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O.S. Sheet 86

G.R. NY 642 697

## BORDER

# Spadeadam Crag

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

by **Stewart Wilson**

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

Spadeadam Crag is a pleasant south-facing sandstone outcrop in a delightfully remote, but easily accessible position in the Irthing Gorge, about 4 miles from Greenhead on the main A69 Newcastle to Carlisle road. It lies just within the county boundary of Cumbria.

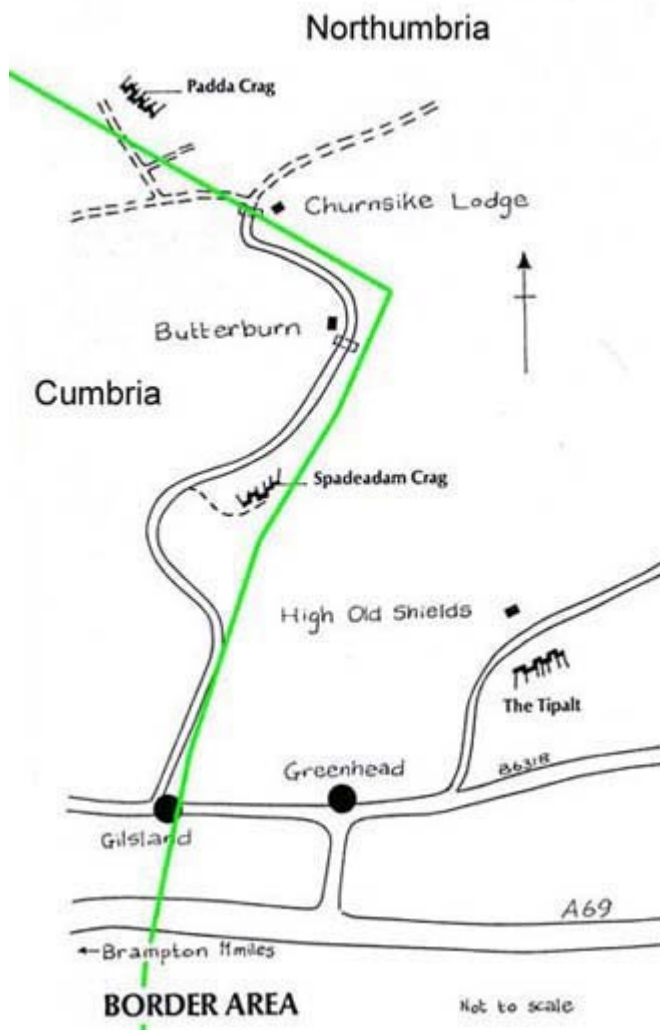
The crag consists of two buttresses of good quality fell sandstone. The outlook over the Irthing Gorge is fine. Facing south, the crag dries very quickly and catches all the available sun. Climbs tend to be steep and belays at the top can be arranged on angle irons which have been placed (Note that the new fence on the top of the left hand buttress prevents access to the belay stake but the posts are a good alternative.) There are dozens of other crags upstream and downstream, some of which have provided, as yet, too few routes to make recording them worthwhile.

### Approaches & Access

The crag is on open moorland owned by the Ministry of Defence who let it out to farming and forestry and access is not a problem.

From the A69, leave the dual carriageway which now by-passes Greenhead, and go into the village. Follow signs to Gilsland and from there to Spadeadam and Butterburn. At the top of the hill leading out of Gilsland are M.O.D. signs and a restricted entry road. Turn right just before this onto a road signed as a "no through road". Follow it for less than a mile to just after crossing a small bridge, a large layby on the right provides ample parking. Follow a marshy track which takes a diagonal line away from the road heading down to the river. Where it forks at a fence corner, take the left branch. The crag can be seen just beyond a stone building with a flat concrete roof. Where the track forks again, take the right branch down to this building and descend rough steps to another building by the side of the river. The crag is now reached by ascending a grassy slope on the far side of the small side valley that guards direct access to the rocks. Just downstream of here is a fine

waterfall, Crammel Linn, which is well worth a visit.



The climbs are described from left to right, starting with those on *Left-Hand Buttress*, and then those on *Right-Hand Buttress*, 40 metres further right.

**Left-Hand Buttress**

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### Spadeadam Crag Left-Hand Buttress

#### 1. **Snakelet** 7m VS

The extreme left of the buttress has a cracked overlap at the top.  
(5a). Climb the bulging wall and finish direct over the overlap.

#### 2. **Back and Biting** 8m HVS \*\*

Start just right of *Snakelet*, below a steep scooped slab.

(5a). Make a hard move to gain the slab (chockstone on right). Finish direct, or step left at the top (easier).

Very top end for the grade (CK, SR). Thought to be HVS (5) by the first ascensionist.

#### 3. **Viper** 8m HS

Climb the corner 3 metres right of the left end of the buttress. Surmounting a block at mid-height provides the crux.

#### 4. **Serpent** 8m HS

Start just right of *Viper*. Climb to a large flake. Ascend this and continue to the top. More like VS 4c, but a good route, worth a star? (SR, CK). We agree the comments regarding Serpent (felt VS 4c and must be at least MVS 4b). Definitely a star, maybe 2 (WW, JMcR).

#### 5. **The Mamba** 8m S

In the centre of the buttress is a broken section of rock. Start to the left of this below a curving corner. Climb the corner passing a tree at mid-height.

#### 6. **Snake Charmer** 8m HS

Start at the foot of an easy-looking rib. Climb the easy-looking rib, right of the corner of *Mamba*, to finish at a tree. Graded HS (4a) by first ascensionist.

#### 7. **Wiley Sike** 8m MS

Start just right of the easy-looking rib, below a pedestal ledge, which gives access to a face broken by three cracks.

Gain the pedestal, and either finish straight up the left-hand crack, or, better, move out right to the right-hand crack, and finish on the fine arete.

Worth a star (SR). Definitely a star but maybe only V Diff as described. This route also seems like two routes welded into one. The described start leads directly to the left crack, a more direct start below the centre crack and arete would seem practical. (WW, JMcR)

The right side of *Left-Hand Buttress* has overlaps at mid-height.

#### **Sidewinder** 8m VS \*

A good quick-drying eliminate on excellent rock.

(5a). Follow the crack of *Ananconda* until a strenuous hand-traverse can be made out left onto the nose. Pull up to a ledge, and follow the right-hand side of the arete to an easier finish.

C King, SJH Reid, 4th January 2006

#### 8. **Anaconda** 8m VS

(4c). Climb the obvious wide crack just right of a jutting arete.

#### 9. **Venom** 10m E3 \*\*

A strenuous but pleasing line. Start 3 metres right of *Anaconda* below an obvious flake under the roof. (5c). Climb direct to the flake. Jam round its left-hand side and pull onto the wall above. Climb the wall direct.

#### 10. **Hissing Sid Vicious** 10m E1 \*

Immediately right of **Venom**, the wall is split by parallel twin cracks.

(5b). Climb these to the roof, pull through onto the wall above and left to finish at some jutting blocks.

#### 11. **Krait** 9m MVS

Start at the right-hand end of the overhanging wall.

(4b). Gain a sloping ledge and climb up to an overhang which is passed on the left. Move back right, and, after a heathery struggle, gain the top.

#### 12. **Black Adder** 9m E1 \*



Will Walker on **Wiley Sike** (MS)  
(All photos: John McRoberts - Will Walker Coll.)

(5c). Climb the clean rib immediately right of the crack of *Krait*. The start is undercut and difficult.

### 13. **Slow Worm** 9m HS

Start below a tree at the right-hand end of this buttress.

(4c/5a). Either climb a short slanting corner on the right to reach the tree, or, harder, climb a steep cracked corner on the left to reach the same ledge. Follow a groove above to the top.

## Right-Hand Buttress

*Right-Hand Buttress* is 50 metres right of *Left-Hand Buttress* and has a conspicuous overhanging arete.

### Indian Rope Trick 8m VS \*

An indifferent start leads to a spectacularly positioned finish. Start on the left side of the buttress, to the left of the arete.

(4c). Gain a footledge at the foot of a short groove, and climb the groove to a bilberry ledge. Move up right (crucial Friend in pocket) and hand-traverse rightwards to the arete. Finish up the steep wall on jugs.

SJH Reid, C King, 4th January 2006

### 14. **Backstreet Crawler** 10m E3 \*\*\*

The overhanging arete. Start just left of the arete.

(5b). Climb the short groove, then hand-traverse right onto the edge. Continue direct on large well-spaced holds. A selection of Friends is useful.

### 15. **Cobra** 9m HS

Climb the crack and V-groove just right of the overhanging arete. Take care with blocks at the top of the groove.

## Spadeadam Crag FIRST ASCENTS

1970s & 1980s	The crag was "discovered" and climbed on by Phil Hope, Stew Wilson and friends in the late 1970s. Most of the routes in the 1981 guide were by this team. No further activity was seen here until a visit by Karl Lunt and Andy Williamson in April 1988 resulted in the number of routes being doubled and some fine hard problems resulting.			
1988	Apr	1	Back and Biting	Karl Lunt, John Stringfellow
1988	Apr	6	Snakelet	Karl Lunt (solo)
1988	Apr	6	Snake Charmer	Karl Lunt (solo)
1988	Apr	6	Venom	Karl Lunt, Andy Williamson
1988	Apr	6	Hissing Sid Vicious	Karl Lunt, Andy Williamson
1988	Apr	6	Black Adder	Karl Lunt, Andy Williamson
1988	Apr	6	Backstreet Crawler	Karl Lunt, Andy Williamson
2006	Jan	4	Sidewinder	C King, SJH Reid
2006	Jan	4	Indian Rope Trick	SJH Reid, C King



View from **Spadeadam Crag**  
(just downstream are some spectacular falls)

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