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O.S. Sheet 85

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NORTH CUMBRIA LIMESTONE

Head End Quarry

by Stewart Wilson



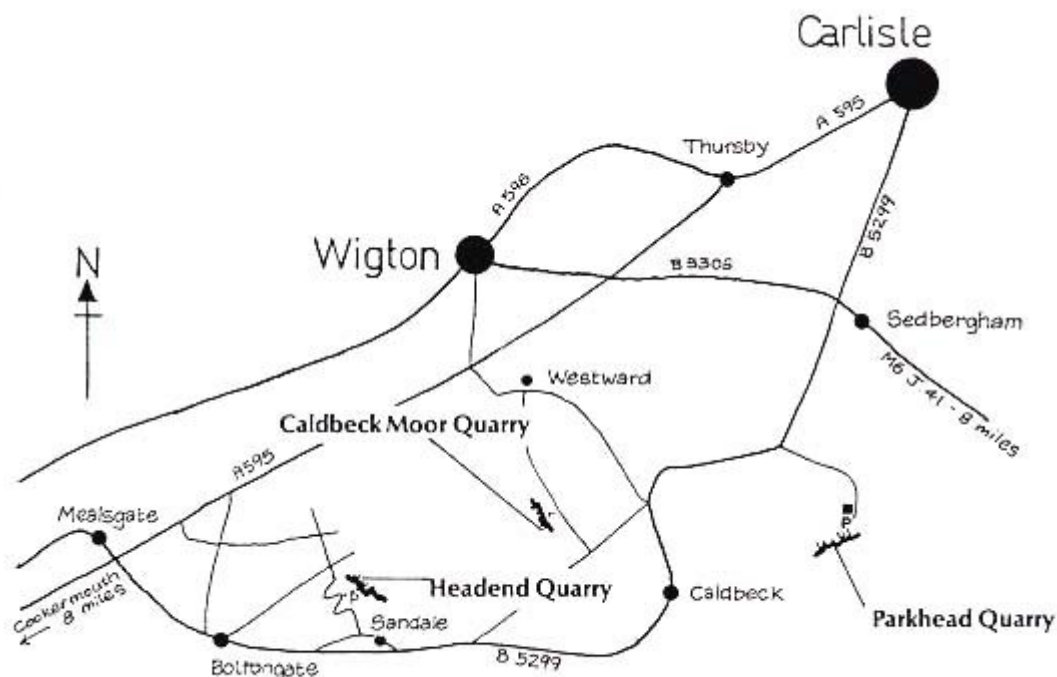
**FELL and ROCK
CLIMBING CLUB**
of the
English Lake District

This crag will be included in the next FRCC Eastern Craggs guide (due 2008)

Whilst *Head End Quarry* itself does not have much of an outlook, the top of the climbs command extensive views across the Solway Firth in one direction, and in the other, a fine aspect of Skiddaw and the Northern Fells. The quarry is a pleasant spot, favoured by picknickers, kite fliers and groups under instruction for whom it is eminently suited being mainly low-grade climbing.

Facing south and catching all available sunshine (and wind), these faces of Carboniferous limestone dry very quickly and provide a good winter venue.

The quarry is about 40 metres long, 10 metres high and has good landings. The rock is generally sound, but care should be taken with a rather flaky stratum at the top. The popularity of the crag, particularly with beginners has meant that holds are rather polished. The climbs tend to be on steep slabs and walls and holds are generally positive. Stakes provide anchorage at the top.



Approaches & Access

The quarry is near the summit of Catlands Hill, Spot Height 304 m. It is two miles NNE of Ireby and six miles S of Wigton. Follow the B5299 from Caldbeck towards Boltongate. About one and a half miles before Boltongate turn right for Sandale. Beyond Sandale on an ascending road, the quarry entrance will be seen on the right just before the road bends sharply to drop down the other side of the hill.

There appear to be no access problems, but it is suggested that vehicles are driven into the quarry to avoid congestion on the narrow lane.

Barry Clarke has recently checked all the routes here and suggests the grades and comments in brackets.

The climbs are described from left to right, section by section and are easily located.

West End Wall

Identified by three steps in its left-hand arete and a chockstone corner crack at its junction with *Suicide Wall*.

1. **Novices' Route** 8m M

Start just right of the arete. Climb an easy crack, moving left to the first step or, more difficult, climb direct to the top. (VD ignore the info about left or direct).

2. **Catlands Wall** 8m HS

Climb the wall to the right of *Novices' Route*. (* VS 4c. More properly called Arthur's Wall).

3. **West End Groove** 8m HD *

A good route and popular.

Start at the shallow cracked groove. Climb the crack and groove on good holds until a step right can be made on smaller polished holds to gain the top. (* VD).

4. **West End Direct** 8m VD *

Start immediately right of the last climb. Climb the steep face on small, worn holds. (S 4a. Past the rock scar).

5. **Dodgy Neck** 8m S

Interesting rock and moves.

Start 2 metres right of *West End Direct* at a small corner. Climb onto a pedestal ledge on the left then climb the face direct to finish on some unusual calcite holds. (VS 4c. Serious).

6. **Diogenes** 8m S

A good companion to the last climb.

Start as for *Dodgy Neck*. Climb directly up the vertical cracks to finish up the middle of the fluted, top block. (S 4b).

7. **Controlled Gurning** 8m VS

A pleasant and thought-provoking climb.

(5a). Start immediately left of *Headend Chimney* below a steep wall. Climb the wall up to and over a bulge. (Grade OK).

8. **Headend Chimney** 8m HD

More a crack than a chimney and nicely insecure.

Start at the crack at the junction of *West End* and *Suicide Walls*. Climb the crack awkwardly, but with good jams. (MS. A true nightmare experience!).

Suicide Wall

A steep wall of excellent rock bounded on its right by an arete of protruding blocks; *Birds Nest Direct*.

9. **Kamikaze** 8m VS *

A fingery exercise. Start immediately right of *Headend Chimney*.

(4c). Climb the wall direct. (HVS 5a. Well-named, bold moves with suspect holds).

10. **Nippo Crack** 8m HS *

Start below a crack and groove, one metre right of the last climb.

(4a). Climb this left-slanting break with a definite crux. Finish near *Kamikazi Wall*. (* VS 4c).

11. Letter-Box Direct 8m S *

Start as for *Nippo Groove*.

Follow cracks diagonally rightwards to finish directly up the wall above the *Letter-Box*. (* HS 4b).

12. Letter-Box 8m MS **

Start a metre left of the arete. Climb onto a slot-like ledge; the *Letter-Box*. Follow good holds to finish up two, very thin cracks. (MVS 4b. The block supporting the letter box has gone).

12a. Divine Wind VS *

(4c). Fine climbing up the non-independent line just right of *Letter Box Direct*.

13. Bird's Nest Direct 7m D *

Follow the blocky, right-hand arete of *Suicide Wall* on good holds to below a steep crack. Climb this or move right to an awkward mantelshelf finish. (Grade and star OK).

Summit Face

The most impressive face, consisting of a steep, narrow pillar with a bulging finish. Further right the face has a footledge at half-height and is less steep at the top.

14. Bilberry 10m S

Climb the grassy crack just right of *Bird's Nest Direct*. Awkward. (Downgrade to VD).

15. Bloodhound 10m HVS

Start directly below the crack which cuts through the left-hand side of the top bulge of the pillar.

(5b). Climb directly to the crack with ease and ascend the crack with considerably less. (Fine, and grade OK, worth two stars).

16. Crusthound 10m E1 *

The hardest climb in the quarry and only just warranting its grade. Start below the prominent crack in the centre of the bulge.

(5b). Climb up to the crack with difficulty and climb it with greater lack of ease to the top. (Poor climbing, with the interest reserved for the lunge for the top! HVS 5a if you are tall, E1 5c if small!).

17. Soap Gut 10m S

Start in a slight corner just right of the bulging pillar which provides the two previous climbs. Climb the corner and crack above.

Note: The overhanging crack at the top is HS (4a) not S (Graham Uney) Note: Severe seems about right, the top didn't feel HS 4a as has been suggested (Trevor Langhorne) (Grade OK).

18. Snail Wall 10m S

Start below the obvious white wall at a corner.

Climb the corner and white wall to gain a good ledge. Finish up the finger wide flake crack above. Care with rock! (S 4a. Barely independent).

18a. Fossil Arete 10m VS.

(4c). The cracked grey wall with the steep arete above, in between *Snail Wall* and *Devil's Kneecap*, is climbed on the right of the arete, using this for the left hand.

Graham Uney, 4th October 2004

Almost certainly done before.

Note: felt very mild for VS 4c, HS 4a? (Trevor Langhorne) (* HS 4a. If arete climbed on its right-hand side. VS 4c if bulge at half height is climbed direct!)

19. Devil's Kneecap 10m VD *

Steep and quite hard for the grade initially. Start about 2 metres right of *Snail Wall*.

Climb the steep wall by means of widely-spaced but good holds to the obvious ledge. Finish up the pleasant wall above. (S 4a. Bold start).

Mollusc VS

(4c). The chest-height roof and rib direct, one metre right of *Devil's Kneecap*.

Crystal Wall

This is the attractive steep slab, characterised by excellent rock, with, in places, a veneer of calcite which gives the wall some good but fragile holds and its name.

20. **Blah** 8m S

Start below the twin cracks which run up to a bulge at the left end of the wall.

Climb the cracks until a jam and a long reach leads to an awkward finish. (S 4b. slightly harder due to loss of half of top block!).

Barry Clarke notes that the next five routes are almost mini-classics.

21. **Crystal Cruise** 8m HS *

Start midway between Blah and the fine thin central crack.

(4b). Gain and climb the slab direct. (* VS 4c)

22. **Crystal Wall Direct** 8m MS **

Perhaps the best climb on the crag. Start below the fine thin crack in the centre of the slab.

Follow the crack on good holds to a long reach for the top break. Pull over the top with care. (** MS 4a)

23. **Dids** 8m HS *

(4b). Ascend the wall just right of the *Direct*. (* VS 5a. Unfortunately the crack of CWD is always in reach!).

24. **W.A.C.** 8m MVS *

A sustained climb with a difficult start. Start about one metre left of the bounding arete of *Crystal Wall*. (4b). Climb the overlap on small holds. Delicate climbing follows up a shallow scoop. Move right onto the prow and finish with care.

Note: Feels very hard for MVS (4b), probably VS (5a). (Graham Uney) Note: agree with comment that VS 5a might be more appropriate (Trevor Langhorne) (** VS 5a. It is now usual to finish direct).

25. **The Butcher's Dog** 8m MVS **

(4c). Climb the arete direct to the top.

Note: felt hard for MVS 4c, similar grade to WAC but more sustained (Trevor Langhorne) (** VS 5a. The super direct slippery start is 5b!).

Terrace Wall

The final section. This wall of good rock is unfortunately split by a grassy ledge at half-height.

26. **Nut Smasher Crack** 8m VD

The name is awful, the climb worse!

Climb directly up the crack which forms the angle between *Crystal* and *Terrace Wall*. Swing your nuts behind you. (* VD and rather good)>

27. **Terrace Stairway** 8m M *

A good little climb with a fair degree of interest. Start below a crack just right of the last climb. Climb the crack to the terrace, then follow the interesting left-slanting staircase to the top. (Grade OK, often used as a descent).

27a. **Terraza** S

(4b). The ledgy wall between *Terrace Stairway* and *Piggy Malone* to the terrace. Followed by a stiff pull up the tiny groove on the left. The steep wall just right gives a 5a finish.

28. **Piggy Malone** 8m D

Start at the centre of **Terrace Wall** between two, slanting cracks. Climb the steep face and mantelshelf onto the terrace. The left-slanting scoop, awkward to start, is followed to the top. (Grade ok if cracks used. HS 4b otherwise).

29. **Bobtail** 8m D

This route for rabbits follows the easiest line up the wall right of *Piggy*. (Grade OK, very pleasant, worth a star).

30. Heads Or Tails?

An amusing traverse of the crag from left to right, starting at *Novices' Route* and finishing up *W.A.C. Suicide Wall* and *Crystal Wall* are the most interesting and difficult sections.

Head End Quarry
FIRST ASCENTS

1970s	The quarry has a long history of useage by groups and individuals and it is strange that it is not more widely known. It was first documented in a small guide produced by the Border Bothies Association and then in the 1981 edition of the Rock Climbers' Guide to the North of England. The majority of the later routes were the work of Ron Kenyon or Stew Wilson.		
2004	Oct	4 Fossil Arete	Graham Uney

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