

	No star	1	2	3
<b>Mod to S</b>	-	1	1	4
<b>HS to HVS</b>	-	-	-	5
<b>E1 to E3</b>	-	-	4	4
<b>E4 and up</b>	-	-	2	7

Dow Crag is the southernmost of the Lake District's big cliffs and also one of its most popular. The crag is composed of five or so huge buttresses split by deep gullies and crossed by some noticeable slanting terraces.

This can make identification of the routes on first acquaintance quite tricky, although a good look at the cliff from Goat's Water on the approach will help identify the major features.

The climbing appeals to all abilities - few crags can offer such a range from classic Diffs and Severs, to top end E5s and E6s. Most of the routes are multi-pitch, although for the harder lines the difficulties tend to be only focussed on a single pitch. The routes see plenty of traffic on the whole and the rock is excellent, with good (if not always plentiful) protection options.

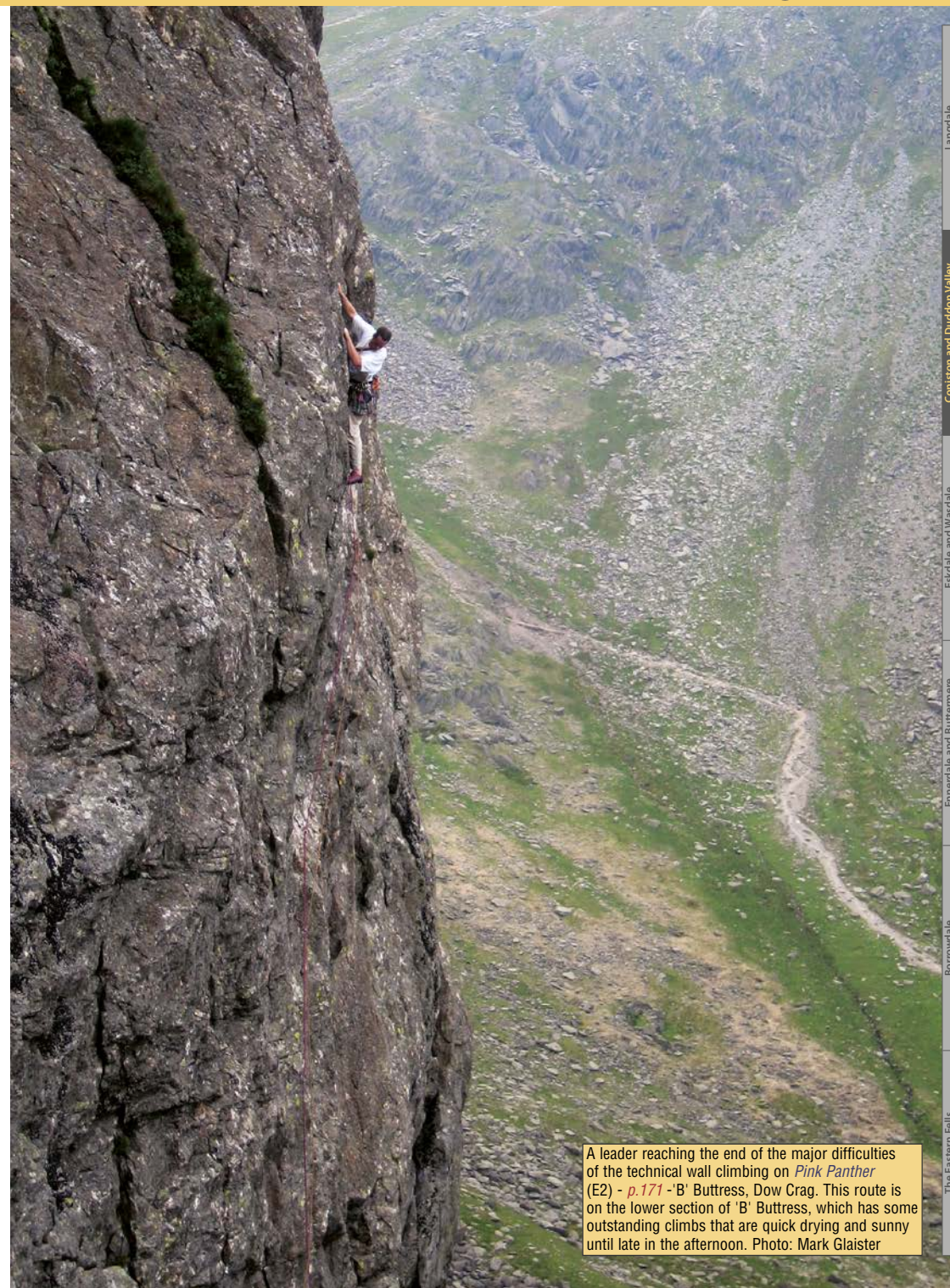


### Approach

From the centre of Coniston, follow the road up the hill signed towards 'Coniston Old Man'. This leads to parking at Walna Scar - do not drive up the Walna Scar track beyond the parking area. Walk along the Walna Scar track for 1.7km, passing two small rock cuttings, to a path on the right. Take the path for 1.7km to Goat's Water. Go around the left side of the tarn over boulders, then take a steep path up the scree slope to below the cliff. It is also possible to approach from the Duddon Valley by picking up the Walna Scar track near Seathwaite.

### Conditions

Dow Crag's relatively amenable approach walk and quick-drying nature make it a more reliable venue than some of its higher and more remote counterparts. The crag gets sun from first light until early afternoon, although the climbs on the lower section of 'B' Buttress stay in the sun for a little longer. Many of the routes are quick drying, although those on the shaded gully walls and deep in recesses take longer to come into condition. In cooler windy weather, Dow Crag can be a very cold spot.



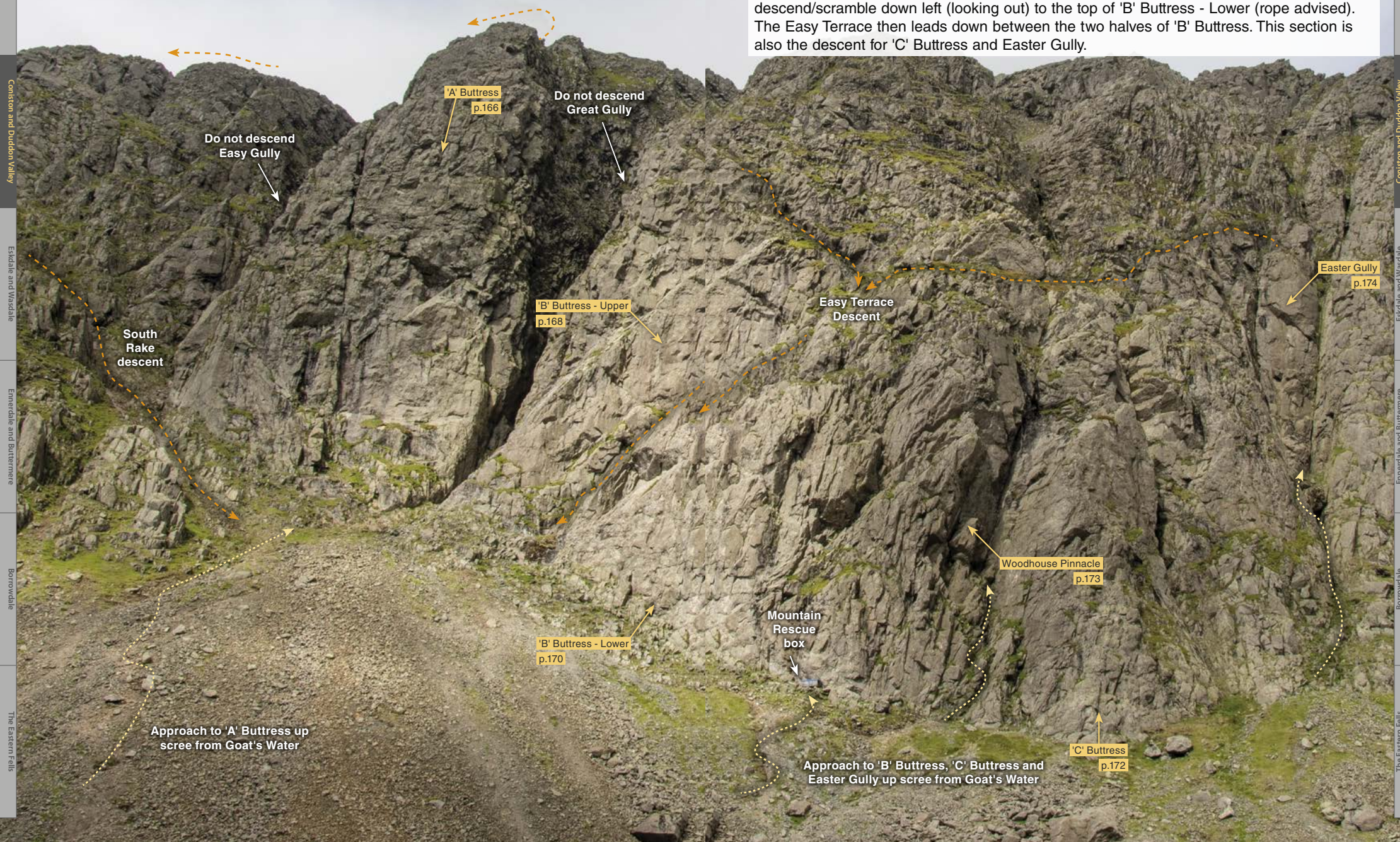
A leader reaching the end of the major difficulties of the technical wall climbing on *Pink Panther* (E2) - p.171 - 'B' Buttress, Dow Crag. This route is on the lower section of 'B' Buttress, which has some outstanding climbs that are quick drying and sunny until late in the afternoon. Photo: Mark Glaister



## Descents

**South Rake Descent** - From the top of the crag, walk right (looking out) past the heads of Great Gully and Easy Gully to a depression. From here descend South Rake, which brings you down to the base of 'A' Buttress.

**Easy Terrace** - From the top of 'B' Buttress - Upper, either scramble to the summit or, descend/scramble down left (looking out) to the top of 'B' Buttress - Lower (rope advised). The Easy Terrace then leads down between the two halves of 'B' Buttress. This section is also the descent for 'C' Buttress and Easter Gully.



Do not descend  
Easy Gully

'A' Buttress  
p.166

Do not descend  
Great Gully

'B' Buttress - Upper  
p.168

Easy Terrace  
Descent

Easter Gully  
p.174

South  
Rake  
descent

Woodhouse Pinnacle  
p.173

'B' Buttress - Lower  
p.170

Mountain  
Rescue  
box

Approach to 'A' Buttress up  
scree from Goat's Water

Approach to 'B' Buttress, 'C' Buttress and  
Easter Gully up scree from Goat's Water

'C' Buttress  
p.172



**'A' Buttress**

The towering buttress that is bounded on the right by Great Gully has some classic multi-pitch climbs that span the grades from Severe upwards. The main face gets sun until early afternoon, but is exposed, so can be cold and windy. Most of the routes are well travelled and clean, but the harder lines can get mossy.

**Approach (see map on p.162)** - Walk up to the base of the buttress and scramble to various grassy ledges, from where the climbs begin.

**Descent (see p.164)** - Scramble up relatively easy ground to the top and then on to the South Rake Descent.



Easy Gully

Easy scramble

85m

50m

Great Gully

**1 Arete, Chimney and Crack** **S 3c**

A long and classic route with some great climbing and exposure, but also a number of vegetated sections. Start below the arete on the left edge of the buttress.

- 1) 22m. Climb the arete and face to a crack that leads to a ledge and belay.
- 2) 11m. Move up a grassy groove rightwards to a small shallow cave and belay.
- 3) 20m. Move up rightwards under overhangs then make a short traverse to a chimney. Climb up over a large chockstone to a stance and belay.
- 4) 15m. Traverse right, past an exposed ledge, until below a corner (this is a few metres before a grass ledge).
- 5) 24m. Follow the long corner to easier ground and belays. Scrambling remains to gain the top of the buttress.

FA. T.C.Ormiston-Chant, T.H.G.Parker, S.H.Gordon 18.9.1910

**2 Gordon and Craig's Route** **S 3c**

Similar to *Arete, Chimney and Crack* with the addition of an extremely exposed finish. Start below grassy ledges right of the arete of *Arete, Chimney and Crack*.

- 1) 24m. Move up to gain a left-trending line that leads up to meet the final crack on pitch one of *Arete, Chimney and Crack*. Take the crack to a stance and belay.
- 2) 11m. Pitch 2 of *Arete, Chimney and Crack*.
- 3) 20m. Pitch 3 of *Arete, Chimney and Crack*.
- 4) 19m. Traverse right, past an exposed ledge and corner-line to a grass ledge and belay below a right-leading ramp.
- 5) 12m. Climb the ramp and move round to a ledge on blocks. Move up a corner to a ledge and belay.
- 6) 12m. Move up leftwards to a slab and follow this right to easier ground. Scrambling remains to the top of the buttress.

FA. S.H.Gordon, A.Craig, J.P. and R.Rogers, J.Hanks, R.Gregson 26.9.1909

**3 The Balrog** **E2 5c**

A strenuous but well-protected route that tackles the crack and corner-line up the middle of the buttress. Start below the corner at a belay reached via a short scramble.

- 1) 5a, 17m. Climb the corner to a belay on the left.
- 2) 5c, 20m. Take the steep cracks in the wall to gain the next corner - strenuous - and follow this to a grassy ledge.
- 3) 25m. Climb the chimney and cracks to easy ground and belay. Scrambling remains to the top of the buttress.

FA. L.Brown, K.Jackson (3 pts) 1965

FFA. J.Eastham, M.Lynch 28.6.1975

**4 Abraxas** **E4 6a**

An audacious and fierce line that has a serious first pitch and strenuous main pitch. Start at the base of *The Balrog's* corner.

- 1) 5c, 15m. From the base of *The Balrog's* corner, move right for 3m. Climb to a slight depression and pull out of it past a bulge to a mossy slab. A dirty slab leads up and left to a stance. A very serious pitch that gathers moss.
- 2) 6a, 35m. Head out right below the slanting overhang, then break through it at a corner/groove. Move right to an easing and go left to a steep crack-line. The crack-line is pumpy and ends with a wild move right to easier territory at a corner. Take the corner then move right into *Eliminate 'A'*. Follow this to its stance at blocks.
- 3) 4c, 14m. Climb steeply from the left up a groove and wall to a bulge. Move over the bulge and up another groove to a belay.
- 4) 5b, 30m. Gain the thin groove above (left of a hanging arete). Climb the groove with difficulty before moving left to another groove that leads to easier ground and belays.

FA. R.Matheson, J.R.Martindale (1pt) 28.6.1975

**5 Isengard/Samba Pa Ti** **E2 5b**

Space-walking positions through the right-hand side of the central roof are combined with an interesting initial pitch. The third pitch is the E2 part of the route and the second pitch E1. Start at a short corner on raised ledges left of Great Gully.

- 1) 4b, 9m. Climb the corner and then move right to a stance and belay.
- 2) 5b, 32m. Take a rising line leftwards up the slab and steep wall to a ledge. Step left to a crack. Take this to the left end of a long overhang. Pull over the overhang and follow the slab and crack above rightwards, to a stance and belay under the massive central roof.
- 3) 5b, 30m. Climb up to below the right end of the roof. Pull over to a short corner/groove. Move up and then pull right and up past a bulge to gain the wall above. Climb direct up the wall, passing a final smaller overhang on its right, then head leftwards to a stance/belay on a good ledge.
- 4) 4b, 30m. Climb direct up cracks, short corners and walls to easy ground.

FA. (Isengard) L.Brown, A.McHardy 4.1962

FA. (Samba Pa Ti) A.Hyslop, R.O.Graham 20.8.1977

**6 Eliminate 'A'** **VS 4c**

A tremendous expedition that ranks as one of the UK's best VSs. The climbing is varied and positions spectacular. Start on a raised ledge left of Great Gully.

- 1) 4b, 12m. Climb up the arete until it is possible to traverse left to a belay on a grassy ledge.
- 2) 4b, 20m. Head rightwards up a scoop and shallow grooves to below a corner/groove (ledge on right). Climb the corner/groove until a traverse right can be made to reach a stance and belay.
- 3) 4c, 12m. Make an exposed traverse left across a wall and ledge until moves around a rib gain a slab and belay below the large roof.
- 4) 4a, 12m. Head up the wide crack leftwards under the roof, then pull up to a recess and belay on blocks just above.
- 5) 4c, 16m. Move out right on a slab under a bulge to an open groove. Climb the groove that leads up to a belay on the traverse of *Arete, Chimney and Crack*.
- 6) 4b, 24m. Move left and climb a groove to below an overhang, then step right to a spike. Move up past the overhang and follow a groove/corner to easier ground and belays. Scrambling remains to gain the top of the buttress.

FA. H.S.Gross, G.Battersfield 17.6.1923

**7 Side Walk** **E2 5b**

An intimidating gully wall climb that needs dry conditions and care with the rock on its two upper pitches. Start in Great Gully at a large boulder/pinnacle.

- 1) 5b, 14m. Climb the crack to the top of the pinnacle then make a committing pull up left to a corner and ledge. Do not be tempted to go left before standing on the pinnacle.
- 2) 5a, 9m. Take the smooth corner to a ledge and belay.
- 3) 5b, 10m. Move out right and up a difficult wall and corner (next to a dog-leg crack) to a stance.
- 4) 4b, 20m. Work up right then left past large blocks to a stance and belay under a big corner/groove.
- 5) 5a, 25m. Climb the groove and corner to below an overhang, then take a crack out leftwards to finish. Scrambling remains to gain the top of the buttress.

FA. L.Brown, B.Stevens 6.4.1960









Langdale

Comiston and Duddon Valley

Esedale and Wasdale

Emmerdale and Buttermere

Borrowdale

The Eastern Fells

Langdale

Comiston and Duddon Valley

Esedale and Wasdale

Emmerdale and Buttermere

Borrowdale

The Eastern Fells



### 'B' Buttress - Lower

The lower section of 'B' Buttress is a wedge-shaped wall of fine rock and contains a number of Dow Crag's best pitches. It dries rapidly and gets sun longer than other parts of the crag.

**Approach** (see map on p.162) - The bases of the routes are easily reached from either below 'A' Buttress or the Mountain Rescue box.

**Descent** (see p.164) - Scramble down the Easy Terrace.

#### 1 Giant's Corner . . . . . S 3c

Start under the corner that leads up to the huge roof. Move up the thin wall to below the corner and take the slab to under the roof. Traverse steeply left on good holds to reach Easy Terrace.

FA. G.S.Bower, A.W.Wakefield 4.1920

#### 2 Pink Panther . . . . . E2 5c

An intricate face climb on great rock. Start at a ledge 3m left of the perched block at the start of *Leopard's Crawl*. Move up right between two narrow overlaps to a right-leading shallow depression. Follow this to a bulge and flat-topped spike. Move up and right to a groove and take this until a move left gains a slab and the right-hand end of the huge roof. Finish up a corner/groove.

Photo on p.163  
FA. R.Matheson, M.R.Matheson 28.6.1973

#### 3 Leopard's Crawl. . . . . HVS 5a

A testing route that crosses some impressive territory and has a run-out section on the upper part of the first pitch. Start at a small perched rock spanning from a spike.

1) 5a, 30m. From the perched block, move up rightwards to a crack on the right side of a smooth wall. Traverse right to an open groove/scoop and follow this boldly to a belay.  
2) 4c, 20m. Move right 3m and then take the groove and cracks above to the top.

FA. R.J.Birkett, L.Muscroft, T.Hill 9.9.1947

#### 4 Tarkus . . . . . E2 5c

A well-positioned climb that has a serious initial wall. Start down and right of the perched block, below a small overlap and narrow groove. Photo on front cover.

1) 5c, 30m. From the overlap, make a bold move up and right to gain the wall just right of the groove. Further serious moves lead to a horizontal break. Traverse right and take the excellent crack and wall to the belay at the top of the first pitch of *Leopard's Crawl*.

2) 4c, 20m. Pitch 2 of *Leopard's Crawl*.

FA. R.Matheson, M.R.Matheson 18.4.1972

#### 5 Murray's Direct . . . . . VS 4c

Contrasting styles of climbing combine to make up this exceptional route. Start at a conspicuous right-leading ramp. Photo on p.160

1) 4c, 16m. Climb the technical ramp rightwards to a belay at the base of a large corner. Not a pitch to be rushed!  
2) 4b, 12m. Climb flakes in the wall right of the corner, then move left to a stance and belay below the upper corner.  
3) 4c, 25m. Layback the corner-crack to some small ledges below where the corner starts to overhang. Move right and climb slabby rock to the top.

FA. E.H.Pryor, J.B.Meldrum 15.10.1922

#### 6 Murray's Super Direct . . . . . E2 5b

Start at a slight ramp 3m left of *Murray's Route's* V-groove.

1) 5b, 16m. Climb the steep ramp and then move up the wall to eventually arrive at the base of the large corner and belay. This pitch can gather a lot of moss.  
2) 5b, 12m. Move out left to a groove and take this and the right-leading crack above to a stance in the corner.  
3) 5b, 25m. Take the chimney on the left (as for *Murray's Route*) to its top and move up left to below an overhang. Pull out right and move up to another overhang. Make a long move out left to clear the overhang and gain easier ground that leads to the top.

FA. R.Matheson, J.R.Martindale 25.4.1974

#### 7 Murray's Route . . . . . Top 1 L50 S 4a

A distinguished classic that wends its way up the lower section of 'B' Buttress. Start at a wide V-groove just left of the Mountain Rescue box. Photo on p.23

1) 4a, 20m. Climb the V-groove then head left across a difficult slab to below a corner. Move up and left to avoid an overhang, then continue to a stance and belay at the base of the large corner.  
2) 10m. Traverse right past a large flake then up and around to a wide crack that leads to a cave belay.  
3) 9m. Take a short steep crack on the left to a traverse line that leads to the corner and a belay.  
4) 12m. Take the chimney on the left to a traverse line that heads left past a flake to a belay below a corner. An exposed pitch.  
5) 20m. Climb the flake-crack on the right that leads into the corner. Climb the corner and groove above to the top.

FA. D.G.Murray, W.J.Borrowman, B.L.Martin 25.4.1918





### 1 Woodhouse's Arete . . . . . E6 6b

A stunning line up the very edge of the leaning arete that rises above Woodhouse Pinnacle. Start below the pinnacle. From a flake in the chimney in the wall left of the pinnacle, reach around the arete to a good hold and climb steeply to below a groove. Move up to a flake, then head right under a small overhang to gain the arete and a peg. Climb the airy arete via a series of steep and technical moves.

FA. K.Phizacklea, R.Matheson 5.1998

### 2 Critical . . . . . E6 6c

The overhanging crack-line in the shady wall above the pinnacle is an extremely hard trad test piece. From the chimney behind the pinnacle, gain a flake on the wall under the crack-line and move up left to a peg. Follow the crack-line up the overhanging wall passing a peg and a slight easing midway.

FA. G.Sutcliffe 20.6.1992

### 3 The Shining Path . . . . . E5 6b

First-rate wall climbing protected predominantly by pegs. Start below the sheer wall right of the pinnacle. From the chimney, step right onto the wall and climb up it to gain a pocket and then an easier corner that leads leftwards to the top.

FA. A.Hyslop, D.Kells 16.6.1992

### 4 Paths of Victory . . . . . E6 6c

A huge pitch that takes on the intimidating ground that lies above the initial difficulties of *The Shining Path*. From the pocket on *The Shining Path*, make hard moves right and up over a bulge onto the wall above. Head right to the arete (peg) before making another set of difficult moves to a ramp. The middle of the slabs to the right (peg) leads past small overlaps to the top.

FA. S.Wood, D.Kells 5.9.1993

### 5 'C' Ordinary Route . . . . . VDiff

The long narrowing buttress is a gratifying climb packed with interesting climbing. The climb is slightly more difficult than in the past as a result of the loss of a large spike of rock high on the route. Start 2m left of the toe of the buttress at a crack.

*Photo on this page.*

- 1) 16m. Climb to a large block, then head up leftwards to a steep flake-crack that leads to a ledge and belay.
- 2) 13m. Move up a short wall and step left to a ledge. An easy low-angled corner gains a belay ledge with a large square flake resting on it.
- 3) 11m. Traverse 3m left and climb easily up right to a ledge and belay.
- 4) 23m. Climb up leftwards to the crest of the buttress and follow this to a small ledge and belay. Good hidden cracks just up and left of the belay.
- 5) 12m. Move up to the base of a slab and follow it rightwards to a belay on a ledge.
- 6) 16m. Traverse a crack leftwards to a pronounced fin of rock. Move left under the fin and make a difficult move up a crack to easier ground. Move up right to a belay at the start of a ramp.
- 7) 13m. Climb the ramp and pull up to a ledge. Traverse back left until a final move up gains the top.

FA. G.F.Woodhouse, A.J.Woodhouse 8.1904

Bridget Glaister enjoying some perfect summer conditions on the lower section of the classic 'C' Ordinary Route (VDiff) - *this page* - on 'C' Buttress, Dow Crag. Photo: Mark Glaister



Way off descent  
scramble down  
Easy Terrace

Big spike  
shown  
here next  
to fin has  
fallen off

A

30m

4

Woodhouse  
Pinnacle

Large ledge  
next to  
pinnacle

Large flake

1

2

3

5

### Woodhouse Pinnacle and 'C' Buttress

The shady walls above the squat pinnacle that hides midway up the corner left of 'C' Buttress has some very hard single-pitch routes that see few attempts. To the right is the long, gently-angled 'C' Buttress, home to one of Dow Crag's most popular classics. The climbs in the recess of Woodhouse Pinnacle see very little sun, although seepage is not too much of a problem. 'C' Buttress is quick drying.

**Approach (see map on p.162)** - Woodhouse Pinnacle is approached via a scramble up the corners and gully below it. 'C' Buttress is the lowest point of the crag to the right of the Mountain Rescue box.

**Descent (see p.164)** - There is a lower-off point above the lines that end on top of *Woodhouse's Arete*. For the other climbs, descend via the scramble down Easy Terrace.





Scramble to the Easy Terrace descent

The Bandstand

Large Africa-shaped flake

Pass the huge chockstone via the wall to its left

50m

### Easter Gully

Easter Gully is one of the lesser-visited sections of Dow Crag. The gully is an impressive spot with the narrow headwall sandwiched between two long crack-lines and above a massive chockstone that is wedged in the gully. The routes described are memorable not only for their amazing position and challenging climbing, but for the sobering fact that they were both first ascended over a century ago. A confined location, the gully takes time to dry, especially the corner-crack of *Hopkinson's Gully*. **Approach** (see map on p.162) - Scramble up the gully, passing the huge chockstone via the wall to its left. **Descent** (see p.164) - Scramble left to join and descend Easy Terrace.

#### 1 Great Central Route

HVS 5b

A monumental line that tackles the narrow headwall at the back of Easter Gully. The crux is probably E1 without resort to traditional tactics! Care is needed with the belay below the crux as the best gear is at foot level. Start at the base of the wall.

- 1) 5a, 23m. Climb up the centre of the narrow buttress via short slabs and walls to a ledge below a steep crack on the right-hand side of a large Africa-shaped flake. Climb the strenuous crack to ledges - The Bandstand. Belay on the left - the gear placements are at foot level.
- 2) 5b, 22m. Thin, fingery and bold moves up the wall gain better holds and a slight niche. Continue up a short flake-crack to an overhanging diagonal break and follow this left to a corner. Move up and right to a stance.
- 3) 4b, 18m. A traverse right along the ledge ends at an exposed rib. Move right around it and follow the slab to the top.

FA. J.I.Roper, G.S.Bower, G.Jackson, A.P.Wilson 9.1919

#### 2 Hopkinson's Crack . . . . HS 4b

A very traditional climb that takes the eye-catching right-angled corner-crack at the back of the amphitheatre. Although described in three pitches, it can be led in one by the confident and/or those with a big rack. Start at the base of the corner.

- 1) 4a, 14m. Take the crack to a belay on a ledge on the left level with the base of the Africa-shaped flake.
- 2) 4b, 11m. The next section of the crack is more difficult and leads to a belay on ledges - The Bandstand.
- 3) 4a, 25m. Continue up the crack to the top. Scramble up the gully to where you can walk leftwards.

FA. C.Hopkinson, O.Koecher 14.4.1895



Rob Greenwood engaged in the technical intricacies of the slim groove of *Tumble* (E4) - p.168 - on the upper wall of 'B' Buttress, Dow Crag. To his left is the corner followed by the second pitch of *Nimrod* (E1) and the steep wall of the initial pitch of *Holocaust* (E4). Photo: Mark Glaister