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EDEN VALLEY

Cowrake Quarry

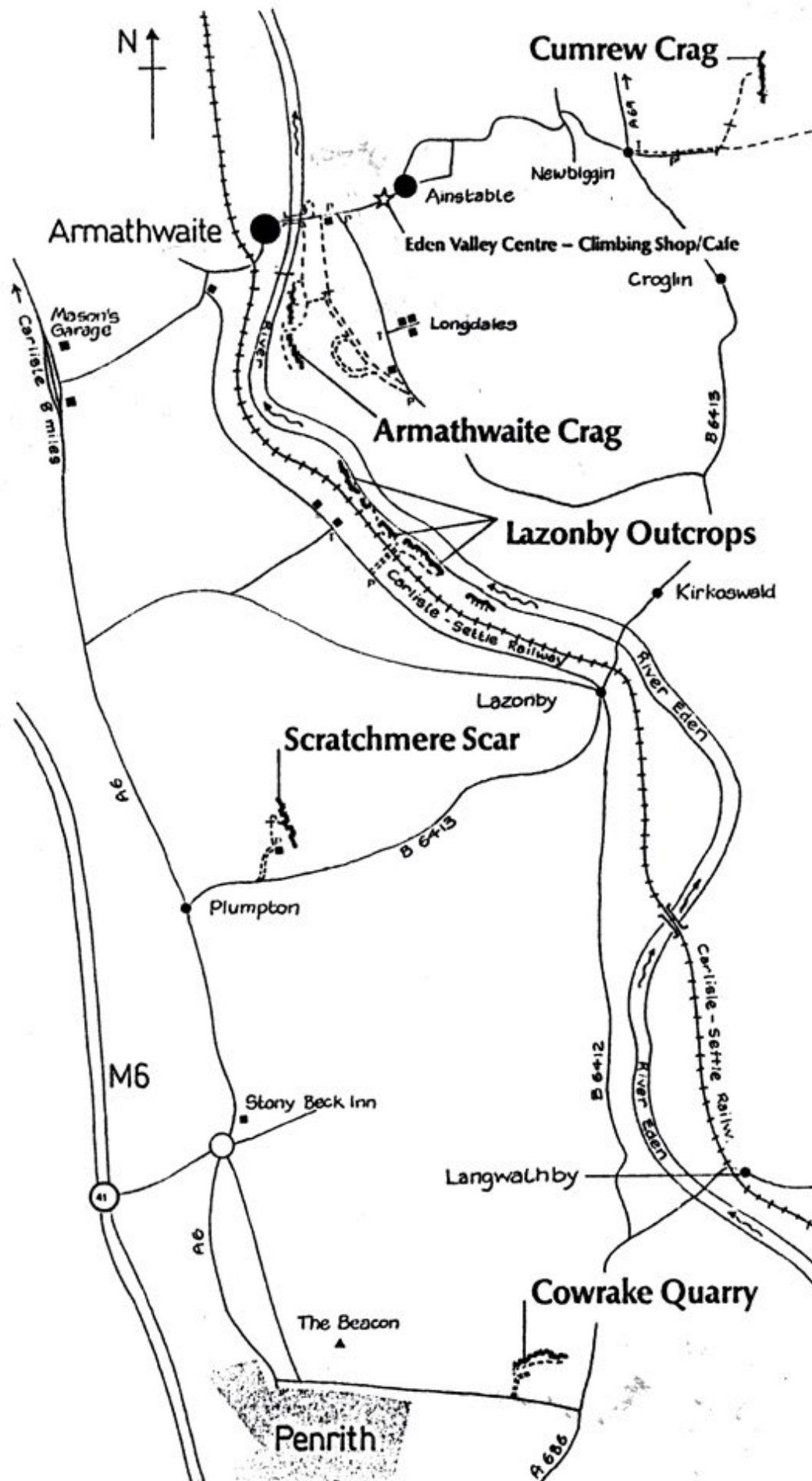


**FELL and ROCK
CLIMBING CLUB**
of the
English Lake District

This crag will be included in the next FRCC Eastern Crag guide (due 2008) by **Stewart Wilson**

Cowrake Quarry is an old quarry of Penrith sandstone and lies on the eastward spur of Beacon Hill, the obvious wooded hill above the town of Penrith. The quarry is nowhere more than seven metres high and is quite extensive. The west end of the quarry gives the best climbing and bouldering whilst the eastern end tends to be more overgrown and less popular. The quarry faces south and is a sunny spot, much frequented by the proud burghers of Penrith and their offspring. Set amidst sandy banks, grassy knolls and towering scots pines, the rocks are a very pleasant place to spend an odd hour. The views are superb. The climbing whilst pleasant and even problematic is not superb. The rock tends to be snappy, especially in the cracks and care needs to be taken. The area to the right of *Jughandle* and the *Broom Wall* are perhaps the best sections for soloing.

Belays can be a bit of a problem and there are stakes above *Main Wall*. The place is ideal for organised groups.



Approaches & Access

From the A66/A6 roundabout just south of Penrith, follow the A686 Alston road through the village of Carleton. About one mile beyond a big left-hand bend a road joins the A686 from the left, signposted to the golf course. Turn into this, with the steep wooded slope of Gibbet Hill on the right. Four hundred metres along this road a couple of buildings will be seen on the left-hand side of the road. Just beyond these on the right is a little gated lane entered by a stile which leads up the hill to the quarry which is hidden from sight beyond the large scots pines. Parking for a couple of cars is available beside the stile.

To reach the quarry follow the lonnen until it bends right then strike up the left one of three paths which goes steeply uphill and parallel to the walled field on the left. This brings one in five minutes to a level area at the left-hand end of the quarry. A path to the right meets a network of paths beneath the quarry walls. The first rocks visible on the left from this path and through the trees is the *California Area*.

The quarry is council property and no access problems exist.

The climbs are described section by section from left to right.

California Area

This steep and rather featureless wall has an overlap just above head height. There used to be a climb here called *Yosemite Wall*. This has fallen down and a loose groove remains. Not quite up to its more famous namesake.

Ten metres right of California is:

Problem Wall

This is a rectangular wall about three metres high which provides some amusing problems.

1. **Gratir Pissage** 4b

A not very pleasant experience. Climb the left end of the wall using a thin crack for the left hand to pass a pink scar.

2. **White Snake** 5b

Climb the centre of the wall above the biggest overlap.

3. **Problem Wall** 5a

Climb the wall in the line of a downward pointing flake. Big layaways to finish.

4. **Pis En Lit** 4b

Climb the wall on a vertical sequence of layaways to finish just left of a small scots pine.

A number of traverses have been made and they represent the hardest problems on the wall. All 5b+.

Fifteen metres right of *Problem Wall* is:

Main Wall & Aretes Area

This is the most impressive part of the quarry. It is fairly open and dries quickly. The *Main Wall* is steep and seamed by a fine thin crack at its left end and some vaguer lines further right. A steep shallow corner marks the division of *Main Wall* from the *Aretes Area*. The *Aretes Area* consists of four corners with intervening walls and aretes. The second corner has a large pine tree on a ledge at mid-height, above and to the left of it. The rock on *Main Wall* is snappy and requires care, but it improves in the *Aretes Area*.

5. **Udder Crack** 3m 5a

Climb the thin cracks 2 metres from the left end of the wall, past a niche and up to a heathery finish.

6. **Sacred Cow** 6m VS *

(4c). Climb the continuous thin, vertical crack one metre right of *Udder Crack*.

7. **Holy Cow** 6m HVS

Start 2 metres right of the continuous finger crack.

(4c). Climb the scruffy right-slanting groove. Climb the groove and move left up a slanting overlap to a ledge. The wall above is climbed direct, via twin cracks. Very loose.

8. **What's Coming Up?** 7m HVS

Should be called What's Coming Off? Start one metre right of *Holy Cow*.

(4c). Climb directly up a flaky cracked wall until it is possible to step right onto a small ledge. Move right and climb the thin crack which deepens into a groove.

9. **Cow Pie** 6m VS

(4c). Climb the undercut shallow corner at the right end of *Main Wall*.

The crag to the right of *Main Wall* is a series of corners and aretes.

10. **The Arete** 5m VS

Start at the foot of the arete, 2 metres right of the corner of *Cow Pie*.

(4c). Climb the arete on good holds to an overhang. Above the overhang a slim groove on the right side of the arete is followed to the top.

11. **Deadend Groove** 6m VS

(4b). Climb the loose groove one metre right of *The Arete*.

12. **Jughandle** 7m VS *

Only one hard move and then only for dwarfs, but it's near the top. Start at a very thin crack in the middle of the fine wall right of *The Arete*.

(4c). Climb direct on good holds with an interesting move to reach a jug on the left at the top. Nasty landing!

A large scots pine grows on a ledge at mid-height and impinges on the next two routes.

13. **Aunt Aggie** 6m HS

(4c). Climb the groove below and left of the big scots pine. Move left at the tree and climb the cracked wall on the left.

14. **Scots Pine** 6m MS

(4a). Climb the next big groove to the pine. Finish up easy rock above.

15. **Pine Wall** 5m VS *

(5b). Climb the right wall of the groove rather precariously to gain a high finger crack. Finish up this.

16. **Dirty Dave** 5m VS *

(5c). Climb the fine arete to the right of *Pine Wall*. The start involves a leap or a technical layaway move. From the good hold finish up the arete above.

17. **Desperate Dan** 5m S

Start at the foot of the steep groove just right of *Dirty Dave*.

(4b). Climb the steep corner and ledges on the left and finish up a loose groove in the left-hand wall.

18. **Tom Thumb** 6m HVS *

A good problem. Start as for *Desperate Dan*.

(5b). Make a move up the groove and quit it almost immediately to move up and rightwards via a break on the right wall. Move round the rib to the right and follow the line of a thin crack to a good hold on the arete. Finish direct from the good hold.

19. **Prunesquallor** 5a/b-6a *

This low-level girdle of the *Main Wall* and *Aretes Area* provides an interesting excursion. The move around the arete of *Dirty Dave* is the crux.

A path now leads rightwards through a tangle of gorse and bramble passing under some ribs of poor quality rock with the odd problem. The path soon descends to a fine flat grassy "landing pad" below a steep wall of good rock. This is:

Pod Area

This is probably the most popular area, with excellent, though limited, bouldering, on the best rock in the quarry. A horizontal break - *The Pod* - is a central feature of the upper part of the face.

20. Heather 3m 5a

Start 2 metres right of the extreme left end of the face and climb the blunt arete direct, or alternatively, left, into a niche, reaching the top via a good hold on the left.

21. Gorse 3m 4c *

Start 1 metre right of *Heather*.

Climb the discontinuous thin vertical crack and finish to the left of *The Pod*.

22. Broom 4m 5b **

Start below the left-hand crack formed by a large jammed block to the right of *The Pod*.

Climb the left-hand crack to *The Pod*. Move slightly left and finish up the fine little crack above, on improving holds.

23. Bedknobs 5m 6a **

Climb the first crack of *Broom*, then climb the wall above to the top, moving rightwards.

24. Brambles 4m 4c

A route for connoisseurs!

Climb the crack to the right of the jammed block and move up the groove above and slightly right.

25. Bramble Arete 4m 4a

Climb the arete right of *Brambles*.

26. Prickles 4b-6a *

A very popular low-level traverse from the left side of the wall to the wedged block on the right. Many variations are possible. Good for training when done back and forth with a sack of rocks.

From *The Pod Area* it is possible, if you are stupid, to make a bee-line for the next area on the right and this could involve encounters with: trees, bracken, brambles, para-military survivalists, decomposing army rations, spent condoms, local activists (delete as necessary).

It is far easier to pick up the main track a short distance from and parallel to the rock face. Follow this rightwards until a tree-filled bay is reached. This bay contains quite a bit of rock, but it is very overgrown and soft. To the immediate right of the bay is the next area:

Twin Cracks Area

Twin Cracks Area is located to the right of the big tree-filled bay. A very big birch tree grows above a corner. The rock to the left of the birch is loose and unattractive, but to the right of the corner is a short, slabby wall with at right-angles to it, a longer, steeper wall with a barrier of overhangs low down (almost at ground level on the left). The front of this longer steeper wall has two slim parallel cracks running up the middle of it.

27. Ordinary Route 3m 5c

Climb the crack to the left of the corner with the birch above it.

28. Cracked Slab 5m 3b

Start at the arete right of the corner and just left of the roof-barrier.

Climb the arete via a good slanting crack on the left to a ledge. Finish up the slab on the left moving towards the big birch.

29. Fine Tuned 3m 5b

Climb the thin crack 2 metres right of the arete. Only use the crack.

30. Pot Black 3m 5c

Start 3 metres right of the arete. Climb the left-hand of the twin cracks.

31. Twin Cracks 4m 4b

Climb the twin cracks, surmounting the lip of the low roof being the crux.

32. The Vixen 4m 5a

Very close to the right-hand *Twin Crack*. Climb the left-facing layback crack avoiding the use of a convenient ledge on the right, below the roof.

33. The Ferret 4m 5a

Start one metre right of *The Vixen*. Pull out right onto a good sidepull and surmount the overlap to gain a protruding hold at the top of the wall.

34. The Polecat 3m 4b

Climb the faint break direct to the larch tree at the top of the wall.

35. The Fox 5m 5a

Climb the obvious layback crack, 4 metres right of *Twin Cracks*.

36. Upstairs 4c

Traverse from *Cracked Slab* to *The Fox* with hands above the roof.

37. Downstairs 6a

The same as *Upstairs*, but this time with hands below the roof.

To the right of the *Twin Cracks Wall* are three more short climbs on the ribs of rock emerging (just) from the tangle of vegetation. They are described by their perpetrators as "mountaineering routes, destined to become minor classics". These are:

38. Slabs 2 3m 3c

Climb the left edge of the slabs, 5 metres right of *The Fox*.

39. Slabs 1 3m 4c

The slab on the right.

40. Blackberries 5m 4a

Climb the crack just right of *The Slabs*.

From *Twin Cracks Area*, regain the path and continue eastwards to reach in about 50 metres another shallow pit containing an extensive wall:

Medusa Tree Area

Medusa Tree Area is at the extreme right-hand end of the quarry. It consists of a continuous wall of rock up to seven metres high. The extreme left wall is split by a steep sharp-edged crack finishing at the Medusa Tree. Right of this wall is a prow of rock which points leftwards and forms a chimney recess between itself and the actual rock face. To the right, the face is guarded by a barrier of overhangs at approximately head-height, the most obvious feature herabouts being a left-facing, bottomless layback crack; *Red Cherry*. The rock in this area leaves a lot to be desired, and, on this account, the climbing is serious, particularly for the inexperienced who should really give it a miss.

41. Stoneface 6m HS

Start 2 metres right of the extreme left-hand side of the wall.

(4b). Climb over the overlap and follow the lines of cracks to an overgrown finish.

42. Permian Face 6m E2

(5c). Climb the wall midway between *Stoneface* and *Medusa*.

43. Medusa 7m HS

One of the better climbs hereabouts.

(4b). Climb the left-facing flake crack which runs up the face to the right of the line of overlaps. Finish at the Medusa Tree.

44. The Gorgon 6m HS

(4b). Climb the crack to the right of *Medusa*. An elder adds to the complications.

45. Keaton Wall 6m VS

Start one metre right of *The Gorgon*.

(5a). Climb direct to the bulge and ascend the wall above, to the left of the yellow veneer. The holds are good but need careful handling.

46. The Mirror 5m VS

Start 2 metres right of *Keaton Wall*, below a slim crack leading up to the overlap which is cracked at this point.

(4c). Climb up to the overlap and ascend the cracked, shallow groove above to a loose finish.

47. Climb At Your Peril 6m VS

Start at the foot of the corner leading into the cave between the prow of rock and the actual rock face.

(4b). Climb into the cave and exit to the left. Take great care with rock.

48. Who Dares Might Win 6m HVS

Start at the foot of the arete of the prow of rock.

(4c). Mount good but loose layaways to reach and climb the middle of the front of the prow on loose holds.

49. Pegleg 6m HVS

Deserves a black spot. Start one metre right of the arete.

(4c). Climb the lower groove, and then the horrendous-looking upper groove, to finish at a tree.

50. Virgin 6m HVS

Start at the foot of a thin crack 4 metres right of *Pegleg*, just left of where the barrier roof commences at head-height.

(5b). Climb the crack exiting right, to finish below a huge scots pine.

51. Red Cherry 6m VS

Start 3 metres right of *The Virgin* below the prominent bottomless flake crack.

(5a). Climb the crack to a recess above which is a loose but easier finish.

52. The End 5m S

Start one metre left of the right-hand end of the overlap.

(4a). Reach up for a good hold and keep moving right on good holds to finish on a heathery ledge below a bent pine tree.

53. In Search Of The Chinaman 6a

A continuously interesting(?) low-level traverse. Start at *Medusa* and keep moving right to finish, strangely enough, at *The End*.

Bouldering Notes



Michael Kenyon bouldering at Cowrake (Ron Kenyon).

John Kettle has sent the following notes on bouldering at Cowrake: It seems to be a fairly well visited bouldering spot for locals now, with the Newton Rigg students 'discovering' it on an annual basis. Three areas have stayed popular year round, the *Pod Area*, *Twin Cracks Area* and the *Medusa Tree Area*. Everywhere else is in varying states of neglect. It's a worthwhile area for the low grade boulderer - here are the six best problems not in the existing guide. Since bouldering with a pad here is now the norm, V grades are given in addition to UK technical grades.

Twin Cracks Area

Mungo is Angry V2 5c **

Sit start in the hole under the roof at the left end of the area on flat jugs and good foot jams. Jam the diagonal break leftwards and finish back right. Very satisfying.

Mungo Direct V3 6a

Start as for '*Mungo..*', but lunge directly up the short wall above on crimps. Height dependent.

30. **Pot Black** V2 6a*

The puzzling sitting start to this existing problem.

Neanderthal Crack V3 6a**

The right hand *Twin Crack*. Lurch up the thin crack on fingertip jams, without use of the *Vixen Flake* on the right.

Medus Tree Area

Crashmat recommended.

Neneh Cherry V5 6b

Sustained and fingery. Start 2 metres left of *Red Cherry*.

From the break under the roof pull rightwards onto the wall left of *Red Cherry*. Now traverse left on smears and crimps to finish at the finger crack of *Virgin*.

Black Cherry V2 5c **

Start below a hanging scoop at the extreme right-hand end of the wall. Pull steeply into the grooved scoop, and traverse the hanging slab thinly left, to finish at a sandy groove. Jump off, or continue left into *Red Cherry*. A fine problem.

All the above were climbed and named by John Kettle since 2003, but first ascents unknown.

**Cowrake Quarry
FIRST ASCENTS**

1970s & 1980s

Cowrake has been an adventure area for the youngsters of Penrith for decades. Into this rich tradition of War and more occasionally Love-Games, the climber has blended. The quarry has served an important function as a training ground for the Penrith Mountain Rescue Team and members of this organisation were probably responsible for all of the climbs here. Local climbers however have added less-likely problems and variations on countless, sociable evening training stints.

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