to the right of a large, pointy triangular rock, extending partway up the lower wall. Rappel the route with two 60m ropes.

Mulanje is a mere 60 km from Blantyre (the nearest big town), and when I go next time I won't even bother with a rental car—it's easy to get a ride from locals. En route, drive past Likhubula, home of the popular hiker and climber's hostel called the Hiker's Nest. All the beta, meals, and bivy options you may need are available there. Though we came prepared for camping and did a major grocery run in Blantyre, we slept and ate well at the Hiker's Nest.

To approach Mulanje, continue past Likhubulato Vicky's Seed Shop. For the approach (well shy of an hour), hike from the seed shop through corn fields nestled within some of the nicest boulders you may have ever seen. A local guide named Witness knows Chambe well and can lead you directly to it. Ruth, the owner of the Hiker's Nest hostel, can contact him and handle all of your logistical needs.

Frank Eastwood's guidebook (now out of print, but still available in some Blantyre book shops and on the Mountain Club of Malawi website) describes a plethora of his routes in Malawi, and can be helpful for researching climbs and hikes from the 1970s and '80s. None of his older routes are bolted, and few have been repeated.

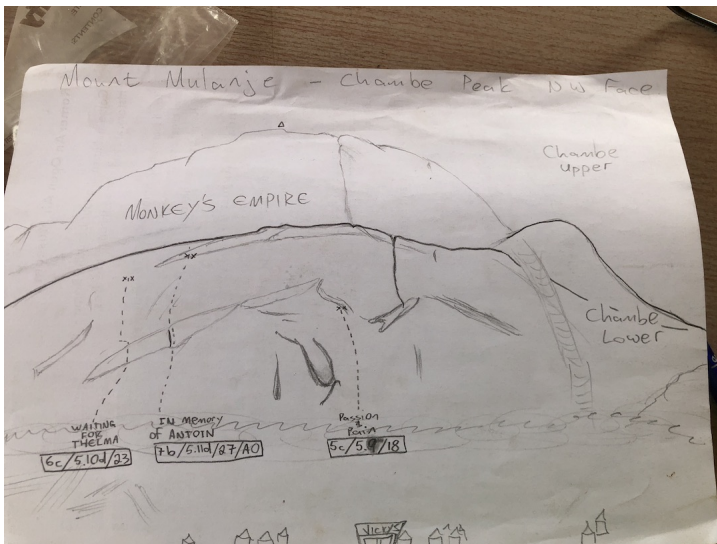
– James Garrett, USA

**TWO OTHER RECENT CHAMBE ROUTES:** Two difficult, sparsely bolted routes were put up in 2014 by French climbers (names not known) on the lower Chambe wall, left of Passion and Pain, and were recently repeated by a strong South African team: Waiting For Thelma (280m, 6c) and In the Memory of Antoine (650m, 7b A0). Topos are at the Mountain Club of Malawi website.

## Images



The lower and upper northwest face of Chambe. With a total height of more than 3,000 feet, the potential is huge.



A general topo of three known routes on the lower wall of Chambe's northwest face.





Richard Ford leading on Passion and Pain. He and Garret found a natural trail through the grass tufts and didn't need to remove vegetation.



Looking down the fifth pitch of Passion and Pain.



The team receiving the blessing of the village chief below Chambe.



James Garrett, anesthetist and retired flight nurse, performing volunteer medical treatments in Malawi with the Himalayan Cataract Project



New Route on Chambe

Article Details

Author	James Garrett
Publication	AAJ
Volume	61
Issue	93
Page	257
Copyright Date	2019
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions