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EDEN VALLEY

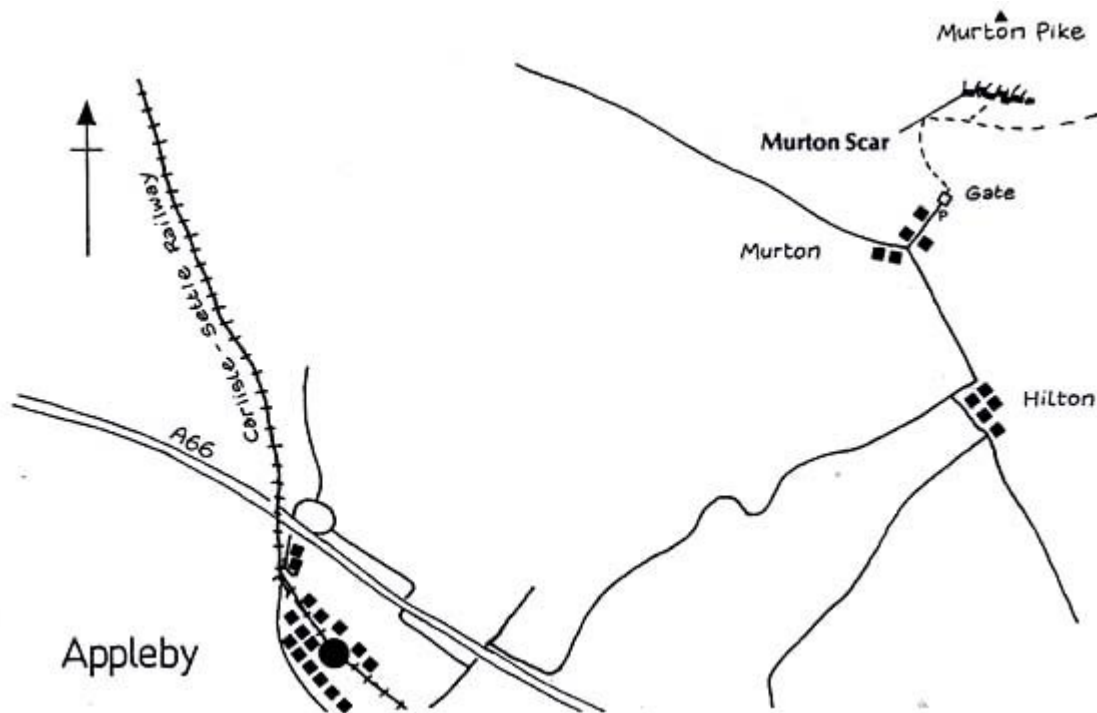
Murton Scar

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

by **Stewart Wilson**

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

Perched high on the Southern slopes of Murton Pike, the limestone crag of *Murton Scar* occupies a prominent position overlooking the Upper Eden Valley. The crag takes the form of a single, steep wall banded by overhangs and offering few easy options. Although there are some worthwhile lower-grade climbs, *Murton* will appeal more to the lover of technical limestone. Facing south, the crag is exposed to the prevailing winds but also catches the sun and dries quickly after rain. The rock is sound and compact on the lower part of the crag but caution is necessary higher up where the rock is more broken. Several of the harder climbs contain in-situ pegs and threads. The ground below the crag falls away steeply so belays are advisable.



Approaches & Access

Murton village is easily reached from the A66 near Appleby. Follow signs for Hilton and Murton. After passing Hilton the road enters Murton and crosses a bridge over the beck. Immediately beyond this, turn right and park on the grass near the cottage at the end of the lane. A gate allows access to the open fell and a recently constructed track can be followed first left and then right as it cuts across the flank of Murton Pike. A more pleasant, direct route is to follow the obvious tracks running through the bracken to reach the made-up track below the crag. Steep grass leads to the foot of the buttress.

Descents can be made at either end of the face.

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

The crag can be conveniently divided into three distinct sections: *Left Wall*; *Main Overhang Section* and

*Right Wall.***Left Wall**

This consists of a steep, smooth wall of excellent rock topped by a continuous band of small roofs, with more broken rock above. This wall terminates on the right where a steep, crack/groove abuts against the bulging buttress at the left-hand side of the *Main Overhang* area.

The left-hand end of *Left Wall* is split by two slim cracks. The second one curves leftwards to meet the roof.

1. Earl Street 15m E3 **

Start below the second crack which curves leftwards.

(6a). Climb the thin crack, passing an 'in situ' ring peg. Continue in this line to the roof. Traverse right for a couple of metres until a break in the overhang, containing a wedged block is reached. Surmount the roof and finish up easier grooves above.

2. Earl Street Direct 15m E3

Start below a thin crack just right of *Earl Street*.

(5c). Climb this crack direct to the good foothold on *All Along The Watch Tower*. Climb direct to the roof and surmount it just to the right of the wedged block. Above the roof, step left and finish as for *Earl Street*.

3. All Along The Watch Tower 16m E3 ***

A superb line with continuously interesting climbing. Start 3 metres right of *Earl Street* at the foot of the question mark-shaped curving flake.

(6a). Climb the flake passing an 'in situ' thread runner at 5 metres. Step left to a good foothold. Make a difficult pull up and right, and pull through the roof 2 metres right of the break containing the block (*Earl Street*). Finish up a deep groove which contains a flake-edged block.

4. The Haunted Smear 15m E3 *

Start below the centre of the steep, smooth wall just right of the curving flake of *All Along The Watch Tower*.

(6b). Climb the centre of the smooth wall, passing an 'in situ' peg runner and move slightly right to an 'in situ' thread, to a junction with *Morgan's Lane* which comes in from the right. Move left to enter a groove which leads up to a metre wide roof above. Climb this at its centre on excellent jugs and finish up easier rock.

5. Morgan's Lane 16m E3 ***

Start below a 2 metre high, thin crack on the right of *The Haunted Smear* wall.

(5c). Climb this short crack and step right into a little, grassy recess. Climb up and leftwards on underclings, passing a couple of 'in situ' threads to the junction with *The Haunted Smear*. Move left to enter a groove which leads more easily to a one metre roof above. Climb this at its centre to good jugs. Climb more easily to the top.

6. Mind Over Matter 15m HVS **

The "steep, unclimbed groove" of the 1981 guide. Start below a faint crackline which opens into a square recessed groove to the left of the overhanging left buttress of *Main Overhang Section*.

(5a). Climb the faint crackline just right of *Morgan's Lane*, passing a small thread runner at 4 metres. Continue via tricky moves to enter the niche which contains a sapling. Climb up and out of the niche, following the groove to exit right to easier rock and the top.

Main Overhang Section

This extends rightwards from the groove of *Mind Over Matter* to a deep chimney/gully containing loose-looking blocks which provides the line of *Keach*. The *Main Overhang* is imposing and provides a difficult exit to routes in the centre of the section.

7. Sunshine Super Sal 15m E1 ***

One of the original routes, now a magnificent free climb. Start 2 metres right of *Mind Over Matter* at a short one metre high, blunt spike of rock below a thin crackline.

(5b). Climb the thin crackline, taking care with the semi-detached finger of rock in the lower part. At a

downward pointing spike, step right under the bulge to move up to a good ledge below the *Main Roof*. A good crack leads diagonally leftwards following a sensational traverse line through the roof. After a couple of metres climb directly up the vertical continuation crack in the headwall. Easy ledges lead to the top.

8. **Body Rock** 15m E3 *

This route accepts the challenge of the *Main Overhang*. Start one metre right of *Sunshine Super Sal* below a faint groove in the crozzly wall directly below the *Main Overhang*.

(5c). Climb the slim groove and wall to below the major break in the overhang. Climb the break through the overhang into a slim groove above which has a protruding block in it. Pass an 'in-situ' thread runner on the left. Finish easily above.

9. **Deadend Groove** 17m VS

Start below a slim groove one metre right of *Body Rock*.

(4c). Climb the obvious slim groove on reasonable holds until the roof is reached. Traverse right below the roof for about four metres to reach the continuation, steep, cracked corner above the block-filled chimney of *Keach*. Finish up this.

10. **Keach** 15m VS

Start at the foot of the open, block-filled chimney/gully at the right-hand end of the *Main Overhang Section*.

(4c). Climb the steep gully to a ledge. Finish up the steep, cracked corner above. Care with rock and protection.

Right Wall

The *Right Wall* is generally less-steep than the other two sections. It consists of two steep corners on the left-hand side with between them a tremendous, steep buttress, topped by a fine prow. Further right, the crag is more slabby and swings around and up the hillside to terminate in a short-steep buttress: *The Egg*.

11. **Bitter Fingers** 15m VS

Start 2 metres right of *Keach* at the foot of the next obvious, shallow corner.

(4c). Climb the shallow corner to a grassy ledge above which is a patch of grey, smooth rock. Move directly up to another ledge and climb the twin, cracks above to the top.

12. **Red Hot Spankers** 16m E3 **

Start below the middle of a very steep, narrow, white wall just right of *Bitter Fingers*. This wall has an 'in situ' thread runner at mid-height. A bold climb!

(5c). Climb the wall direct past the thread runner. Finish by pulling leftwards over the prow which is left of the finish of *Murton Moggy*.

13. **Murton Moggy** 16m VS **

At the upper end of the VS grade. Start below the next obvious line where a white cone of rock, cracked on either side leads up to a pronounced groove.

(4c). Climb the left side of the cone of rock into the groove above which is followed to a ledge below a bulge. The bulge is overcome by means of a left-trending crackline. Finish up easier ledges above.

Five metres right of *Murton Moggy* is a left-slanting crackline at the base of which is a downward-pointing, small nose of rock. The next two climbs start at the foot of this crackline.

14. **Catlike Tread** 15m MVS

Follow the left-slanting crackline to some small saplings. Exit above and rightwards on loose rock.

15. **Meal Ticket** 15m VS

Start below the downward-pointing tongue of rock as for *Catlike Tread*.

(4b). Move up rightwards to ascend a fine, blunt rib leading to a prominent, narrow corner-groove. Ascend this with difficulty to ledges and the top.

The Egg

The next feature of note is *The Egg*, a prominent short, steep buttress of excellent rock on the right end

of the crag, commencing at half-height.

16. Brown Dirt Cowboy 12m HS

Climb the corner to the left of *The Egg* either in the corner or via its left wall.

17. Felix 12m MVS *

A good cat whose bark would appear to be worse than its bite.

(4b). Climb up to below the corner of *Brown Dirt Cowboy* then move right onto *The Egg* to follow a steep, crack to the top.

18. Bigus Dickus 12m VS 4c

Start below the front face of *The Egg*, to the right of *Felix*.

(4c). Climb the wall direct, passing an overhang at mid-height.

19. Incontinentia Buttocks 12m E3 *

Start below the steep crack on the arete of *The Egg*.

(5c). Climb the steep crack on the arete direct on excellent rock.

20. Wilkes's Wander 12m HS

Start as for *Incontinentia Buttocks*, below the arete of *The Egg*. Climb the short slab to a thin horizontal break. Swing around onto the right side of the arete and climb the crack to the top.

Dave Upton, Wendy Graham, Chris Peckham, 8th December 2005

Murton Scar FIRST ASCENTS

1970s & 1980s

The first records of climbing on Murton Scar, date back to November 1975 when Ron Kenyon and members of the Eden Valley club visited the crag. In this period the most notable ascent was Kenyon's Murton Moggy. The deep gully of the crag was climbed by Alan Stark and named Keach.

The crag was not very popular because the 'lines' were generally steep and intimidating and did not always provide natural protection. In addition the upper part of the face was composed of easier rock and the 'real meat' of the routes involved only twelve metres of climbing.

On 24th April 1976, Ronnie returned with Sally Dixon and Ray Parker and the trio had a very productive day, climbing Meal Ticket, Brown Dirt Cowboy and Felix. Ron then turned his attention to the fine central line of the Main Overhang Section and after a struggle, finished the line, calling it Sunshine Super Sal, but unfortunately had to resort to using aid from two nuts in the upper crack.

The next real phase of development involved Robin Curley, Chris Thwaites and Noel Stansfield, all from Appleby. In the Summer of 1983 they concentrated their efforts on Murton Scar producing a fine collection of difficult climbs. Robin Curley climbed Sunshine Super Sal completely free and then went on to produce Morgan's Lane. Chris Thwaites climbed the fine unclimbed groove to the left of Sunshine Super Sal naming it Mind Over Matter. The fine left-curving line on the Left Wall provided Thwaites with All Along The Watchtower; one of the best climbs on the crag. Curley inspected the blank wall to the left of this and after placing a peg and thread runner, led The Haunted Smear which involved some extremely hard climbing on superb rock. Noel Stansfield contributed his Bigus Dickus and joined Curley in Incontinentia Buttocks.

The clean, tall prow to the left of Murton Moggy could not escape the attention of Curley and eventually, this provided a hard and bold lead named Red Hot Spankers.

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