

Jessica Mccaskey

Youngest Scottish Woman to on-sight E5

Report by Martin Mcloughlin

During the good spell in April (whilst the hillsides were burning) Jessica Mccaskey climbed three consecutive days on the incomparable Diabaig. Surely a strong contender for Britain's best rock and single pitch climb: *The Pillar E2 5b?*

Although the weather did its best to repulse her from the mountains (an abseil retreat from Eagle Ridge in a lightning storm for instance) she did manage to climb the classics *Talisman VS* (Creag a'Coire Etchachan) and *Bludger's Revelation HVS* (Slime Wall, Buachaille Etive Mor).



On her one and only foray to bolts this year, in August, Jess climbed her first 7c (*Granola Head*, Myopics Buttress, Dunkeld) in an impressive two attempts.

Then on the 25th of August 2011 Jessica became the youngest Scottish woman to on-sight E5. Her chosen route was *Shapeshifter Direct E5 6a* at Rosehearty on the Moray Firth Coast. We had visited the crag a couple of times earlier in the year in an effort to avoid the rain. Although it is a difficult crag to get in condition because of the sea spray Jess had managed three E4s on previous visits and had enjoyed the style of climbing, so it was natural perhaps to attempt her first E5 on-sight here.

The route has a boulder problem start and finish with a stamina sapping middle section. A positive approach and good protection at half height saw Jess shaking out at a reasonable rest. Fifteen minutes later, with arms like Popeye, she only just managed to pull over the yellow, lichen covered finish much to her, and my, relief.



Shapeshifter at Rosehearty is the line on the left. The Direct starts left again. PHOTO: Neil Morrison