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# EDEN VALLEY

## The Otterstones



**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**

*The Otterstones* are situated on the south side of the River Leith, five miles south of Penrith. This small limestone crag faces north in a sheltered valley. It is never likely to be very popular, but the situation, and some good low-grade routes on reasonable rock, make it worth an evening visit. *The Otterstones* are just upstream of the crag and consist of a jumble of immense blocks of rock. This was a favourite beauty spot at the turn of the century. The crags consist of a series of walls and corners up to nine metres high. When the climbs were first made, the crag was given a good clean-up but in the intervening years, grass has recolonised the place, particularly the finishes. Vegetation however is not too great a problem, and regular use should see the climbs become considerably cleaner. There remains much scope for development.

### Approaches & Access

Follow the A6 South from Penrith for about four miles. Immediately before the A6 crosses the M6, turn left and follow the minor road, via a sweeping bend, towards Melkinthorpe. The road passes under the railway and within a few hundred metres, a right turn is taken leading to Great Strickland. After about half a mile, a bridge crosses the River Leith, and cars can be parked just beyond, in an overgrown gateway on the right. To reach the crag, return to the bridge, and enter the wood on the south side of the downstream parapet. Follow the wooded slopes above the river, until a mossy vegetated jumble of huge blocks - *The Otterstones*- are reached on the opposite bank. To view *The Otterstones*, it is necessary to cross to the north bank. Continue downstream until the escarpment on the south bank is reached in a further five minutes. This is identified by a fine wall behind a pile of large blocks: *Main Wall*. Time from the bridge is about ten minutes, as the valley sides are strewn with the debris of timber extracting operations

The woods are private but there are no problems with access, provided the route of approach described is followed and group size is limited. On no account should a shorter route be taken through the field to the south. **Do not take dogs to the crag as ground nesting birds will be disturbed.**

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

### Buttress 1

The extreme left-hand buttress. Steep or overhanging rock terminating on the right at a big corner with a cave-recess in it.

#### 1. **Bad Manners** 6m HS

Start 5 metres left of the corner with the cave at half-height.

(4b). Climb onto the pedestal and follow the face to the left of a dirty crackline. Move left to finish at some ash saplings.

### Buttress 2

This is bigger than *Buttress 1*. It extends rightwards from the corner with the cave at half-height and finishes on the right some metres beyond an obvious stepped arete, at a point where a huge block fills the bottom-half of what would be a big corner.

#### 2. **Bad Mouth** 7m HVS

Start 2 metres right of the corner with the cave at half-height at a slight overlap left of the undercut arete.

(5a). Climb up to the right of the small overlap to a broken area of rock above, near a hole. The face above is climbed via a shallow line of overlaps leading left to a horizontal break. Move left and finish at a notch at the top

### 3. **The Gob** 7m VS

Start at the foot of the undercut arete right of the corner with the cave at half-height.

(4c). Climb the undercut arete to a good ledge; *The Step*. Follow the arete above on its left-hand side.

### 4. **Lutra** 7m VS \*

A good climb which is being masked by an ivy mass. Start 3 metres right of the arete at a small left-facing corner/groove.

(4c). Climb the corner until a prominent, little hole is reached. Move right onto the Ivy-masked ledge then climb the wall above bearing left to finish

To the right of the corner with the huge block filling its bottom half is:

## Main Wall

*Main Wall* takes the form of two steep walls on either side of the main corner of the crag. The right-hand wall has a pile of large blocks in front of it.

### 5. **Summer Bird** 9m HS \*

Steep climbing on excellent rock. Start from behind an ash tree, 2 metres left of the main corner.

(4a). Climb the wall to the right-end of a long narrow ledge. The steep upper wall has good holds and this provides a pleasant finish.

### 6. **Matty's Corner** 8m D

Climb the corner on the outside. Much better than it looks.

### 7. **In Through The Out Door** 9m HVS \*\*

An excellent steep wall climb with good protection. Start 2 metres right of *Matty's Corner* below a very thin crack.

(5b). Climb the line of the very thin crack and finish up the steepest part of the face directly above, passing a horizontal break.

### 8. **Fool In The Rain** 9m HVD

Start at a steep crack below and right of an elm tree growing on a ledge on the face.

Climb the cracked wall passing the tree to gain and climb the wider crack above. An interesting route.

### 9. **Crayfish** 9m S

Start 2 metres left of the right-hand arete of the wall, and just left of the undercut base.

Climb the wall direct to reach the left-hand end of a ledge. Steep climbing up and leftwards leads to better holds and the top.

### 10. **Amber** 9m S

Start just right of the right-hand arete of *Main Wall*.

Move leftwards onto the arete and gain a small ledge. Continue to a bigger ledge. The arete above is climbed, mainly on the left, to a good tree at the top.

To the right of the arete, the base of the crag consists of a complex of large blocks forming, at half-height, a good ledge below a square-cut chimney and some ribs to the right. To the right of this is the final section:

## Plongeur Section

*Plongeur Section* consists of a steep corner crack with a slabby left wall and a much steeper undercut right-hand wall which is split by a hand crack above a small sycamore growing out of the face.

### 11. **Gelert** 9m S \*

Better rock than appearances suggest. A very pleasant climb - when clean! Start below the centre of the left-hand wall.

Climb steeply on good holds until the angle eases. The wall is climbed moving slightly leftwards to finish at a break, just right of a dead tree.

**12. The Plongeur** 9m MVS \*

Steep climbing on good holds with good protection. Start 4 metres right of the corner in the middle of the right-hand wall at a right-facing corner.

(4b). Climb the short right-facing corner to a ledge just left of a sycamore sapling. Follow the twisting vertical crack to finish.

**The Otterstones  
FIRST ASCENTS**

1980s

The crags were discovered by Stew Wilson in the early 1980's. Stew, Ron Kenyon and Paul Carling visited the crags several times resulting in the present routes.

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