



Goblin Combe

The Climbs of Goblin Combe, North Somerset

Martin Crocker

Goblin Combe

A guide to the climbs of Goblin Combe, North Somerset

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Front cover: Jon Bassindale making the first ascent of *Modern Times*, Owl Rock Pic: Matt Ward

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Acknowledgements

Many thanks to photographers: Matt Ward, Colin Knowles, Nigel Coe, and Jonathan Crocker. A huge hug goes to original Goblin activist and guidebook writer Keith Williams who provided pearls of history and fond memories. Comments on first ascents were sought from Chris King, Matt Ward, and Simon Mooney; thanks too to the late Ray Chappell for his extensive observations.

Goblin Combe OS Ref 470 653

The Crag

‘The name of the Combe lends itself to thoughts of the characters of The Hobbits and Lord of the Rings; their names have therefore been used for all climbs and cliffs.’

Keith Williams, Goblin Combe activist and guidebook author, 1972.

‘I have dispensed with the tradition of naming routes after the Hobbit books because I hate the Hobbit books.’ Jon Bassindale, 1980s Goblin Combe activist.

Comprising steep unquarried limestone, the outcrops in this charming woodland valley have evolved into one of the Bristol area’s most popular climbing sites. The climbing is strenuous, protected by natural gear, and the lines are strong. What is particularly attractive about the place is the abundance of good quality routes in the VS – E2 range. It is also an ideal winter venue, since the climbs are quick-drying and have a sunny but sheltered aspect. An extra bonus on Owl Rock is the combined umbrella effect of foliage and overhangs which can keep some routes dry, even in pouring rain. On the down side, the peacefulness of the valley has been subsumed by an eclectic soundscape of Lulsgate air traffic and yapping hounds.

Access

The bulk of the site is managed by The Goblin Combe Environment Centre for Groundwork South (at the time of writing the Centre is going through what is described on its website as a ‘transition phase’). The Combe gets an amber light on the BMC’s Regional Access Database (RAD) i.e. ‘approach with caution’, so it wouldn’t do any harm to log in to the RAD for an update prior to your visit. Currently the RAD advises that ‘the owner Groundwork South does not formally allow climbing here. If climbers do decide to visit the crag and are asked to leave by Groundwork South staff, they should do so politely.’ If you wish for more information contact the BMC’s Access and Conservation Officer or local volunteer access representative (www.thebmc.co.uk).

The eastern part of the Combe including the The Carrock is a nature reserve managed by Avon Wildlife Trust. It is understood that The Car-Park Quarry (the ‘village quarry’) is managed by the local parish council which acknowledges the popularity of this and the main cliffs for climbing.

BMC		CRAG CODE www.thebmc.co.uk	
Access	Check the Regional Access Database (RAD) on www.thebmc.co.uk for the latest access information		
Parking	Park carefully – avoid gateways and driveways		
Footpaths	Keep to established paths – leave gates as you find them		
Risk	Climbing can be dangerous – accept the risks and be aware of other people around you		
Respect	Groups and individuals – respect the rock, local climbing ethics and other people		
Wildlife	Do not disturb livestock, wildlife or cliff vegetation; respect seasonal bird nesting restrictions		
Dogs	Keep dogs under control at all times; don’t let your dog chase sheep or disturb wildlife		
Litter	‘Leave no trace’ – take all litter home with you		
Toilets	Don’t make a mess – bury your waste		
Economy	Do everything you can to support the rural economy – shop locally		
BMC Participation Statement – Climbing, hill walking and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement.			

Goblin Combe is an SSSI (designated in 1999), and a beautiful wooded Carboniferous limestone environment; hereabouts the Environment Centre (closed at the time of writing) once made much of engaging people, particularly youngsters, in woodland activities. The Combe supports broadleaved semi-natural ancient woodland, which is now limited in Great Britain. There is a wide variety of trees, ferns and ground flora and a number of nationally rare plant species including the stinking hellebore. There are also areas of important calcareous grassland such as you see above The Carrock. So far as nature conservation issues go, among the inhabitants to be aware of here are: (a) the rare and unusual moonwort fern, which is found under old yew trees – so tread carefully, and (b) whitebeam trees – please don't damage them (or any other plant or tree for that matter), and (c) nesting ravens on Eagle Rock. The ravens are known to have been nesting on Eagle Rock since February 2015 but you might hear their gurgling croaks or 'cronks' anywhere in the Combe. If you plan to climb here please check the RAD beforehand and look out for notices on site. In any event avoid climbing on the left-hand half of Eagle Rock during the nesting season if the ravens are present (they were in 2021, and are likely to continue to remain so).

Remember that SSSI citations express as potentially damaging: 'The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant or plant remains, including tree, shrub, herb, hedge, dead or decaying wood, moss, lichen, fungus, leaf-mould and turf.' For this reason **please avoid wrapping your ropes directly around trees and abseiling; either use the *in-situ* abseil points or walk down.**

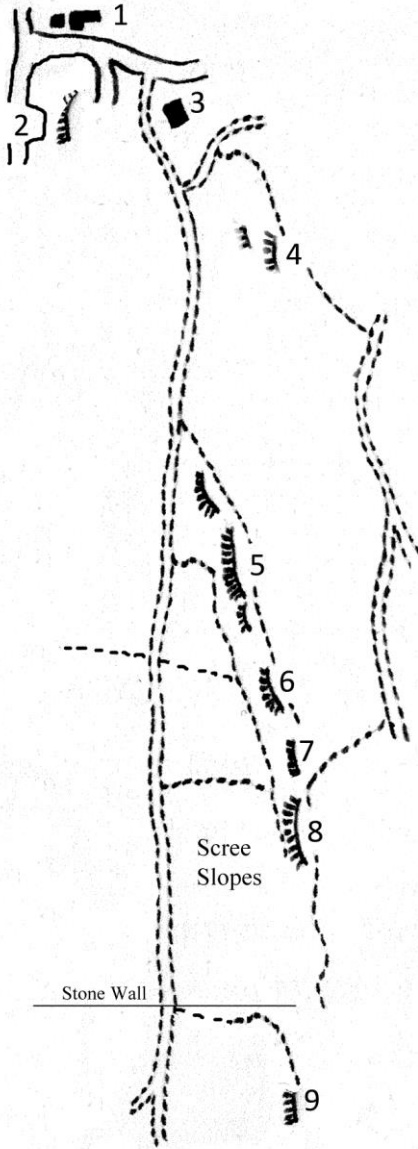
Approach and Layout

The Combe lies eight miles southwest of Bristol, just beyond the village of Cleeve on the A370 Bristol to Weston-super-Mare road. When approaching from Bristol, turn into Cleeve Hill Road, which is the left turn immediately before the former Lord Nelson Inn (the site of a controversial redevelopment proposal). Follow the road for 400m to a car-park in front of a quarry (The Car-Park Bay). During peak periods the car-park can fill up; please don't block any residents' drives (or the road!). Walk back along the road for 15m and turn right into Plunder Street. Take the signed RoW (the left fork) at the Old Village School building (which later became the Goblin Combe Environment Centre). Go through a gate at the entrance to the Combe (here, a sign asserts – among other things – that 'climbing is forbidden'). For the main cliffs continue on the path along the valley floor past a little crag until after 500m an initially fern-clad tier of rock on the left (Little Napes Needle Scarp) rises obliquely across the northern side of the valley to form Owl Rock, the principal crag of the valley. Beyond, the tier continues to rise and break up into a series of buttresses overlooking an extensive series of scree slopes; from left to right these are The Obelisk, Brandybuck Buttress, The Arkenstone, Orthanc, and the second largest cliff in the Combe, Eagle Rock. The buttresses can be linked via a path along the top of the scree slopes beneath them, or approached on paths running up from the valley floor. Three other small buttresses offer handfuls of lesser climbs high up on the eastern slope either end of the Combe. These are Toot Rock and its lower companion which are largely hidden from up left near the entrance of the Combe, and The Carrock which is situated near the far, eastern end of the valley.

Rock Stability Caution

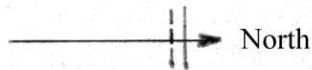
Despite the popularity of the cliffs there still remain much hollow-sounding rock, loose blocks, and patches of weak and friable rock. Take special care at the cliff-tops and ledges which are most exposed to weathering and plant/tree roots that can prise the rock apart. Rockfalls occur from time to time, so beware. Accidents cause bad press and perceived access insufficiencies.

From
A370



KEY

- 1. School Building
- 2. Car Park
- 3. Walnut Tree Farm
- 4. Toot Rock
- 5. Owl Rock
- 6. Arkenstone
- 7. Orthanc
- 8. Eagle Rock
- 9. The Carrock



Credit: I thought it would be quaintly retro to use Keith Williams's original 1972 layout sketch, which still does the job.

Vegetation on the Cliffs

The cliffs of the Combe have a symbiotic relationship with ecology, and climbers have from time to time taken on an unofficial interventionist role. While we may prefer the look and functionality of a clean rockface we have absolutely no authority to bring this about, especially since the cliffs lie in an SSSI in which any such land management is regulated. There are various parts of the cliffs that have once again fallen into ‘neglect’ – now hemmed in by brambles or covered in ivy. (I took a set of crag pics in 2006 and a set in 2019: on the latter the routes were considerably more vegetated.) For the corresponding routes that have become affected I have, for the most part, reproduced their descriptions – not least so future parties know ‘what went where’. Any proposals to carry out any significant ‘gardening’ or resurrection of the climbs should first be discussed with the BMC.

Tick Alert

And if the above cautions weren’t enough, do beware of ticks. Make sure you read up on how to minimise the risks of picking up a tick and what to do if bitten.

Ethics and fixed gear

The whole of the site is a bolt-free area: strictly no bolts please. There is little *in-situ* gear on the cliffs, but what there is must be treated with the utmost caution: if in any doubt, back it up, or do not proceed. Also be mindful that quite a lot of first ascents, not necessarily only at the higher grades, will have been top-roped first. Unfortunately some activists – for reasons known only to themselves – do not report the practices they have used. As a guidebook writer I can only present what is recorded. So it is best to proceed with caution and, to be safe, assume anything HVS and above had first been top-roped or otherwise intimately pre-checked before a first ascent.

Abbreviations Used

SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest	Grades	
BMC	British Mountaineering Council	D	Difficult
RoW	right of way	VD	Very Difficult
m	metre	S	Severe
km	kilometre	HS	Hard Severe
FA	first ascent	VS	Very Severe
EGONS	Exploration Group of North Somerset	HVS	Hard Very Severe
Soloist	A self-belay device that enables ground-up lead-climbing without a partner	E1 – E7	Extreme

Guidebook Disclaimer

You climb entirely at your own risk in line with the BMC Participation Statement (see below); and this guidebook has been published strictly on that basis. The author and any other party connected with this guidebook cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions or be held liable for any personal or third party injuries or damage. The inclusion of climbs in this guidebook does not assume any right of access to them; please refer any access queries to the BMC.

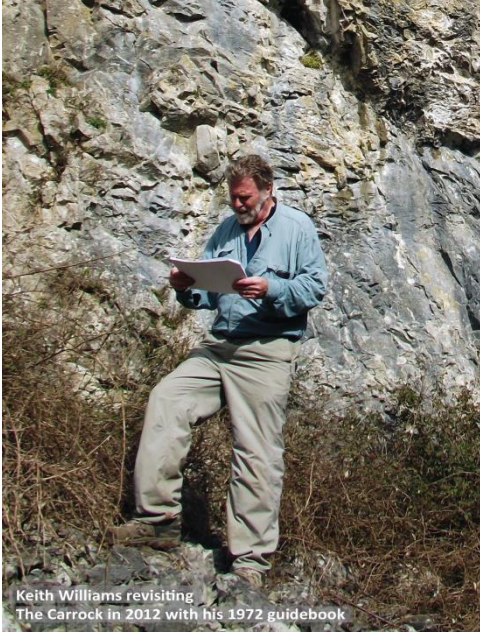
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A Hobbit's History of Climbing in Goblin Combe

The Fellowship of the Ring

By kind permission of its author here is the 1972 Goblin Combe guidebook's climbing history. First mention of Goblin Combe in climbing literature appears in *Limestone Climbs in South West England* (1964). But its mention of The Rising Sun Inn (which is two miles before Cleeve Hill Road) suggests a printing error or the fact that no one had cared to look up into the Combe. When Bob Walker discovered the possibilities in 1968, Owl Rock was hidden by dense vegetation.



Keith Williams revisiting
The Carrock in 2012 with his 1972 guidebook

The first wave of gardening and exploration belonged to Walker and Bob Bennett, who produced such routes as *Gondolin* and *The Goblin King*. Interest was lost until 1970 when Bob, with brother Fred, returned to produce *Longbeard*, *Gollum*, and *Smaug the Dragon*, amongst others. This led to more activity: Walker and David Lloyd climbed *Esgaroth*, and an elderly (54-yr-old!) Norwegian, Elias Fivesdale led *The Wargs* on aid...he was in his element. Winter arrived and the climbers left. They returned next year, the final sweep lasting right into 1972. The two Bobs were joined by Keith Williams, a gritstone climber from Shrewsbury; between them they climbed all that remained: *Saruman* and *Gandalf* by Williams, *The Hobbit* by Bennett, and *Girion* and *Pippin* by Walker. As a climax John Moss joined in to lead *Orcist* [and Williams led *Gandalf* which he thought 'fantastic']. For school teacher Williams: 'On a warm summer's evening there was no better place to climb than Goblin Combe, well away from the hustle and bustle of Avon Gorge, the city traffic, and teaching.'

The 1972 guidebook cautioned that: 'Further gardening will have fruitless results and will undoubtedly spoil the atmosphere of the climbs recorded here.' As is the way in the climbing domain, future climbers took no notice of this at all (although they probably didn't see it); and so here are extracts of the Combe's mid-history from *Avon & Cheddar* by Martin Crocker (The Climbers' Club 1992, 2004 editions).

The Two Towers

Across the 70s the Combe retained its secretive air and got relegated to an abseiling and top-roping crag, a trademark that was hard to shake off – and the routes became polished. Part of the problem was the absence of an accessible guidebook. You see the 1972 guide was a homespun venture and only the odd copy could be printed before the hand-cranked Banda copying machine caused 'Banda elbow'! And when Williams left the area in 1975 the records went with him. Fortunately, in the mid/late-70s, some notable local activists, who had been honing their abilities at Avon and Cheddar, took a fresh look at the hard free challenges and aid points that remained. In 1977 Chris King and Nigel Gifford bagged *Shagrat* and came close to free climbing the face section of *The Wargs* on a two pitch route they called *No Pussyfooting*: 'the ethos in those days was to climb routes on sight and preferably on the first attempt'.

The main spike in interest came from Cheddar Gorge expert Richard Broomhead who, while preparing his Cheddar Supplement (Cordee 1981), reviewed the old routes and added some of his own. *Gundabad* and *Legolas* were to become classics, while *The White Tower* still tests climbers to this day. Even tougher was *Nazgul*, which was more akin to the hardest Peak showpieces of the day, by Avon visionary Andy Hall. Naturally Bristol powerhouse Richard (Nipper) Harrison, a competitive and forceful climber, got in on the action too, claiming the first free leads of *The Wargs* (on a more direct line) and *Mithril* in 1981.



Jon Bassindale and Annette Jones
Pic: Ray Chappell

During 1983, a new team led by Julian Chapman and Matt Ward began to scrutinize some of the minor crags in the locality. Inevitably they pulled up at Goblin Combe to find that little new climbing had been done. Their finds on the overlooked Car-Park Quarry and The Arkenstone were to spark a big new wave in the Combe. Stirred by the sight of a photograph of a ‘first ascent’ in a climbing magazine, Jon Bassindale, who lived but a stone’s throw from the crags, began a scrupulous clean-up of the remaining lines. He followed Chapman up *The Clockwork Fingerflake* on the tower of Orthanc, led *Girion Direct*, *Moments in Space*; and in the absence of his female climbing companion Annette Jones recorded the sub-classic *The Israel Blues*. Without remorse, Bassindale also perpetrated the most heinous crime imaginable: dispensing with the Tolkien theme on his routes (‘because I hate the Hobbit books!’). His finest moment came, however, in 1984 with *Modern Times*, a blistering pitch with a razor hold (which a soft-fingered pundit found you could avoid by means of an alternative sequence).

His belief in the quality of climbing in Goblin Combe echoed that of Williams and friends ten years earlier: ‘I hope that Goblin Combe gets the recognition I feel it deserves as a pleasant and superior alternative for Avon and Cheddar.’

As the crag segued into old age, the imminence of a new guidebook helped focus the minds of a few. On Owl Rock Dave Viggers and Mark Hopkins established a bold low-level traverse and Martin Crocker crimped up *The ‘Oh No’ Zone*, the crag’s first E6. On Eagle Rock, Crocker slipped and dived repeatedly from the crux of *Quality of Sacrifice*, the substance of Bassindale’s old top-rope problem. Subsequently his *Avon & Cheddar* guidebook (The Climbers’ Club, 1992) signed off warning of the ‘gathering forces of vegetation’. But, with more information and a range of easier classics available, the mainstream appeal of the Combe endured. Those with an eye for a line even noticed a few gaps. One such was Simon Mooney, a young Taunton climber who eked out a scattering of oddballs. Not all were at the lower grades; Mooney had the unsettling (for others) habit of underestimating his own ability – as testified by his solo first ascent of *Idée Fixe* which he graded E2: ‘I think the option was always to jump off into the undergrowth if things went wrong.’ Another punter was Mark Turnbull whose *The Shadow of Mordor* added to the Combe’s nerve-wracking repertoire. Viggers came back with Damien Carroll who completed the trilogy on *Girion* with the *Superdirect*. Also, just about squeezed into the back of *Avon & Cheddar* 2004 were some headpoints by Crocker, *Dead Wood* claiming the honours for leg-break potential.

Return of the King

In 2012 Keith Williams, one of the Combe's earliest pioneers, returned to Goblin Combe to meet up with one-time fellow EGONS member and climbing partner Crocker. Together, with a copy of the enigmatic 1972 guidebook to hand, they compared present with past, firming up the Combe's history. Amongst their stop-offs were the 'outliers' of Toot Rock and The Carrock which Crocker had previously explored and laced with routes mostly climbed solo or with his trusty Soloist device. Dismissed previously as 'hardly worth the walk-ins', the two thought otherwise, and a good picnic was had beneath the crag. Crocker flash-backed to how influential Williams had been on his own outlook: 'Back in the early-70s Keith would always want to explore new places – the so-called Crag X, normally deep in some woods somewhere. I often didn't know where I was going or where I went and I still don't know!'

The development of the Combe admirably illustrates the interaction between guidebooks and producing routes. That seems no truer post new millennium than for enthusiast Mark Davies who had become gripped by 'guidebook fever'. Davies's intensity was complemented by his predilection for shady bucolic venues like Goblin Combe where he would invest time and effort downing ivy curtains and furnishing new routes or refurbishing old ones. Some Climbers' Club guidebook colleagues and high-end models, making up in effect a mobile guidebook factory, got involved too. Davies set aside his camera for *Open Knightly*, Brian Mullan set aside his cello for *The Hive Queen*, and Guy Percival (who had acquired a formidable reputation for hard unprotected headpointing) set aside second thoughts when he soloed a high-danger interpretation of *Quality of Sacrifice* which he called *Atonement* – the Combe's first E7. But that Eagle Rock saga still has time to run; why, just look to the right.....

Let's conclude with the allegorical words of Keith Williams: 'This guidebook has been produced for climbers in the Bristol area who have shown considerable interest in the activities of the climbers who have been responsible for the climbing and recording of the routes found in this guide.' (1972). Let it be so.

The future: Ants defeat Orcs



Wood ant sends direct start to *Esgaroth* (V12)

THE CLIMBS

The Car-Park Bay (Cleeve Quarry)

This is the small quarry which lies behind the car-park. The ‘village quarry’, was worked in the 19th century and provided stone for the houses and walls in Cleeve. Some good off- vertical face climbing is on offer. All the documented climbs are located on the sheer grey and red wall, though there are various easier passages on the left popular for the instruction of novice groups.

Below the centre of the red wall is an obvious 3m-high flake crack, the starting-point for *The Goblin’s Teasmade*.

1 ***Fix the Squeak** 12m E3 5c (12.11.83)

Excellent climbing. Start at a rounded boulder embedded in the ground, 5m left of the flake crack. Climb the wall on nicely textured rock, trending very slightly right up incipient cracks.

FA: Jon Bassindale, Julian Chapman

2 **Strong Arm Tactics** 12m E3 6a (12.11.83)

Starting 2m left of the flake crack, climb the scabby red face above a short rib to an inclined break. Step right into a scoop for an exit.

FA: Julian Chapman, Jon Bassindale

3 ***The Goblin’s Teasmade** 12m E2 5b (13.11.83)

Superb. Climb the flake crack in the centre of the wall to a ledge. Follow the ragged flake-line on the wall above to the top.

FA: Jon Bassindale, Julian Chapman, Matt Ward,

4 **Give Us a Break** 13m E4 6a (28.7.93)

Boulder up right of the flake crack to a ledge. Arrange gear in the base of a flake; then crimp boldly up the bare wall right of *The Goblin’s Teasmade* to the high-level break and the top.

FA: Dave Viggers, Damien Carroll

Near the right-hand end of the cliff is a cave.

5 **Peapod** 9m HVS 5a (7.83)

Climb the wall and ‘half-a-Peapod’ groove 4m left of the cave.

FA: Julian Chapman, Matt Ward

6 **Edge of Mirkwood** 9m HVS 5c (7.83)

The wall and roof (peg) immediately left of the cave is climbed to a large tree.

FA: Julian Chapman, Matt Ward

7 **The Forest Gate** 9m VS 4c (24.8.83)

Climb the crack through the roof of the cave.

FA: Julian Chapman, Matt Ward

8 **The Gurnjugs** 9m E4 6a (29.8.83)

Cut loose over the big roof right of the cave and finish hastily up the wall, praying that the groundfall potential is not as real as it seems.

FA: Julian Chapman, Matt Ward

There are two traverses.

9 **Tie One On** 15m E2 5b (13.3.2011)

Start in the corner at the left end of the main face, by a tree. Take the rising traverse-line that runs from head height via a couple of tricky moves across *The Goblin's Teasmade* to its end. Finish up the corner-crack.

FA: Graeme Thomson, Rachel Thomson

10 **Relief Massage** 15m E1 5b (4.12.83)

Starting just to the left of the rounded boulder, climb direct to the high-level inclined break. Traverse right along the break to finish via the scoop of *Strong Arm Tactics*.

FA: Matt Ward, Mike Bellian

Cleeve Toot

There are two crags under the hilltop of Cleeve Toot (the site of an Iron Age hillfort): Toot Rock and Yew Rock.

Toot Rock

The region's sunniest crag; not three-star climbing but it is especially worth a winter's visit when the sun is out following a night of sub-zero temperatures or rain. This is a 12m-high limestone knoll poised in a superb situation at the entrance to the Combe, rather Suisse Normandie-like. It took three routes in 1972, while further development had to wait a further forty years. The crag lies within the SSSI. Be mindful that walkers, and even groups of local lads, visit the top, above you.

Rock Stability Caution

Some of the rock is weak and requires careful handling; and the routes are not easy to protect.

A ledge containing a line of fast-growing willow rises rightwards across the crag at two-thirds height.

Approach

Toot Rock is only just visible at 11.0'clock, high up to the left, while passing Walnut Tree Farm at the entrance to the Combe. It supports a flagpole (which unfortunately collapsed in 2018) and a plaque dedicated to Messrs Inglis. Immediately after Walnut Tree Farm, take a track sharp left, which rises under a low rocky embankment. At a right bend, leave the track and take faint animal paths on the right through the trees uphill until a rocky ridge leads through some annoying brambles to the viewpoint above the crag. Drop down to the left of the crag (facing out) to its base.

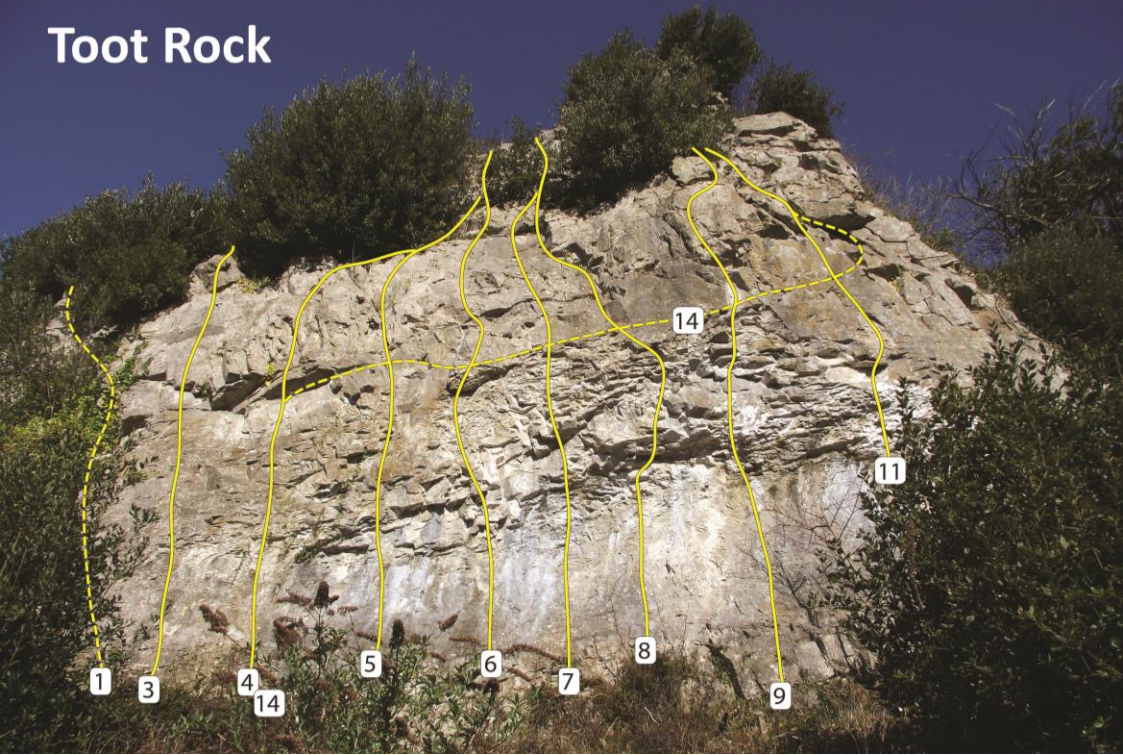
The first two routes start at the extreme left-hand end of the crag, and – be warned – frequently disappear under ivy and willow foliage. (Upon a return visit, even Toot Rock's first ascensionist couldn't be sure of the exact lines taken by his 1972 routes.)

1 **Belladonna** 15m D (9.1.72)

Climb the slab bearing slightly leftwards before climbing a broken wall onto vegetated ledges. Scramble to the top.

FA: Bob Bennett, Keith Williams

Toot Rock



2 **Bilbo** 20m S 4a (9.1.72)

Climb *Belladonna* for 5m. Traverse right across the face (crossing the next two routes) to the groove of *Cleeve Toot*. Climb easily to the line of willow and finish up the short easy wall above.

FA: Bob Bennett, Keith Williams

Near the left-hand end of the crag are two small overhangs 5m up.

3 **Pineapple Days** 15m HS 4b (11.2.2012)

Start below the left-hand overhang and behind a bushy willow. Make a few thin moves up the slab, and then climb straight up a wall left of the overhangs heading for the gap in the trees above. Pull between the trees on a seemingly jammed boulder and scramble to the top. Subject to pruning the fast-growing trees often close the 'gap', so prepare for a tussle.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo) *Goblin Combe activists and their followers (including the EGONS club) regularly met in The Pineapple pub in Bristol (currently closed).*

4 **Gurt Superb!** 15m VS 5b (11.2.2012)

Pleasant and fairly solid, but protection is absent on the problem opening moves. Start below the right-hand overhang. Climb straight up the slab and over a difficult bulge to the overhang. Pull over, via a tiny groove, and trend right to the large gap in the willow trees. Finish up a short easy wall.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo) *'Gurt Superb' was an EGONS expletive following a route enjoyed by all.*

5 Peeping Tom 15m E1 5b (27.6.2012)

Climb straight over the left end of a right-curling overlap into a flake crack using a blind finger-slot for right hand; harder than it looks. (HVS 5a if done slightly left.)

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

6 Blah, Blah, Blah 15m E2 5c (11.2.2012)

Some rather shaky rock at the bulge; be careful. Climb to a small right-facing flake (small wire placement). Stretch up to a hollow undercut flake, and make a long pull up it to reach jugs above. Carry on up slabby grey rock to the line of willow. Exit as for *Gurt Superb!*

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

7 The Ace of Spades 15m E5 6a (29.12.2015)

An eliminate solo. Climb immediately right of *Blah, Blah, Blah* to a deep undercut below the bulge. Using a good fingerhold for right and then an undercut for left, power straight up, passing over a small concave roof. Exit as for *Gurt Superb!* The grade assumes you don't stray onto holds on either of its neighbours.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

8 Cleave Toot and the Maytals 15m E4 6a (11.2.2012)

Powerful, and the gear is weak. Start in the centre of the crag under a rectangular undercut 3m up. Climb to the undercut, clip a peg up to the right; and make difficult moves up and left into a slight groove. Climb easily to the line of willow and finish up *Gurt Superb!*

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

9 *African Doctor 15m E3 6a (11.2.2012)

The most sustained route here; start at a slender red sapling at the crag-base. Climb up to the bulge and clip the off-line peg on *Cleave Toot'* up to the left. Undercut over to a high projecting jug (peg) and pull up strenuously right to a short thin crack. Carry on up the rib, exiting right of the large willow. Finish as for *Gurt Superb!*

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

10 Peroxide Blonde 15m E5 6b (30.11.2013)

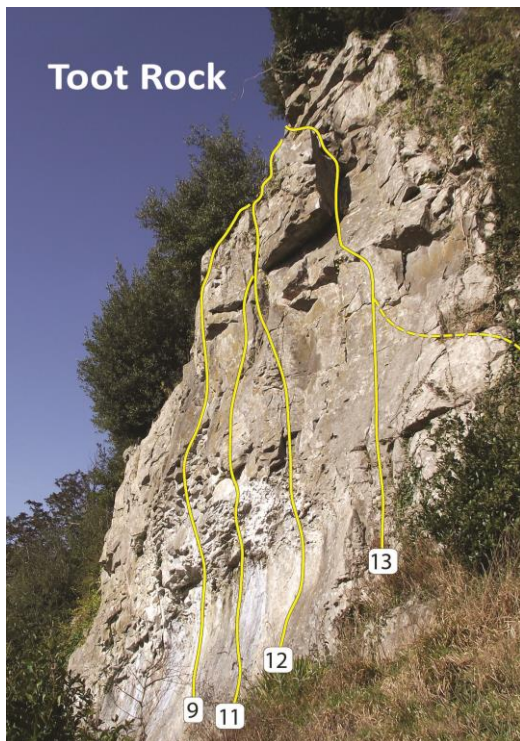
She's so made up, a hold-by-hold description seems necessary. Start at the red sapling, at a slight projecting ledge. Move up to the narrow overlap; 1.2m above it are two opposing layaways: power up on them; stretch straight up for a small sloping crimp for left hand; hang it and then plonk right hand into a small scoop hold. Now balance up and right to finish up the next route. First soloed above a mat; add grades for an on-sight unsupported mat-free solo when the wind is from the south and other Painless Potterisms.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)



Peroxide Blonde (E5) - first ascent; Martin Crocker
Pic: Jonathan Crocker

At the right-hand end of the crag is a slim right-facing groove overhung by a huge hanging block that can't possibly stay 'attached' for much longer.



11 That's My Number 15m E4 6a
(11.2.2012)

Another eliminate solo, but it prolongs your stay up here in the sun. Move up to the bulge just left of the groove, and extend around on small undercuts for both hands so reaching a long sloper above a sharp little overhang. Crank up to reach a fingerhold on the right arête, and step up quickly. Continue more easily to the right-most willow. Scuttle left to exit up *Gurt Superb!*

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

12 That Was a Nice Egg Sandwich 15m VS 5a (11.2.2012)

Enjoyable, and adequately protected with small wires. Work around the right-hand end of the bulge into the right-facing groove. Follow the groove and, keeping left of the undercut block, step left onto the arête; then gain the right-most willow. Scuttle left to exit up *Gurt Superb!*

FA: Martin Crocker (solo) *The name is a quote of Williams' while picnicking under Cleeve Toot on a visit with fellow 'EGON' Crocker, 40 years after his first ascents.*

13 Bungo 15m HS 4b (9.1.72)

Some very worrying rock; don't pull or step too hard on anything! Climb the grey slab right of the right-facing groove into the groove formed by the undercut block (and a cracked flake on the right too). Take the groove; then traverse left above the block and past a pillar onto the ledge behind the right-most willow. Scuttle left to exit up *Gurt Superb!* If you step in from the right (as per the original route), technically the climb is V Diff – but you still have to pass the block.

FA: Bob Bennett, Keith Williams

14 *Sideways (through Time) 25m E1 5b (29.12.2015)

Escapable but nicely positioned and protectable, this is a left-to-right traverse along a line of footholds above the lip of the bulge. Follow *Gurt Superb!* until just above the bulge. Traverse right onto good fingerholds atop the hollow flake of *Blah, Blah, Blah*; then pull up right onto *Cleeve Toot*. Traverse right along the projecting footholds into the groove of *That Was a Nice Egg Sandwich* and either follow that route to the top or (if soloing) work down the slab to the ground.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

Yew Rock

This is an incredibly minor, if not unattractive, rippled face hidden amongst the yew trees below Cleeve Toot. It is sheltered from the wind but misses out on the sun. The routes are underpinned by a short scrappy wall, which implies the potential for a very nasty long fall if soloing. Also note that the routes have not been cleaned for leading: take a nut tool for any additional cleaning required to reveal the necessary wire placements. The crag lies within the SSSI.

Rock Stability Caution

Some of the rock is weak and requires careful handling.

Approach

As for Toot Rock, but contour right (eastwards) when about 30m below the ridge line.

There is a large yew tree at the left-hand end of the cliff.

1 **Yew, Yew, and Yew!** 5m HS 4b (4.1.2015)

Start 2m right of the yew tree. Pull over a tricky bulge, and take flat fingerholds to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

2 **SuperYew** 6m VS 4c (4.1.2015)

Start 3m right of the yew tree, on the easy ramp. Pull up onto the wall and climb diagonally rightwards to stand on a line of projecting footholds. Move delicately up the rippled face to the top. (Can be started from the square pedestal – much easier.)

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

3 **PushMePullYew** 6m VS 4c (4.1.2015)

Start on the easy ramp under the crag at a groove leading between the two yew trees at the cliff top. Make a hard move over a bulge; then take jugs to finish between the trees.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)



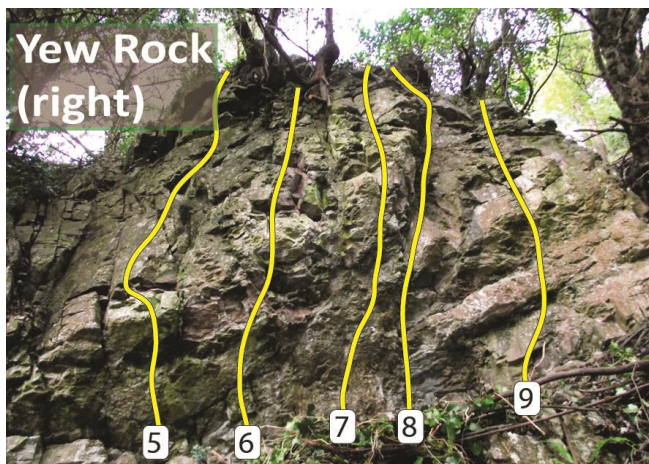
4 **Fall on Sword** 6m E3 6a (10.1.2015)

Start from the left side of a large boulder jammed on the ramp. Make an awkward move over the roof to grab a just-out-of-reach jug. Move up the face (avoid loose blocks up to your right); and pull out on the right-hand yew tree. A very bold solo; possibly E1 to lead?
FA: Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

The right-hand section of the crag is shorter (5m) and – with a spotter (or courage) – probably justifies the use of bouldering grades. There is a hanging yew tree left of a deep crack.

5 Cathartic Drop 5b (V1) Rock up over a roof, and climb up and slightly right to pull out on a tree (which is not a yew!).

6 Snoopers' Charter 6a (V3) Take the bulging crack below the hanging yew tree, starting on a large but hollow jug.



7 Je suis Charlie 6a (V3) A sustained eliminate. From crouch climb the narrow bulging rib left of the deep crack. Keep your feet out of the crack. Exit direct boldly.

8 Off Colour, Off Width 5c (V2) The deep crack.

9 For Want of a Woodpecker 5a (V0) The little wall right of the crack starting on a cracked flake.

FAs: Martin Crocker (solo)

Little Napes Needle Scarp

The first crag in the Combe proper was one of the last to be developed here, presumably all earlier aspirations having been thwarted by the torrid prospect of establishing a rope from which to remove the ivy. It had to wait until 2012, but then not without an overlying thicket of brambles inflicting significant blood loss. This is the long scrappy buttress 100m left of Owl Rock, which on the whole is pretty low grade (you'd be forgiven for walking on). In the centre of the cleaned-up section is a mini-pinnacle sitting at the cliff base under a still ivy-clad groove (Little Napes Needle). Descents are by abseiling from interlinked slings on trees; in the case of the right-hand trio no single tree should be relied upon in isolation.

Rock Stability Caution

There are some hollow-sounding rock and shaky blocks and holds on the cliff, especially at the cliff-top and on ledges where plant/tree roots are prising the rock apart.

The left-hand trio take a steep triangular wall behind a large dead tree; two yew trees are above.

1 *Get Rich, Die Trying 10m HS 4a (29.3.2012)

Excellent and reasonably protected. Start half a metre left of the dead tree on a narrow block. Follow good holds to a sloping shelf. Reach past this to a narrow rightward-slanting ramp. Follow good fingerholds on the ramp to ledges and a straightforward finish to the right-hand yew tree.

1a Variation: **Land of Reward for Failure** 10m E1 5c (29.3.2012) A harder left-hand start, best used as an independent boulder problem. From a square block 2m left of the dead tree reach an inset fingerhold high overhead. Stretch strenuously up right for a pocket; then pull up onto large holds. Step right to the original.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

2 **Prosper the Few, Big Society** 10m E1 5c/6a (29.3.2012)

Looks eliminate, but doesn't feel it in practice. Start a metre right of the dead tree. Follow a seam slanting leftwards, and – using an undercut – make a hard move to stand on the sloping shelf. Gain large holds just above and left of a suspect calcite flake on the right, and then pull up to the exit of *Get Rich*..... Protection is available.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

The right-hand trio take the compact grey buttress right of Little Napes Needle. These routes aren't half-bad (or should it be half-decent?). There are three small ash trees above – which don't look very strong from below. Don't quibble at having to leave slings in order to rig up an equalised belay from which to abseil.

3 **Five Bar Finger Drill** 9m E2 5c (28.3.2012)

Better protected than it looks. Start 3m right of the pinnacle, under a rib. Step onto the rib; then follow parallel seams leftwards (one for hands, one for feet) onto the crystalline wall (small wires). Make a long move up and reach good holds over the left-hand side of a little overhang. Swing left to a finger-jug; and then bear rightwards to a pair of small ash trees.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

4 **Shaker Loops** 9m E2 5b (28.3.2012)

Climb a shallow grey groove, making a hard move to reach over the bulge above to jugs (*in-situ* thread). Pull up direct to the pair of trees.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

5 **Beat Clubs of Hamburg** 10m E3 5c (28.3.2012)

Heads for the crack in the small roof; start behind a coppicing tree on the right. Move up to a series of small finger-pockets (twisted wires), and use them to reach holds under the roof. Pull through the roof via the crack, and follow hollow holds to the highest of the three small trees.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

Owl Rock

Owl Rock is by far the best crag in the Combe and worth a day-trip from afar (and it's not as polished as Chudleigh – which isn't saying much because every crag is less polished than Chudleigh). Strong natural features abound, the rock is compact, and most of the climbs have a lot to offer. Protection can be hard won, however. It is not the warmest place to be deep mid-winter, but from mid-February it luxuriates in full-height sunshine.

Rock Stability Caution

There are some hollow-sounding rock and shaky blocks and holds on the cliff, especially at the cliff-top and on ledges where plant/tree roots are prising the rock apart. Rockfalls are commonplace, so beware.

Approach

The cliff is unmistakably visible about 25m above the path, approx. 800m up the Combe. A path, one of several to the cliff from the main track, leads up to its centre; at this point there is a large twin-trunked tree, which aids location of the routes. Descent from the routes is via a gully at the right end of the cliff or by abseil from sling and maillon/ring abseil points around trees. In any event be mindful of loose rock and anyone below when moving around up there.

Immediately beyond the far left-hand end of the crag is an outlying blocky ridge, recently exhumed from ivy and scrub.

1 **Bombur** 18m Moderate-VD (1970)

Our pilgrim fathers used it as a descent route. Climb the ridge to sound belay trees (abseil descent possible); the grade depends on the exact line. Take care with some of the blocks. You can climb a second pitch up the ridge if you want to get to the top, but it is a little friable.

FA: Bob Walker, Nel Walker

Right of an ivy mass and forming the far left wing of Owl Rock is a slabby area that gets cleaned up from time to time but inevitably degenerates to brambles and ivy. Sorry, but it's not looking too good in 2019. This wall features two small square-cut roofs at the same level 7m up. Close to the base of the cliff is an enormous upward-pointing flake from which routes 8 to 12 depart.

2 **Owlet** 7m VD (13.3.2013)

Climb the obvious crappy crack on the left to a tree (lower-off in place).

FA: Mark Davies, Brian Mullen

3 **Gremlin Groove** 9m HS 4b (11.83)

Start below an obvious groove 4m from the left end of the flake. Follow the groove to the left-hand square-cut roof. Take the groove above, left of the roof; then step left to the tree.

FA: Jon Bassindale, Annette Jones (*initial section climbed before on Girion (Lord of the Dale)*).

4 **Girion (Lord of the Dale)** 18m VS 4b (18.3.72)

This is actually the original *Girion*, which currently looks very poorly. Climb *Gremlin Groove* to the overhang; swing right and climb a second groove. Move up and right to the lower tree on *Bard the Bowman* and finish up that route.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams



Owl Rock Girion area

5 **Bowser's Castle** 18m HVS 5a/b (2015)

In the usual conditions this is quite poky and possibly even E1 if you climb it on-sight. Right of *Girion (Lord of the Dale)*, if you can get through the brambles climb a slight open groove (*in-situ* thread) and rib to join *Bard the Bowman* at its first tree.

FA: Mark Davies, L Steen

The next five routes finish at a yew tree 6m back from the cliff edge which is equipped for abseil (abseil optional; you can scramble out and rightwards – but be mindful of loose stones underfoot).

6 ****Bard the Bowman** 18m HS 4b (1970)

Very enjoyable and well protected; but don't pull too hard on the dubious blocks at or near the top. Climb the initial wall immediately left of the enormous flake to a break. Pull onto the slab under the right-hand square-cut roof and follow it using positive holds and flake cracks left of the roof to reach the lower of two small trees. Continue just to the right of the trees to an exposed exit.

FA: Bob Walker, Nel Walker

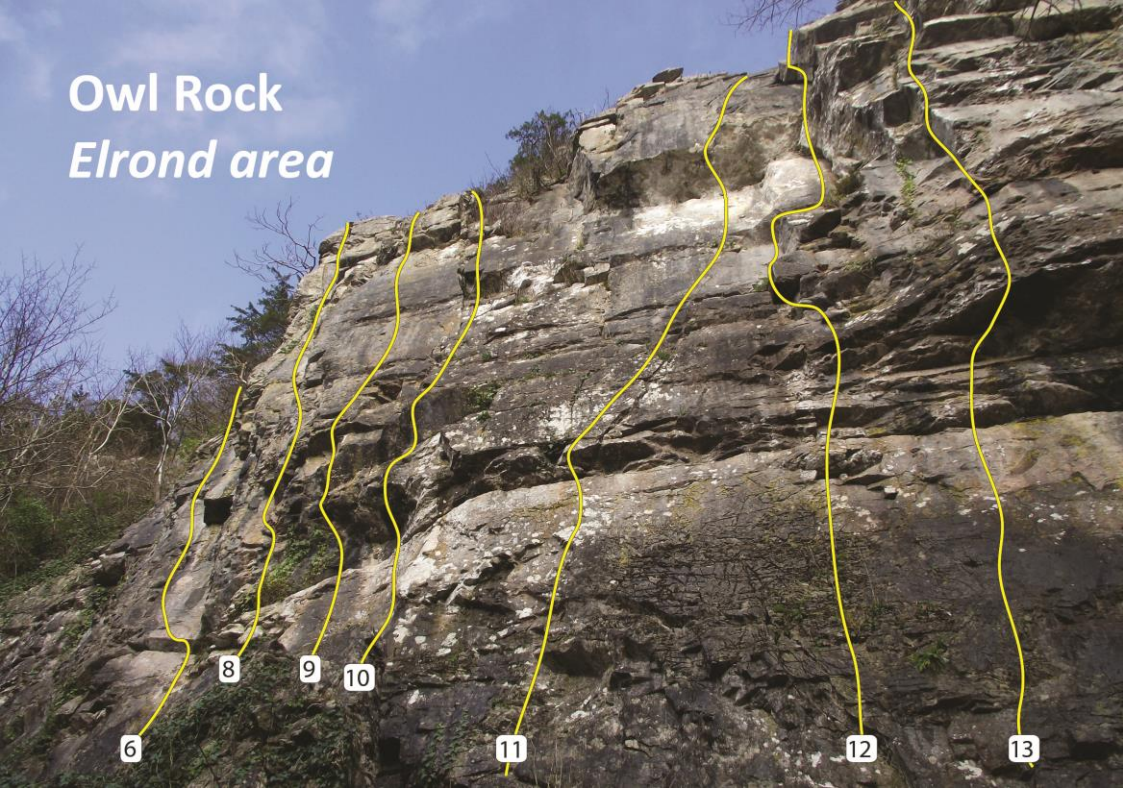
7 **Girion Direct** 15m E2 5c (11.83)

The striking bulging groove in the arête right of *Bard the Bowman*. High in the grade and often impeded by ivy. Follow that route to the roof. Launch up the flake crack which rises from the right-hand side of the roof and step right into the groove. Take the flake crack in the arête above direct.

FA: Jon Bassindale, Matt Ward, Annette Jones

Owl Rock

Elrond area



8 Girion Superdirect (28.7.93) Provides an independent entry at E4 6a. Bridge the overhanging groove past hidden holds and hidden gear; an obvious Rock 1 low down is placed in an unreliable flake. Probably E5 to on-sight since critical gear would not be found.
FA: Damien Carroll, Dave Viggers

9 Tolkien Heads 18m E4 6a/b (18.3.93)
Reasonable wire protection in lieu of the original peg (which pulled out attached to 'Big Mark' decades ago). Start immediately left of the highest point of the enormous flake. Pull through overhangs on fingerholds. Move up to a good pocket on the narrow grey wall (Rock 6). Keep left of the pocket to make thin moves up the grey wall. Swing left on big holds to exit.
FA: Dave Viggers, Rob Parker, M Sewell. *'Hard for shorties!'*

10 Radagast 18m HVS 4c (1968)
Requires careful climbing; and veg' can get in the way. Start on a flat ledge at the highest part of the flake. Climb strenuously direct over two small overhangs (hidden jug!) and gain a rectangular niche. Take a short wide crack onto the shrubby ledge above and finish up a crumbly nose.
FA: Bob Bennett (solo)

11 Moments in Space 20m E2 6a (13.11.83)
Top-heavy; a difficult roof problem – especially for long legs – and well-named should you find yourself falling. Step off the highest point of the flake, and contrive a direct line up the grey wall left of *Elrond*; keep immediately left of a peg to arrive at the roof (cam). Grope around the roof for a large slot (good cam/wire or both), and then lever around onto the pleasant headwall.
FA: Jon Bassindale, Julian Chapman, Matt Ward

The next four routes finish at a sprawling oak tree at the cliff edge which is equipped for abseil (abseil optional; you can scramble out and rightwards – but be mindful of loose stones underfoot).

12 ***Elrond** 18m VS 4c (1968)

A classic line up the left-facing corner-line; taking one or two very large cams will make the experience more comfortable. Step off the far right end of the enormous flake and climb a bubbly wall to breaks (pack good gear in here because...). Make a hard move over a bulge, stepping right into the corner. Bold brisk laybacks up the corner and a long stretch for the top get the job done.

FA: Bob Walker (*starting up Radagast. As described: Bob Walker, Keith Williams 17 June 1971*)

13 **The Shadow of Mordor** 18m E4 5c (29.3.93)

A natural if serious line, but it is too easy to escape onto *Elrond*. Start a metre right of the flake and climb direct to a small roof at 6m (poor RPs). Reach up to small fingerholds over the bulge and pull up to a larger hold under a groove and flake-line. Enter the groove with difficulty (a pocket on *Nazgul* to the right keeps you on line), and take the flake above to the top.

FA: Mark Turnbull, Jon Fullwood, Andy Crome. ‘*Most people would get gear in Elrond, but the way I led it was E4.*’

14 ****Nazgul** 18m E5 6a/E4 6b (8.80)

Superb and intricate, with long shoulder moves and a very hard start. The grade is subject to debate. Start 2m right of the flake. Climb direct to the roof at 6m; clip the peg up to the right (small wire here too). Difficult-to-use holds on the wall above enable some tough pulls over onto a finger-rail. Climb up to a deep pocket; then stretch left for another (pint-handle thread; peg). Span back up right and – before the pump gets to you – pull round the capping bulges on large holds. It is possible to start up *Shagrat* thus avoiding the crux roof: probably E4 5c like this, and much friendlier.

FA: Andy Hall, A Burnham

15 ***Shagrat** 18m E2 5b (22.7.77)

A fine, protectable pitch, with a tricky V-groove that can wrong-hand you into a higher grade. Start 3m from the right end of the enormous flake. Climb a wall and bound up to the top of a sharp crystalline flake (which is unstable in the long term). Wrestle with the sharp V-groove and gain jugs above and right with a long reach. Follow a crack and awkward groove to the sprawling oak tree.

FA: Chris King, Nigel Gifford. *Originally called ‘Time Transfixed’; the first ascensionists don’t know how ‘Shagrat’ appeared! A peg found in-situ suggests an earlier attempt or even ascent.*

Six metres right of the right end of the flake are two thin parallel cracks (*Gollum*).

16 **Precious** 18m E3 5c (6.80)

Technical and satisfying; but bold on the crux. Climb the overlapping wall (some poor rock) left of the parallel cracks to a blind break (or start up the cracks). Locate small fingerholds in the bulge above, and make difficult moves using a short blind flake to reach easier ground (a shrub often gets in the way here). Climb the face above passing a small ash tree just below the top.

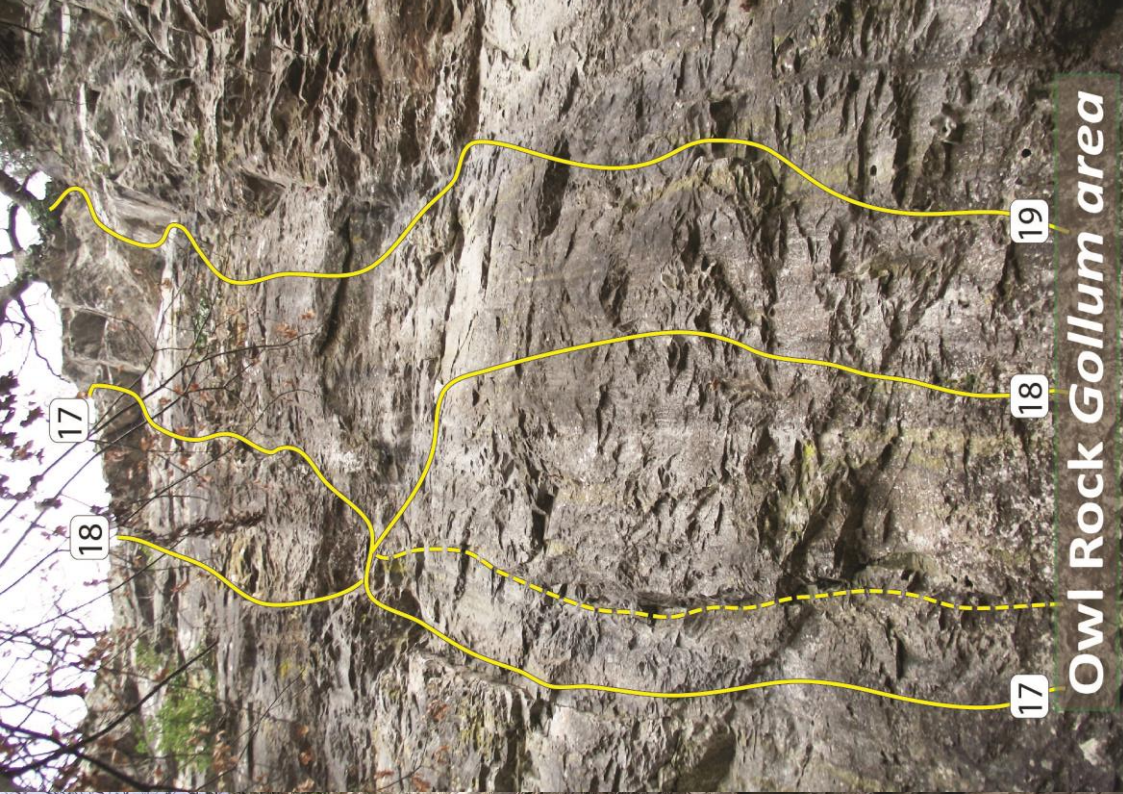
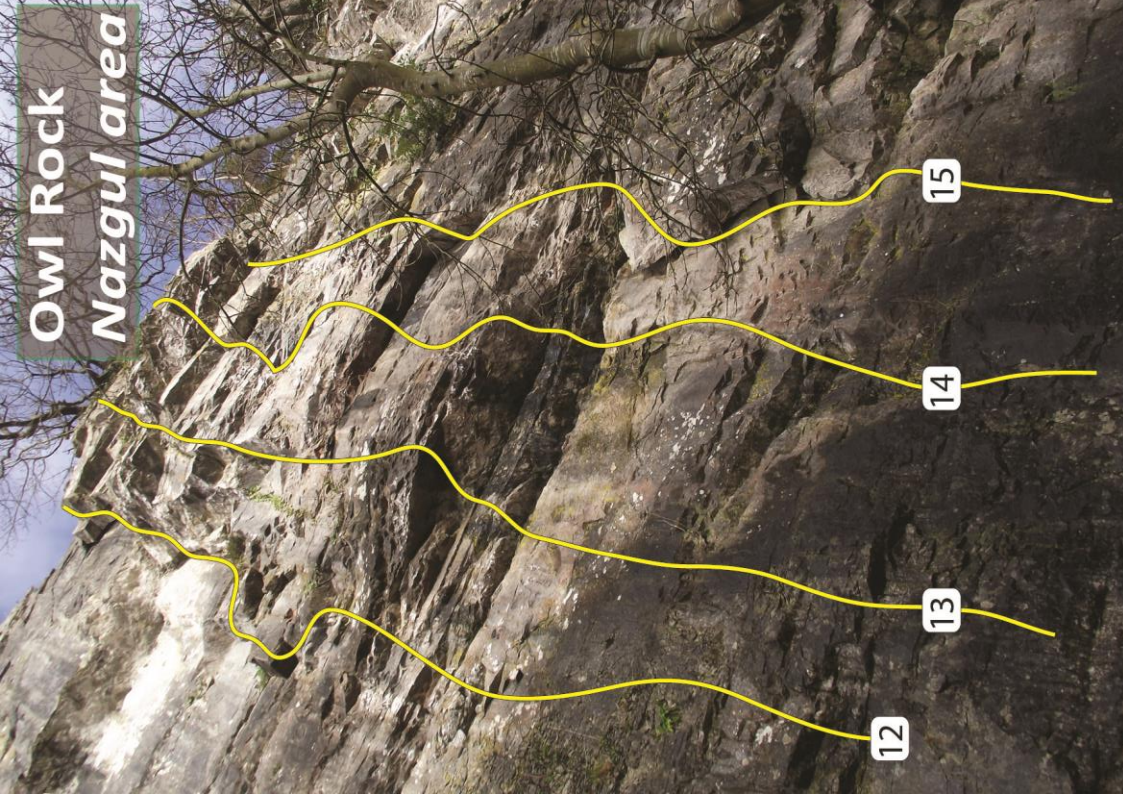
FA: Richard Broomhead, A Burnham

17 ****Gollum** 20m E1 5b (1970)

Doesn’t disappoint; athletic and steep, this route uses a hanging flake to power through steep terrain. Climb the parallel cracks to the blind break. (Or you can stick religiously to the right-hand one to bump up the grade to E2 5c.) A jug high above enables the hanging crack on the right to be grasped. Spring up the crack to easier ground. Follow a crack to a roof; step right and pull around to the top.

FA: Fred Bennett, Bob Bennett

**Owl Rock
Nazgul area**



Owl Rock Gollum area

18 **The Goblin Queen** 20m E3 6a (1994)

An eliminate; especially worthwhile with the unprotected starting wall which is an E3 solo (or a highball with mats). Start 1.5m right of the parallel cracks under a pair of obvious fingerholds. Climb direct up the wall (see ‘bouldering’ notes), until a scary sequence gains the blind break under the bulge. Move left 2m and using the jug of *Gollum* make a very fingery move up to a shattered flake. Easy now, carry on up the face to suit.

FA: Paul Twomey, Ian Parnell

Three metres from the foot of the cliff, in its centre, is the twin-trunked tree by an approach path from the valley floor. The large oak tree at the cliff edge above *Smaug* is equipped for abseil (abseil optional; you can scramble out and rightwards – but be mindful of loose stones underfoot).

19 *****Smaug the Dragon** 20m E2 5c (1970)

Top class, notwithstanding the fiery pocket-cranking for a crux. To the left of the bulges in the middle of the cliff is a sinuous crack and groove that develops into a white corner high up. Start 3m left of the twin-trunked tree. Climb up past a right-pointing flake to the break at 6m. Using a large undercut (peg), climb steeply on pockets left of the groove into the corner. Follow the corner to a roof; swing right and pull through a break in the bulge to an oak tree (care required with the rock at the top).

FA: Fred & Bob Bennett (1 point of aid) First free ascent: probably a local hotshot 1978-1981

20 ***Cloak and Dagger** 20m E3 6a (4.3.2014)

A tricky and pumpy eliminate up the impending rib just right of *Smaug the Dragon*, which is well worthwhile. Start 2m left of the twin-trunked tree. Climb direct via two hand-ledges to the break. Clip/place the thread of *The Goblin King* to the right before blasting up the rib (good gear in a vertical slot immediately right) to the exit of *Smaug the Dragon*.

FA: Rob Stanfield (after top-roping), Mark Davies

21 ****The Goblin King** 20m E2 5c (1968)

A Goblin classic for fit arms; but not to be underestimated. Start below a hand-crack in the centre of the cliff, behind the twin-trunked tree. Climb the crack to the break. Swing left to a thread runner at the base of a crack that twists through bulging steepness above. Muscle up using the rather unhelpful crack to a good ledge and a well-deserved rest. Swing up right making a few strenuous moves up a short, undercut crack – quite exposed, even for kings of Goblin.

FA: Bob Bennett & Bob Walker ‘*The most strenuous of the Goblin climbs*’ (1972 *Guidebook*, when the route was graded HVS.)

22 **CyberTroll** 20m E3/4 5c (4.3.2014)

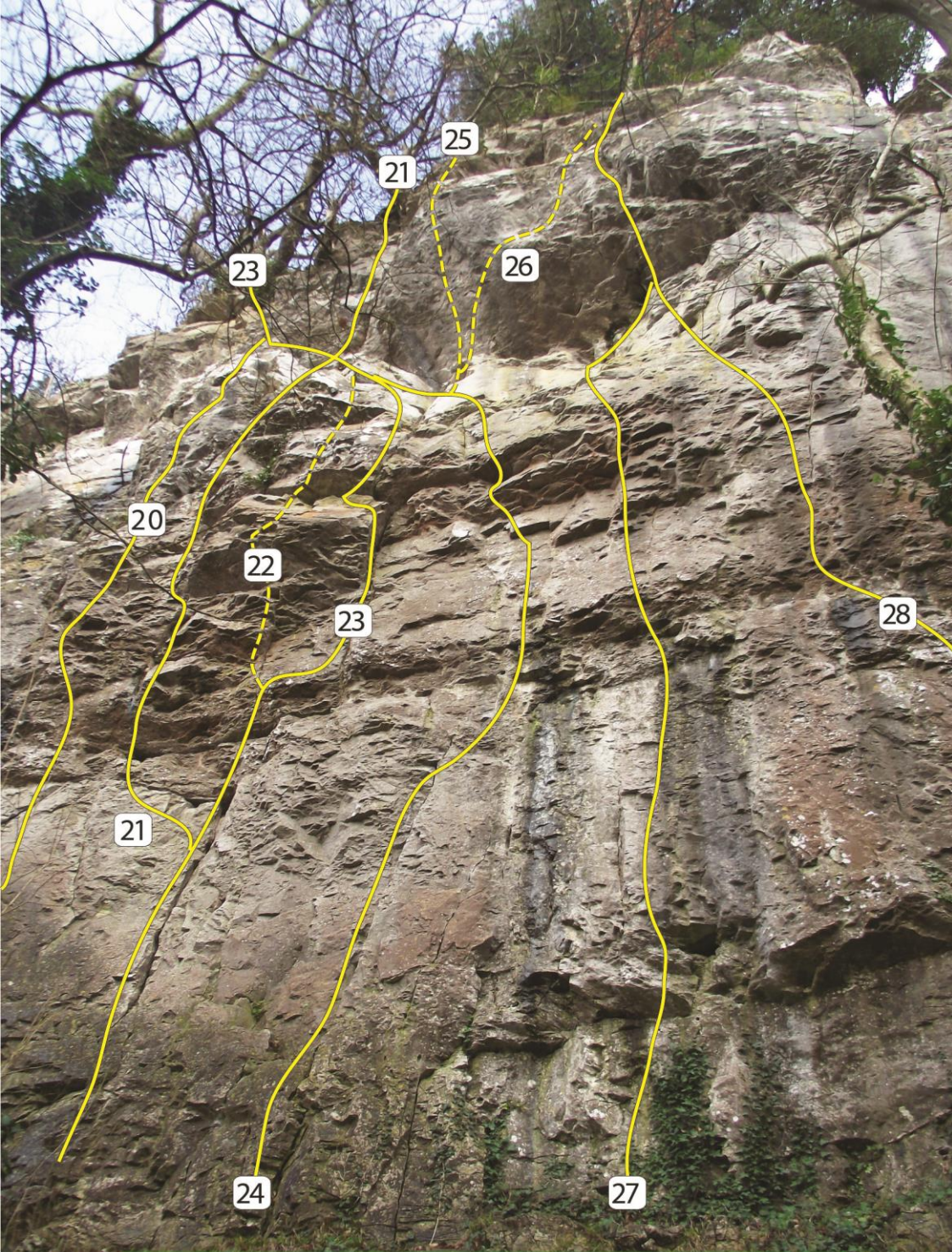
A very strenuous filler-in. Climb the crack of *The Goblin King* to the bulge. Continue straight up the thin crack above which ends below a roof. Before strength ebbs, ‘campus’ straight over and gain a break. Take the rib above; and top out on *The Goblin King*.

FA: Martin Crocker, Matt Goater

23 **Bullroarer** 24m E1 5b (1968)

Adventurous, but most of the rickety rock has long fallen away. Climb the crack to the break, as for *The Goblin King*. Don’t miss the good wire placement in the thin crack overhead before swinging up right into an unwelcoming rounded crack. Fight up the crack past a handrail on the left to ledges beneath the massive overhang. Traverse 3m left and pull through the bulge to finish as for *Smaug the Dragon* ((care required with the rock at the top).

FA: Bob Bennet, Bob Walker



Owl Rock *Bullroarer* area

24 ***Mithril** 22m E4 6a (1981)

A high standard challenge: fingery and exacting face. Sound but fiddly small wire placements provide just enough protection. Start 2m right of the twin-trunked tree. Climb a thin crack rightwards to a bulge. Crank up onto a steep wall (*in-situ* thread) and pull over a second bulge to ledges beneath the massive overhang. Move left to the undercut crack of *The Goblin King*, or rev up and enjoy.....

FA: Richard Harrison

25 **Rising above Bedlam** 22m E6 6b (11.8.94)

The 'whole lot of roof' above *Mithril*; thrilling and gymnastic. Follow *Mithril* (or, for the full fix, The '*Oh No!*' Zone) to ledges under the left-hand side of the massive overhang. Reach up and right for a jug, and then improvise direct up the hanging rib to gain a flake crack and the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping), Francis Haden

26 **Mithril Direct Finish** 22m E5 6a (1981/4.93)

A committing alternative way out. From the ledges beneath the massive overhang, reach up and right for a jug, swing right, and lock hard for reluctant finishing holds just left of *The Wargs*.

FA: Grant Wright (on sight), Ben Luxton; possibly led before by Richard Harrison in 1981.

27 ***The 'Oh No!' Zone** 22m E6 6b (17.9.89)

Extremely sustained; expect forearms to be burning in said zone. Some small threads are normally *in situ*. From a good pocket 2m right of *Mithril*, climb straight up to a bulge (peg). Pull over (*in-situ* thread slightly right) and continue directly up impending rock to ledges below the overhang. If you have energy to spare, step right to finish up *The Wargs*.

FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping), unseconded

28 ****The Wargs** 22m E4 6b (1970)

Goblin's definitive testpiece, which is just plain butch. Elias's original hammered nut is still in place! Start below the right-hand end of the massive overhang. Step off a block and reach a small overhung niche 3m up. Swing left to the base of a leaning crack and climb it (threaded jammed nut) using good holds on the left to gain ledges beneath the overhang. Fix lots of gear in the pockets under the overhang; then one-arm spectacularly over via a beautiful angular jug.

FA: Elias Fivesdale, Bob Walker (VS, A2, via a slightly different line). *Elias was described as an 'elderly Norwegian' – at the age of 54. (So what of us post-60-year olds?)*

First free ascent and line described: Richard Harrison 1981

29 ****Modern Times** 20m E5 6b (23.5.84)

Fittingly still amongst the hardest sequences in the Combe, with one stopper move. Start as for *The Wargs*. Step off a block and reach a small overhung niche at 3m. Pull rightwards over a bulge (old peg) and gain a flat hand-ledge; poxy small thread above. Swing left and climb a short, blind crack (two sideways wire placements), gaining a jug below a bulge with great difficulty. Pull over the bulge (peg, still missing) and finish triumphantly up the headwall.

FA: Jon Bassindale (after top-roping crux section), Martin Crocker. *Bassindale subsequently explained that 'the climb is easier for the excessively tall'. The section to the hand-ledge was probably the original line of The Wargs and was first free climbed by Chris King, Nigel Gifford on 14 May 1977; they then moved left to the hammered nut (1 aid point) and belayed under the roof. Pitch 2 traversed right into Gondolin. Climbed on sight, their route was called **No Pussyfooting** (MXS 5b/c).*



The Wargs (E4); Stuart Hughes
Pic: Nigel Coe

30 **Tomituka** 21m E5 6b/c (10.3.2002)

Enigmatic and eliminate, but totally ‘nails’. Follow *Modern Times* to its hand-ledge. Move up (insubstantial gear) and crimp the bare leaning wall above slightly rightwards to rejoin *Modern Times* below its headwall.

FA: Rob Lisney

Warning! Loose Stones!

All the climbs between *Fletch the Fagless* and *Gundabad* finish at a gully sprinkled with loose stones. Mind your footing and make sure your mate below is wearing a helmet.

31 **Fletch the Fagless** 25m E5 6a (3.3.2015)

A better-than-expected intervention left of *Gondolin*. The gear is spaced. From the starting block of *Modern Times* climb diagonally right to an incipient break (threads). Reach the first of a series of sideholds up to the right (poor peg), and follow them before stretching high left for small fingerholds under the leaning white wall (crucial small wires high right in flake crack – long reach obligatory!). Inhale and then fire direct up the leaning white wall to jugs over the lip; swing left on these, rocking up to a niche on *Gondolin*. It’s not a drag to finish up *The Moves*, *The Moves*.

FA: Martin Crocker (after some top-rope practice), Simon Fletcher (just given up smoking)

32 ****Gondolin** 20m VS 4c (1968)

A popular route which can be protected well (add some largish cams to your arsenal). Twelve metres before the right end of the cliff is a leftward-slanting crack leading up to roof. Climb onto a ledge under the crack. Layaway and jam the crack (polished), swinging out to a ledge left of the roof.

Finish up the pleasant wide cracks and corner, taking care with loose stones underfoot at the top.

FA: Bob Bennett, Bob Walker

33 **The Moves! The Moves!** 20m E3 6a (3.5.87)

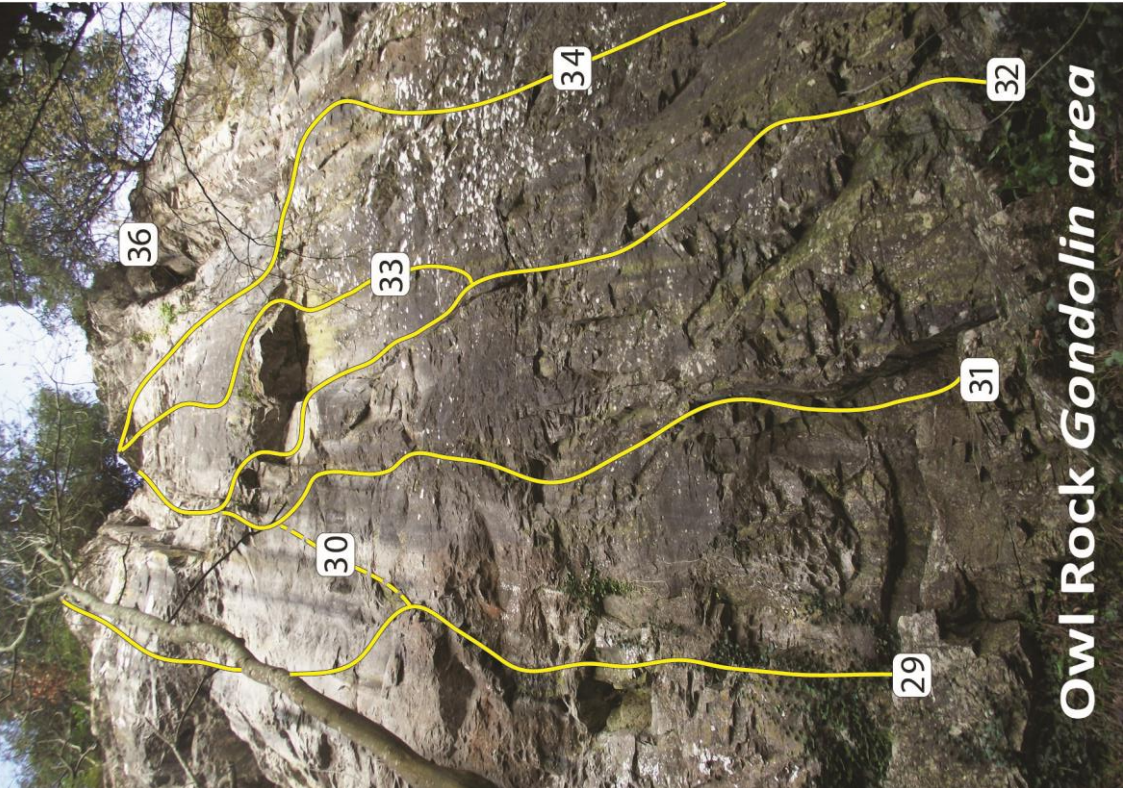
A serious, contrived start combines with an ace top wall. Follow *Gondolin* onto its ledge. Part ways (sort of, since a side runner is mandatory at this grade) and step right onto the wall. Above is lichenous blankness: make a long rockup and stretch for a thin finger-flake. Pull around the right-hand side of the roof, and step left onto a ledge. Above is a perfect pocketed wall. Stretch for a three-finger-pocket for right hand, reach a smaller one for left hand and then pull like hell, pedalling up to more, distant pockets. Climb up and left along a flake to the exit of *Gondolin*. (You can climb the upper wall just left at 5c, but then you’ll kick yourself for missing *the ‘Move’*.)

FA: Jon Bassindale, Annette Jones

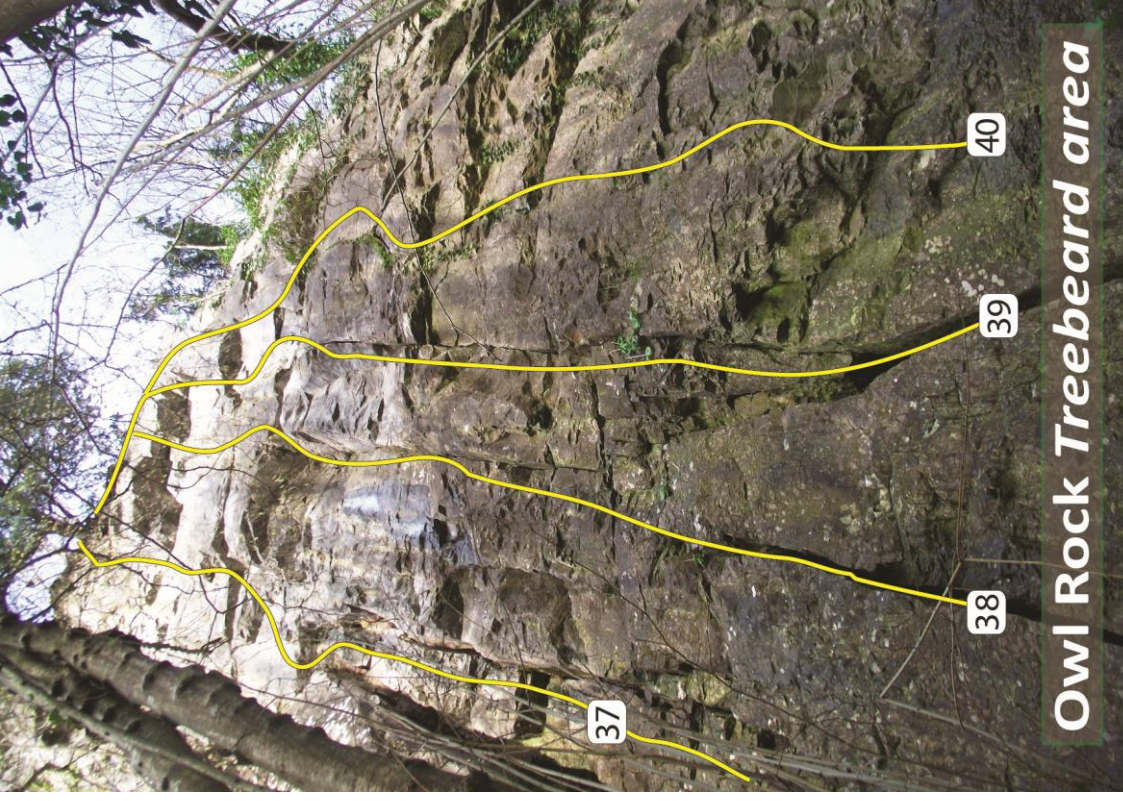
34 ****Gundabad** 20m E1 5b (1970)

A must-do: exhilarating pocket-pulling, and – if you take the easiest line up the lower wall – a very soft touch at the grade. Start a metre left of the chimney-line towards the right-hand end of the cliff. Follow good fingerholds up the wall for 7m. Above is a flake; either climb straight up it to a major break or (much easier) step out right and work back left to the break. Traverse left 2m until beneath a sizeable pocket in the grey wall (thin thread – or should it be ‘thin Fred?’). One stiff pull up leads to easier ground and a rising traverse leftwards up a flake to the top of *Gondolin*.

FA: (Thin) Fred Bennett, Bob Bennett, Bob Walker *The original Gundabad hop-scotched between Gondolin and Necromancer, but the straighter version was climbed at a similar time too.*



Owl Rock Gondolin area



Owl Rock Treebeard area

The next bunch finishes at a large holm oak tree which is equipped for abseil (abseil optional; you can scramble out – but be mindful of loose rock and stones underfoot).

35 Necrophilia 25m E2 5b (1983/4)

The slim groove right of *Necromancer*'s second chimney is dead strenuous. Follow *Gundabad* for 7m, but step up right to emerge on the ledge of *Necromancer*. Make a move up; then transfer to a crack in the right wall which, together with the slim groove, leads to big hollow holds at the top.

FA: Jon Bassindale

36 Necromancer 25m VS 4c (1968)

A climb of character though polished to abandon (largeish cams compensate). Start below the chimney-line 7m from the right end of the cliff. Contort and udge up the shallow chimney using the double cracks; then swing up left onto a ledge below the second chimney. Climb the chimney, moving right at the top to tree belays. (There is also an exciting and exposed leftward exit.)

FA: Bob Bennett, Bob Walker *'The impossibly polished chimney ruins a good climb and many a climber's day'*. Ray Chappell; an advisor to the 2004 guidebook.

37 *Longbeard 25m E1 5b (1970)

Undervalued in the past: a steep and technical outing on compact rock. Follow *Necromancer* as far as the ledge under the second chimney. Step immediately back right above the initial chimney, heading for a finger-jug under a tall left-facing flake crack. Follow the flake and shallow groove above finishing carefully direct to the holm oak tree.

FA: Fred Bennett, Bob Bennett *'Requires great determination.'* (1972 guidebook.)

In the wall 2 to 3m right of *Necromancer* are two initially deep converging cracks starting just above ground level. (They continue as thinner parallel cracks and narrow corners: these are the oft-misrepresented *Treebeard* routes.)

38 *Treebeard (Left) 25m E2 5c (1970/6.6.1977)

Worth unravelling from its close right-hand twin; and well protected throughout. The grade becomes directly proportional to the number of holds on its twin you allow yourself to use (none at this grade!). Climb the left-hand crack and slim left-facing groove above to a bulge. Either pull over direct or – easier – use the square-cut jug on *Treebeard (Right)*. Enter the problematic second left-facing groove (useful footholds out left), doddering up to an overhang. Heave over on jugs and finish up the unstable wall, so gaining the holm oak tree.

FA: Fred, Bennett, Bob Bennett. *Chris King and Nigel Gifford later climbed on-sight a very similar line they called Green Julia.*

39 *Treebeard (Right) 25m VS 4c (1970)

Climb the right-hand crack and shallow groove, stepping right into balance under a rectangular rib. Grope around left into a left-facing corner and stand up on the big square-cut jug. Move up and pull over the right-hand end of the overhang. Finish up the unstable wall, so gaining the holm oak tree.

FA: Fred, Bennett, Bob Bennett

40 Open Knightly 25m E1 5a/b (6.3.2010)

A reasonable route, but one which, if climbing on-sight, requires cautious climbing. Climb the fragile wall a metre right of *Treebeard (Right)* to a pocketed break (*in-situ* thread). Find a hidden fingerhold overhead; span right and crank up on small pockets to ledges, junction with *Treebeard (Right)*. Pull straight into a right-facing groove and climb it onto easier ground. Step left and finish up the unstable wall, so gaining the holm oak tree.

FA: Mark Davies, Guy Percival, Dave Elder

41 Greybeard 25m VS 4b (1970) regularly becomes redundant because of rampant jungle. It 'climbs' the right side of the wall before trending left into the groove nicked by *Open Knightly*.

FA: Members of the 1972 guidebook team

42 Hordes of the Things 60m E2 (6.72/25.7.86)

A high-level, left-to-right girdle of Owl Rock. Start as for *Radagast*.

1 20m 5c Climb diagonally rightwards to the base of the corner of *Elrond*. Traverse rightwards across *Nazgul* (peg) to take a nut and thread belay on *Gollum*.

2 25m 5b Step down and traverse the break rightwards to ledges below the massive overhang of *The Wargs*. Continue rightwards, and then make bold airy moves across a steep wall to a good ledge on *Gondolin*.

3 15m 5b Resume the traverse, along the big break under *Gundabad's* pocketed wall, into *Necromancer*. Step across the groove, and finish up *Treebeard(Right)*.

FA: Fred Bennett, Bob Bennett, John Moss. *The exact line of the 1972 traverse is unknown, and in conversations it was only referred to as 'The Girdle'. The name and at least some of the line described is attributable to Jon Bassindale, Annette Jones, Kevin Bassindale.*

43 *Jive Tolkien 55m E5 (14.6.88)

A low-level, right-to-left girdle of Owl Rock, featuring a very demanding first pitch.

1 30m 6b Climb *Gondolin* for 6m and then traverse left to the foot of the crack of *Modern Times*. Step down into *The Wargs* (jammed nut) and cross urgently leftwards between thin roofs to the crack of *Bullroarer*. Continue at the same level to the belay of *Hordes of the Things*.

2 25m 5c Reverse pitch 1 of *Hordes of the Things* and finish up *Gremlin Groove*.

FA: Dave Viggers, Mark Hopkins (alternate leads)



Gundabad (E1); Kevin Prior
Pic: Colin Knowles



Treebeard (Right) (VS); Sarju Mashru
Pic: Colin Knowles

Bouldering on Owl Rock

The sheer pocketed wall between *Shagrat* and *Modern Times* has been bouldered since time immemorial. A brace of vertical problems comprising the starts of the routes and some testing infills and traverses are on offer. The vertical problems end at the blind break at between 6.5m (on the left) and 5m (on the right) across which a descent can be made respectively down *Shagrat* or the hand-crack of *The Goblin King*. While all have been soloed ground up without mats, they really are bold and in effect short solos. I suppose – as bouldering reaches higher and higher – some might consider them highballs with multiple mats and a spotting team. Both trad (solo) and bouldering V grades are given as appropriate.

A V0+ (E3 5b) The buttress between *Shagrat* and *Gollum*: various sequences possible, but some of the rock is poor.

B V0+ (E2 5b) The thin parallel cracks of *Gollum*, using jugs on the left.

C V2 (E3 5c) Use the right-hand crack of *Gollum* only (precarious at the top).

D V3 (E3 5c) Layback onto an obvious foothold; then trend very slightly right to the break (very nervy towards the top).

E V3 (E3 6a) Boulder straight up past the pair of obvious fingerjugs (possible start for *The Goblin Queen*).

F V1 (E2 5b) Take pockets and the right-pointing flake, bearing left with tricky moves to the break (only V0- 4c if you step right after the flake: the start of *Smaug the Dragon*).

G V0- (4c) Use the two hand-ledges for an amenable warm-up.

H V0 (5a) The steep slab just left of the hand-crack

I 4a The hand-crack surely can't get any more polished than it is.

J V2 (E3 5c) The impending wall between the two cracks; the crux is to gain the break.

The landing site right of the cracks becomes worse still.

K V2 (5c) The rib left of the obvious pocket; finish left on the higher traverse.

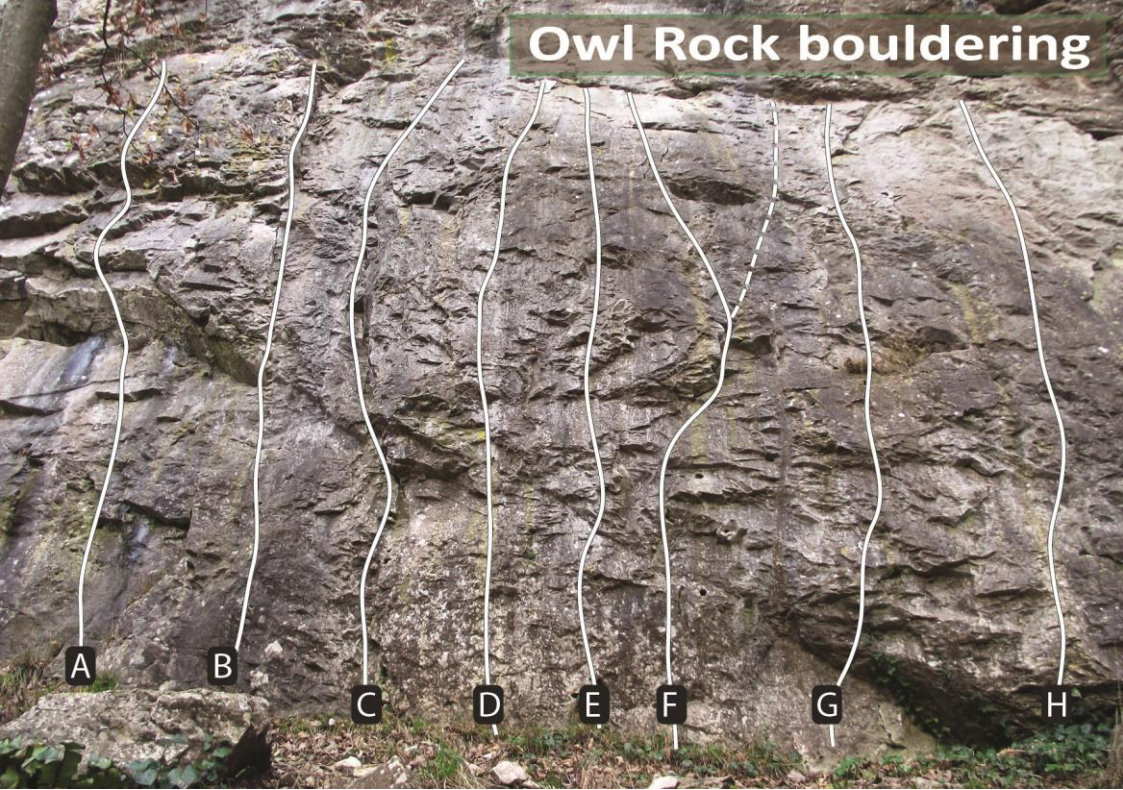
L V3 (6a) Surmount the bulge (obvious pocket for feet) and finish left or right on the higher traverse.

M V3 (6a) Power over the roof; vertical slot above, and finish left or right on the high traverse.

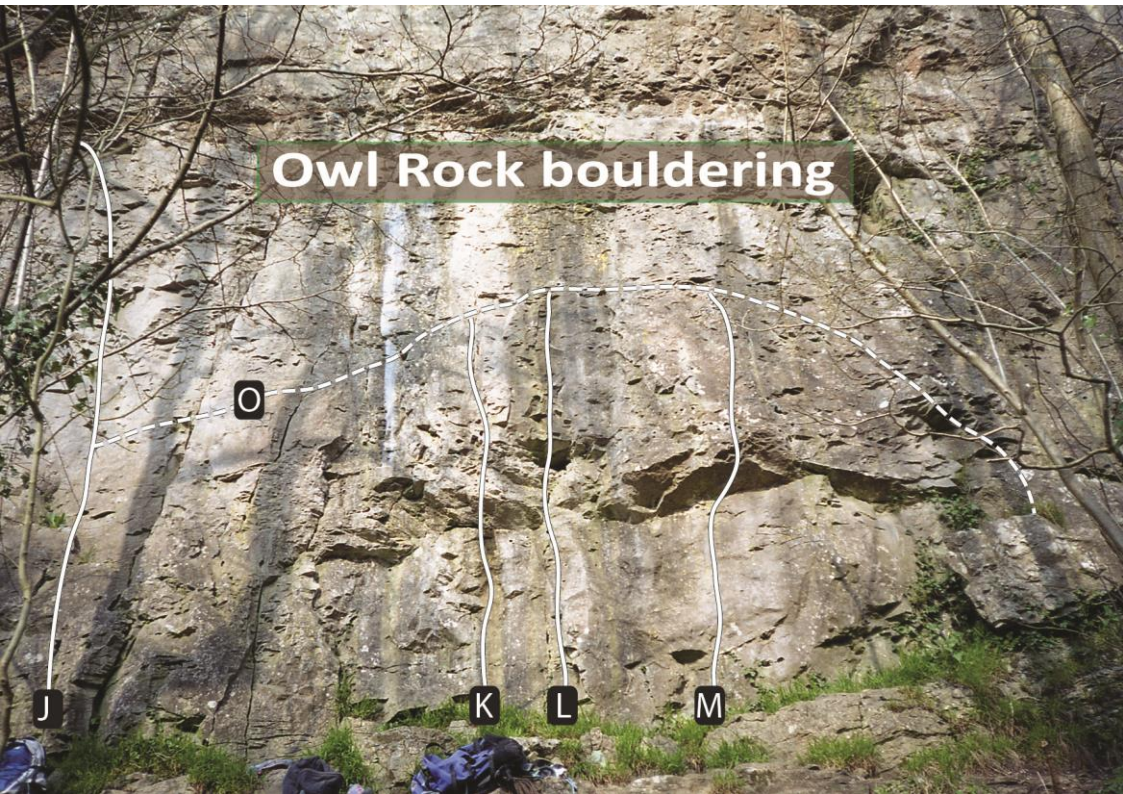
N V3 (6a) The left-to-right low-level traverse; fun pocket pulling and only V2 (5c) if you stop at the hand-crack. The section under *The Wargs* is trickier.

O V3 (6a) This is a higher-level traverse between the hand-crack and the start of *The Wargs*. Feet at 2m or more (and rather blind at that); pretty tense stuff without a travelling mat.

Owl Rock bouldering



Owl Rock bouldering



The Obelisk

Right of the Owl Rock descent gully is a pillar, which gives the following short climbs.

1 **Squeeze!** 6m HS 4a (early-80s)

The narrow chimney: good training for the Harding Slot.

FA: unknown

2 **Michael Mullett** 7m E1 6a

(11.2.2011)

A solo above an awkward landing.

Keeping your feet out of the chimney (an undercut low right keeps you legal) layback the right arête and dyno for flat holds. Pull up and exit up a loose scoop (as for *Nobalicks*).

FA: Brian Mullen (solo after top-roping)

3 **Nobalicks** 8m E2 6b (13.12.98)

Power over the roof guarding the blunt frontal arête and reach a hand-ledge.

Swing left immediately, and continue sketching up the arête. Tempting to solo, but safe if led.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

4 ***Obelisk Crack** 8m HS 4a (early-80s)

A friendly hand-jam crack that can be filled with cams for complete comfort. Start in the chimney on the right; swing left into the crack in the pillar and slot those jams in!

FA: unknown

5 **Obelisk Chimney** 7m V Diff (early-80s)

Take the twin chimney cracks right of the pillar, using the right-hand crack when the fancy takes.

FA: unknown

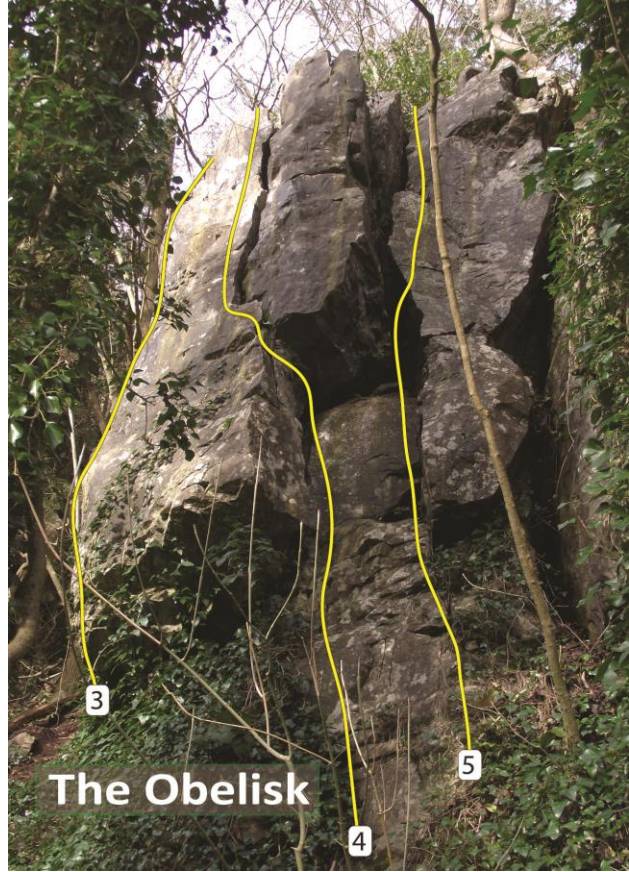
Bolg Buttress

This is the next buttress to the east, right of the twin chimney of The Obelisk, which progressively increases in height from left to right. The distinctive left-facing flake crack is *Bolg*. Descent from the routes is by the narrow root-filled gully just to the right (east).

Rock Stability Caution

There are some hollow-sounding rock and shaky blocks and holds on the cliff, especially at the cliff top and on ledges where plant/tree roots are prising the rock apart. Descent is by abseil or by traversing easily left (facing in) into the Owl Rock descent gully.

The left side of the buttress always seems under siege by ivy, and at the time of writing has once again succumbed to entangling green forces.





*Bolg (S); Colin Knowles,
Simon Fletcher*

1 **Link Two** 9m E2 5c (9.2.2012)

Start 4m down and right of the chimney, behind a tall ash tree. Step into a scoop, and reach a flat finger-edge right of the rounded arête (small wire just above). Span diagonally right for another – hard. Reach jugs above, swing left and then ledge-walk back right to pull onto the top of a tall sharp flake to finish.

1a Variation: **Avalanche** HVS 5a (9.2.2012) From the first finger-edge, reach left for a big flake in the rounded arête and pull up to ledges on the parent route.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

2 **Pebbles Left-hand** 15m E1 5a (c1983/84)

Very poorly protected unless a sling is hitched to the tree behind you. In the sheer wall is a hairline crack leading to a series of flakes. Gain the crack and make a long move off a big layaway for high jugs. Pull up and take the flake exiting with care to a yew tree.

FA: unknown

3 **Pebbles Right-hand** 18m VS 5b (1984)

A minor boulder problem safeguarded by the nearby tree. Climb easily to the tree at the base of the flake crack of *Bolg*. Step left and – using a flat fingerhold – make a long, hard pull into a shallow groove. Follow the groove to a horribly prickly exit (or step left to the flake of the previous route).

FA: Jon Bassindale

4 ***Bolg** 18m S 4a (11.7.71)

A splendid line, very protectable with medium-large nuts and cams. Climb easily to a tree at the base of the flake crack. Follow the crack athletically, past something that might take you unawares near the top.

FA: Keith Williams (solo)

5 **Betwixt and Between** 18m VS 4b (6.3.2010)

An enjoyable if bold addition that hassles its neighbours for space. Climb the short rib and wall right of *Bolg*; then – at the level of *Bolg*'s tree – step up right onto the arête (possible rock-spike runner for thin sling). Delicately follow the arête to the top.

FA: Mark Davies, Guy Percival, Dave Elder

In the clean taller face right of *Bolg* are two finger-cracks; *Legolas* takes the left-hand one.

6 ***Legolas** 12m E1 5b

Any good at finger-jamming? A route that spent most of its life as a VS but which was harder than any HVS on the Suspension Bridge Buttress! On the plus side it's well protected. Gain a shallow groove and climb it on awkward and polished holds to a small overhang. Fumble to find a decent jam in the finger-crack above and persevere up it to the top.

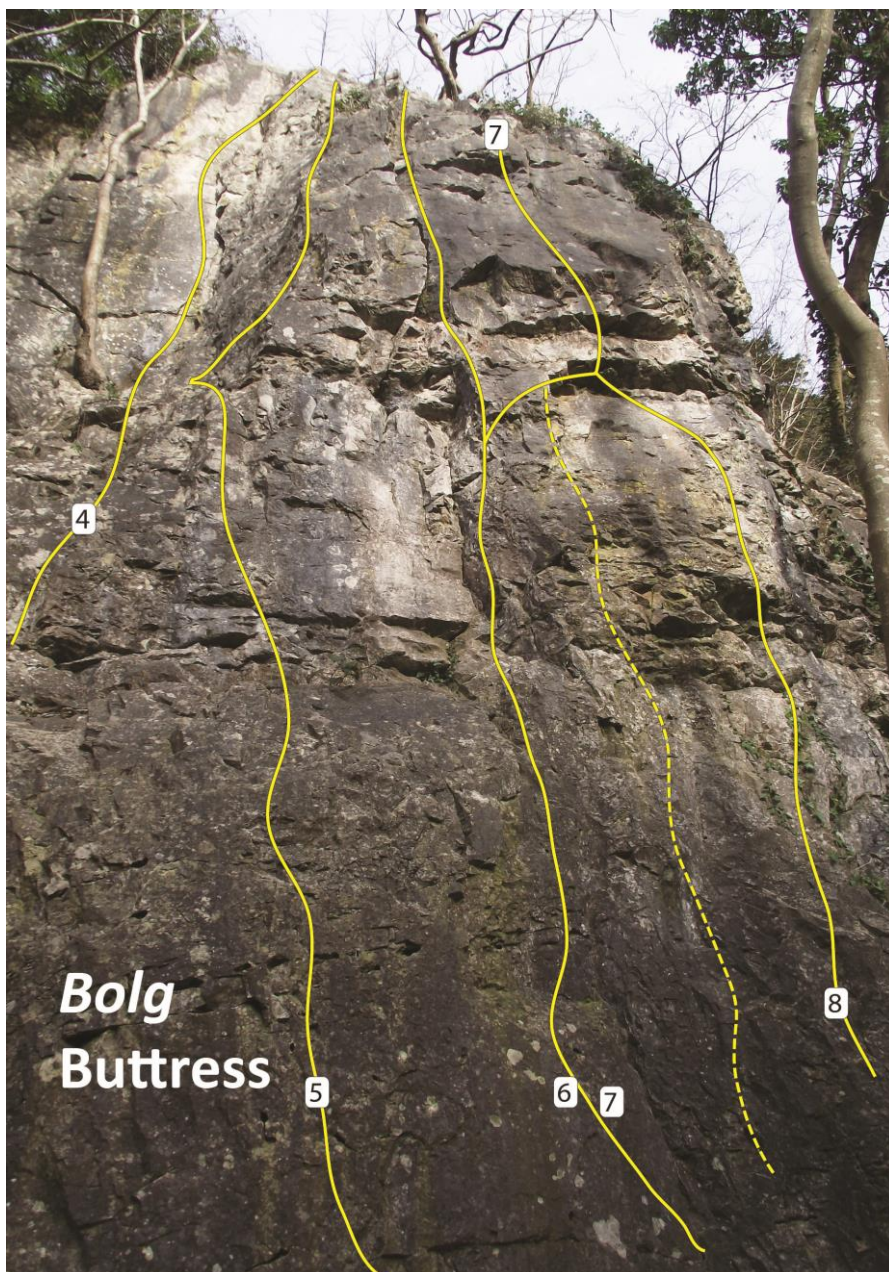
FA: Richard Broomhead, A Burnham

7 ***Brandybuck** 12m E1 5b

A fine testpiece that uses *Legolas* to link with the superb crack in the grey sheet to its right. Follow *Legolas* to the small overhang and make sure you place good gear here. Traverse right under a bulge for 2m. Sprint up the finger-crack, which has a flummoxing first move.

FA: Richard Broomhead, A Burnham.

7a Variation **Direct Start** 12m E3 5c (26.10.2010) Ups the ante somewhat; not that hard, but serious. Climb the rounded rib immediately right of the *Legolas* groove (low gear in breaks) and so reach a series of right-facing layaways. Join *Brandybuck* just above, boldly.
FA: Brian Mullen, Clare Lindley



Brandenburg 12m E5 6a (11.7.2004)

Very hard to read and there is only low, flimsy protection that could rip. Start under the *Brandybuck* crack. Move up to a bulge. Using a series of poor layaways on the right rib make intricate moves up the bulging face to gain a good hold slightly left on *Brandybuck* under its crack. Follow *Brandybuck* to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping), John Harwood

9 Legless on Brandy 12m HVS 5a (30.4.92)

Often in poor condition: look after yourself! Climb cracks in the right-hand end of the buttress, and then follow the broken, strenuous arête above to the top (wires in crack just left of the arête).

FA: Harvey Lyons, Simon Mooney

Just right of Brandybuck Buttress is an inset mini-slab and an isolated conical wall. The mini-slab is a 6m HS 4c but now barely visible behind a fallen tree: **A Parcel of Small Children** (20.3.2012; Mark Davies (solo).

10 Pearl 9m VD (1984)

A reclude, but worth doing. Climb the conical wall from bottom right to top left. (You can also climb the right arête in its entirety at a similar grade but that lands you in unyielding jungle.)

FA: Jon Bassindale (solo)

There is a tall rambling buttress 15m right of the conical wall of *Pearl* which develops into a tottering ridge. Don't expect too much quality here, especially given the ivy comeback. Descent is possible by abseiling from yew trees or scrambling down the adjacent gully.

11 Saving Brian's Privates 30m VD (14.3.2012)

This is an impressive height for the Combe, and is in essence a mountaineering route given the ridge of stacked hollow blocks over which you must risk life and limb. Take the corner on the left to an ash tree. Climb up; then step right and clamber up the ridge with care to its top.

FA: Brian Mullen (solo)

11a Variation **Your Very Good Elf** The corner right of the ridge provides an alternative start at HS 4a; Brian Mullen, Mark Davies (15.3.2012)

Right of an eminently ignorable oft ivy-choked chimney (S) is a discrete flying buttress.

12 Queer Lodgings 10m E1 5b (15.3.2012)

Relatively good but only if and when clean. Take the arête of the buttress onto a foot-ledge. Step delicately onto a short slab; then pull right to a groove and hand-crack that lead to the top.

FA: Mark Davies, Brian Mullen



Esgaroth (HS); Simon Fletcher

The Arkenstone

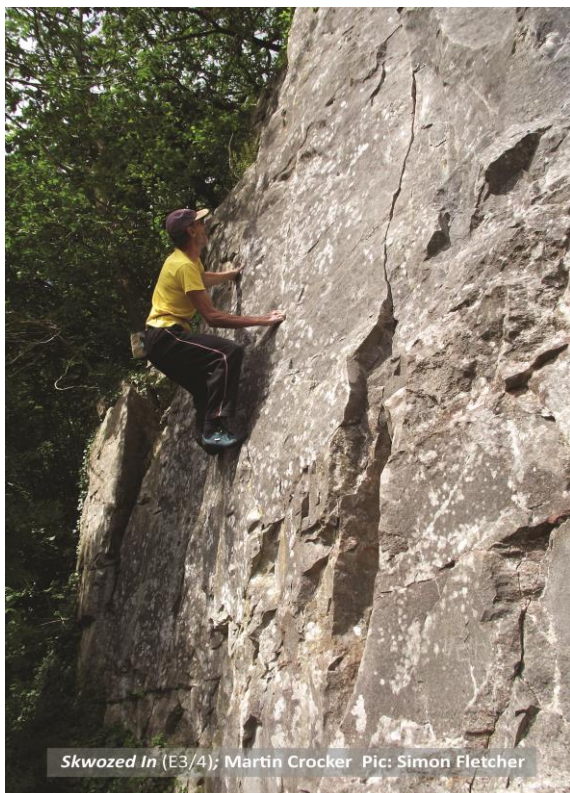
Named after the rumpus of a hunting pack in the distance, this is the distinctive, triangular buttress set above the centre of the scree slopes 200m east of Owl Rock. In contrast to adjacent crags, the climbing is of a delicate, slabby nature, and the harder routes offer very limited protection. One of its main values is in being a perfect winter venue since it is high enough up the valley slope to be in the path of sunshine throughout the year and it is incredibly quick to dry.

Approach

The crag is just about visible from the valley floor. Walk eastwards from Owl Rock for 200m and, where a stepped path on the right (south) side of the valley joins the valley floor path, take a track on the left which heads diagonally up rightwards across the scree to the crag. Descent from the routes is via a steep scramble and gully to the left (when facing the crag) or by abseil (there is often a sling and maillon in place around a block, but check the whole system is sound before using it).

Rock Stability Caution

There are some hollow-sounding rock and shaky blocks and holds on the cliff, especially at the cliff-top and on ledges where plant/tree roots are prising the rock apart (e.g. by the *Idée Fixe* yew tree).



1 **Horology Horror** 15m VS (3.10.91)

Occasionally under ivy (and unmissed). Layback the wide crack formed by a large block; and then climb the wall above, keeping just left of the *Pippin* yew tree.

FA: Dillon Hughes, Simon Mooney

2 **Sloop Jon B** 15m E1 5c (1990s)

Layback the crack in the left wall of the corner; step right (not prematurely), and finish up *Pippin*.

FA: unknown

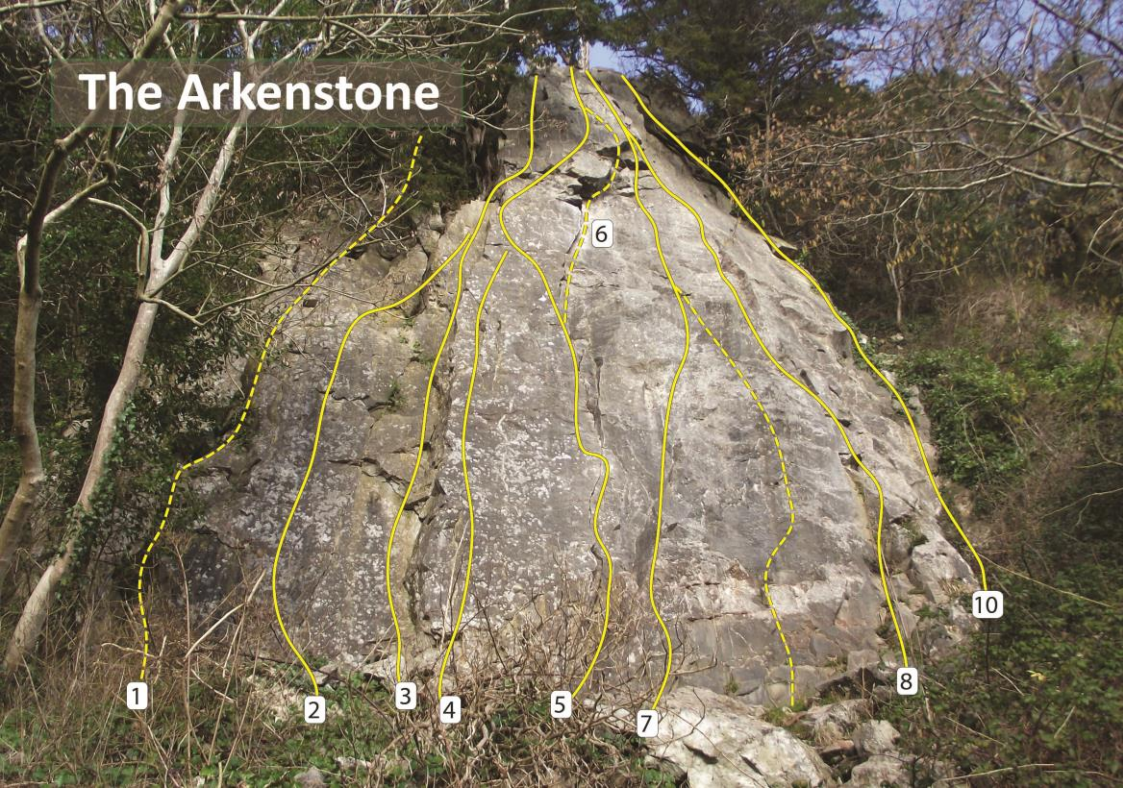
3 **Pippin** 15m HVS 5c (13.2.72)

The left-facing corner in the left side of the buttress. Battle into the corner with infuriating awkwardness (the route used to be graded VS 5a!), pull carefully onto a block, and continue to just below a yew tree. Swing right and take the pleasant arête to the top.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams

Skwozed In (E3/4); Martin Crocker Pic: Simon Fletcher

The Arkenstone



4 **Skwozed In** 8m E4 6a/E3 5c (1983)

You can climb this via three different sequences, but it would take the whole page to describe them. The best line is to stick tight to the arête on its right-hand side, with left hand on a little knobble just round the arête at 5m. No bull.... climbing it this way without mats is an E4 solo since there is only one uselessly low wire. If you approach it on-sight a side runner in *Disaster Area* is forgivable at E1/E2 (depending on its height!). Multiple mats create a highball V3 (if you can be bothered). After, you can solo off right along and down ledges. That's still a mouthful for 8 metres.

FA: Jon Bassindale (solo)

5 ***Disaster Area** 15m HVS 5b (1982/14.7.83)

A strong line initially, until it gets shut down by overhangs. Climb the thin crack on solid fingerlocks (but little for the feet) to ledges. Make a trying rock-up left; then step up right above a bulge and finish up a steep exposed slab.

FA: Jon Bassindale (solo)/Matt Ward, Julian Chapman. *To confuse matters there appear to have been rockfalls between the two ascents. The crack was climbed using pegs in the late-60s but no name was recorded. 'The reason I finally stirred myself to climb the lines I'd so long planned was a photograph in Climber & Rambler of Matt Ward leading 'Disaster Area', a route I'd soloed some years since' [sic]. Jon Bassindale*

6 ***Disaster Area Direct** 15m E3 5c (1990s)

Follow the standard route up the crack to ledges. Above is a slightly staggered bulging groove. Take the groove direct to the top without using *Esgaroth*: sustained hard moves, RPs/microwires useful.

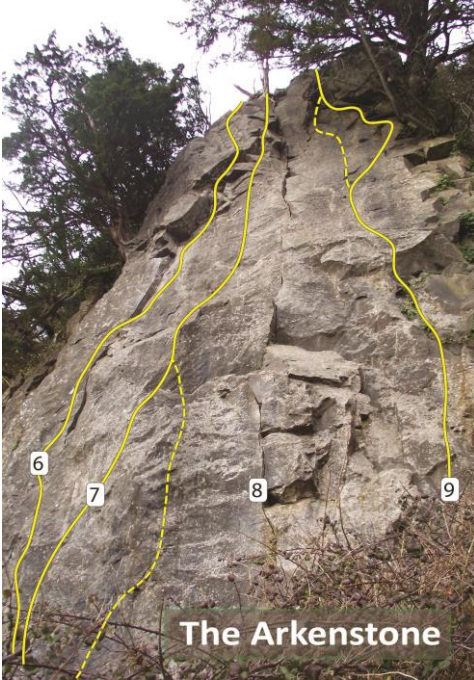
FA: Unknown

7 **Deo Volente** 15m E2 5c (11.91)

Very squeezed in, but with a couple of trick moves on which the hand of God may help. The grade assumes the use of bombproof gear in *Disaster Area* at half height. Follow the line of nice holds on the grooved rib right of *Disaster Area* trending right to a mantel onto a sloping shelf (first gear).

Avoiding holds on neighbouring routes, climb straight up the steep slick slab to finish on *Esgaroth*.

FA: Simon Mooney, Dillon Hughes, Rosie Wych



7a Variation **Direct Start** (1990s) Balance up the precarious blunt arête right of the normal start on tiny holds (without venturing onto better holds on *Esgaroth*); nasty landing.

8 ***Esgaroth** 15m HS 4b (1970) The leading route of the buttress, with mass appeal, up the prominent right-hand crack. Climb leftwards and mantel onto a ledge. Follow the crack with perfect protection (and a few polished holds) to finish up a groove (some dubious rock).

FA: David Lloyd, Bob Walker

9 **Idée Fixe** 15m E4 5c (23.5.92)

Precise slabwork with precise protection; some small *RP*s and microwires fit reasonably well into the tiny slots (there's nowt else). Start up *Esgaroth* but stop under the bulge that undercuts a bare slab (good wire on right). Using a layaway for right hand balance up onto a small angular foothold on the base of the slab. Teeter up and where the slab blanks out into '6c territory', step up right towards a tree; then hand-traverse a tree root leftwards to the exit of *Esgaroth*.

FA: Simon Mooney (solo after top-roping)

9a Variation: **6c Territory** E4 6c (20.12.2009)

Don your best rock shoes for some all-out smearing! Before the original bears right (at the level of a whitebeam tree), use a layaway, but very little else, to extend for a distant crimp for your left hand. Crank up and swing left to exit up a little corner (i.e. avoid using the tree root). An obvious 'good' *RP1* protects, but should be backed up by lassoing a sling around the tree on the right.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

There is a long standing stupidly-eliminate 6b top-rope up the right edge of the slab.

10 **Too Much Tolkien** 15m Very Difficult (11.83)

The broken, right arête of the cliff leads to a yew tree. End it here, or exit as for *Idée Fixe*.

FA: Jon Bassindale (solo)

Orthanc

This buttress is easily identified by a prominent, narrow tower 30m right of The Arkenstone.

Approach it from there along the path atop the scree slope. Descent is either by: (a) abseiling from slings around the top of the tower (normally *in-situ*, but check them first), or (b) by scrambling up the rock step above the tower and climbing down the gully to the right (east) – note that this gully is steep and exposed and is not suitable for novices or anyone other than the brave and sure-footed.

Rock Stability Caution

There are some hollow-sounding rock and shaky blocks and holds on the cliff, especially at the cliff top and on ledges where plant/tree roots are prising the rock apart.

The small buttress left of Orthanc has a group of minor routes and a good tree from which to retreat. By 2019, apart from the merest hint of a sliver of *Balin*, they had once again become cloaked by ivy and suffocated by brambles. Such is its see-saw life that in 2021 a local entrepreneur brought the buttress into fine fettle once more: 'I wanted to find something constructive to do during lockdown'.

1 **Dwalin** 10m VD (8.1.72)

Near the left end (and just right of a detached flake) climb the wall; then continue more easily up the pillar to the tree. (It looks like an easier route is possible just to the left.)

FA: Keith Williams (solo)

2 ***Balin** 12m S 4a (13.2.72)

Don't miss this one. Climb the groove and crack in the wall past a surprise at 4m. There is a neat boulder-problem start which laybacks the right side of the arête on the left at 5c.

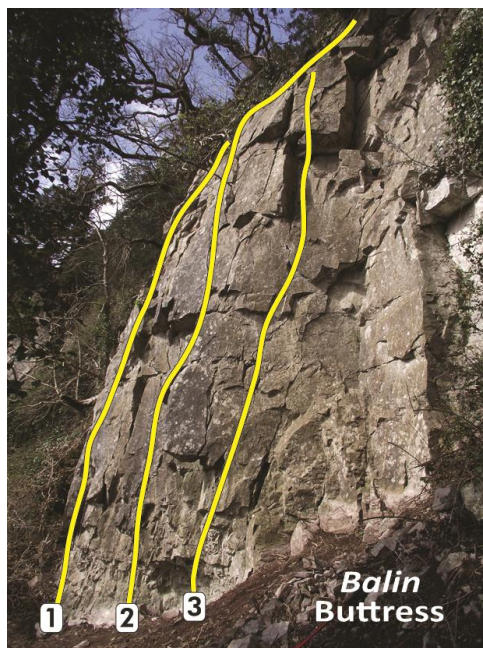
FA: Keith Williams, Bob Walker

3 **Hidden Strength, Visible Weakness**

12m HVS 5b (27.11.2003)

Currently not in hiding. Start a metre right of the groove and follow layaways up and right before climbing direct to finish up a short juggy headwall.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)



The right side of the buttress has been developed further but these three routes are only mediocre and they can quickly fall foul to ivy, and worse, – re-explore at will.

And so to the tower of Orthanc, which has a 3.5m-high flake set in a groove at its base; the flake is the starting-point for the following four climbs.

4 **Dain** 15m Severe 4a (5.2.72)

Care is required with zones of fractured rock throughout. Pull up onto the top of the flake, and step left behind an ash tree into a left-facing corner. Climb the corner to the top of the tower.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams

5 ***Saruman** 18m VS 4b (22.1.72)

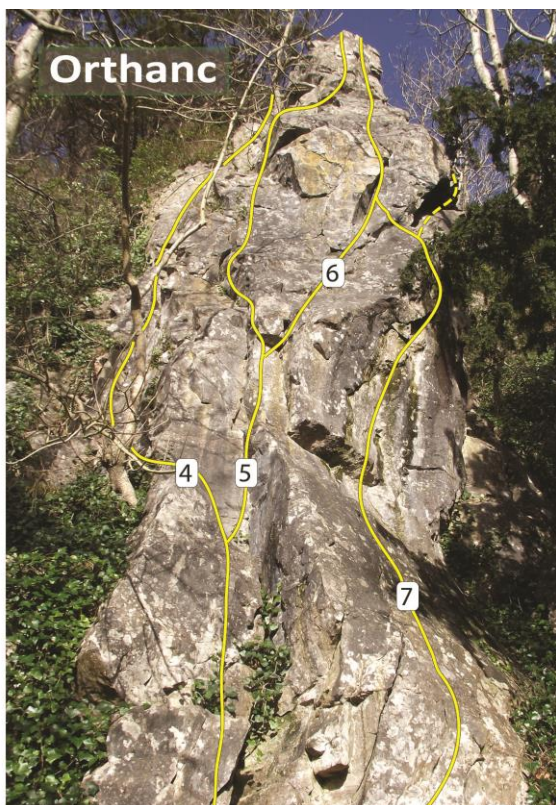
An interesting, well protected route. Pull up onto the top of the flake, and climb the problematic groove and crack in the left arête of the tower to a tree at 13m. Step right onto the front face in a fine position and finish up the exposed headwall.

FA: Keith Williams, Bob Bennett, Bob Walker

6****Gandalf** 18m HVS 5a (19.3.72)

Excellent and highly protectable, but a touch of wizardry in the V-groove may be required. Follow *Saruman* for 8m; then use a huge jug on the right to gain the slabby crest of the tower. Ease into the small V-groove above and pull over on strenuous rounded cracks while wishing for the jug that never quite materialises. Finish as for *Saruman*, up the headwall. Some may consider it 5b.

FA: Keith Williams, Richard Stroud



7 ***The Clockwork Fingerflake** 18m E2 5c (13.11.83)

The overhanging flake-line under the right arête of the buttress offers a dynamic start to *Gandalf*. It goes – but not always like clockwork. Start up the pocketed slab right of the flake. Feeling as if your feet will pop at any moment, take the crack on spaced jugs to a small leaning corner.

Move left into the V-groove of *Gandalf*, which is followed to the top of the tower.

FA: Julian Chapman, Matt Ward, Jon Bassindale

7a Variation: **CrockWork Variant** E2 5c (7.11.2003) Instead of swinging left into *Gandalf*, enter the corner, span right, and pull over a bulge on dodgy-feeling flakes. Climb the rib above to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

8 **Durin** 18m VD (5.2.72)

A worthwhile route up the crack in the right flank of the tower, and just left of the narrow gully. Be careful how you handle the wobbly holds near the top.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams

On the right wall of Orthanc, high in the narrow gully, is a route for the sharp-eyed connoisseur.

9 **Elf-like** 10m HVS 5a (7.11.2003)

Start immediately right of a slender ash tree under an isolated wall. Follow good fingerholds until a reach up left gains a large hold. An even longer reach gains the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo)

A route once took the rib/jungle right of Orthanc: *Oin* 25m D (22.1.72); FA: Keith Williams (solo).



Saruman (VS); Colin Knowles

Eagle Rock

A relatively large and complicated cliff which is situated above the right-most scree slope, 40m above the valley floor and 50m right of Orthanc. It is best to ignore any vegetated dross here and delight in its nest of gems. Descent is either by a desperate gully to the left (west) or by an easier gully 100m to the right (east). Alternatively, in places, you can abseil from trees (but be mindful of anyone below when moving around up there). Unfortunately several tall ash trees have been sawn down here, which won't do anything to engender cordial relations with land managers.

Access Note: Nesting Ravens



Ravens are known to have been nesting on Eagle Rock since February 2015 (normally in the crack of *Orcrist*). If you plan to climb here please check the BMC's Regional Access Database beforehand and look out for notices on site. In any event avoid climbing on the left-hand half of Eagle Rock during the nesting season if the ravens are present (they were in 2021, seemingly bedded in for good).

Rock Stability Caution

There are some hollow-sounding rock and shaky blocks and holds on the cliff, especially at the cliff-top and on ledges where plant/tree roots are prising the rock apart.

At the left-hand end of the cliff is a deep leftward-slanting cleft (*Thorin*). Left of this is a slab in front of which is a tall tree. Sadly the slab frequently becomes covered with ivy (it's heading that way again in 2019).

1 **Thrain** 8m VD (13.11.71)

A micro-line up the slab far left which has been unreservedly reclaimed by Nature.

FA: Keith Williams (solo)

2 **The Hive Queen** 25m E2 5c (3.3.2012)

Problematic and serious, especially the headwall. Start a metre right of the tall tree left of the cleft of *Thorin*. Take the left side of the blunt rib into a slabby recess. Swing right, and move up onto easier rock. Step left and take the bold slab (directly behind the tree) to the large ledge atop *Thorin* (possible belay). Move up the difficult wall just left of *Orcrist* (poor micro-wires initially), pulling over a bulge to a small tree. Surmount a huge flake/block left of the tree; then move right around a rib and finish up a narrow slab.

FA: Brian Mullen (after top-roping), Clare Lindley

3 **Trim the Fringe** 25m VS 4c (11.83)

Often in need of a trim, but pleasant enough when clean. From 3m left of the cleft, climb the blunt rib and the centre of the slab on the right to the ledge atop *Thorin*.

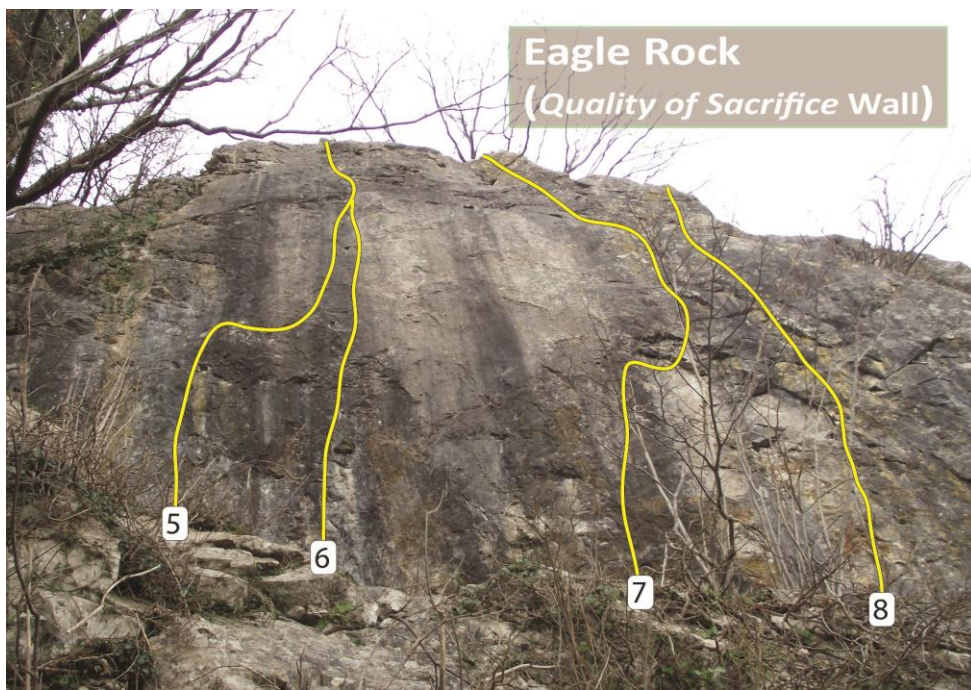
FA: Jon Bassindale (solo)

4 **Thorin** 18m VD (20.6.71)

Climb the deep leftward-slanting crack emerging from the cleft; but 'beware of giant ants at the finish'. From the large ledge above the crack, scramble off left.

FA: Keith Williams, Bob Walker

At the top of *Thorin* is a large ledge with a big oak tree just above its left-hand end, the home for a pristine wall – a battleground for egos and perhaps those of the future on an impossible sheer face.



There are two titbits up the wall left of *Quality of Sacrifice*. **High Step** (5a) is a rock-up into the smooth grey scoop. **Sales Rep** (HVS 5b) is the line of weakness starting as for *Quality of Sacrifice*.

5****Quality of Sacrifice** 10m E5 6c (16.2.91)

The original audacious test-piece on the immaculate grey wall above the ledge. This is the least contrived line of the wall which (because of the gear on the left) is on-sightable. Start 2m right of the tree and move up into a shallow scoop (wires). Step back down and stride right onto the wall (feet at 2m), and span for a three-finger-pocket on the wall with right hand. Somehow, stretch for the obvious jug (*in-situ* thread on the right, afterwards) and continue straight up the incipient grey groove to the top. Despite the gear the falls are long ones and an empathetic rope-holder is an asset.
FA: Martin Crocker (ground-up after many falls), Kevin Mallin

6 ****Atonement** 10m E7 6c (2015)

Eschewing the runners on the left, this is the direct version that despite the top-rope tactics requires absolute commitment (as well as ability). Start 3m right of the tree. Pull straight up onto *Quality of Sacrifice*'s footholds, uselessly low wire possible. Now orchestrate manoeuvres to land your left hand in the three-finger-pocket and make the unprotected crux reach for the jug with your right hand rather than your left, finishing as for *Quality of Sacrifice*. And if you get your left mixed up with your right you'll be back on *Quality of Sacrifice* but without the gear!
FA: Guy Percival (after top-roping – apparently he only just made it)

Project: the true outstanding challenge is the blank wall to the right without using the pocket or jug of *Quality of Sacrifice*. Just some dimples and a bit of texture to go on. When it goes it may start up:

7 **The Three Egos** 12m E4 6b (6.2.2015)

Fierce, but it should prove safe enough. Start 3m left of *Killer Ant* and under a small thread 2m up. Move up to the thread and climb diagonally rightwards past an undercut towards the crack of *Killer Ant*. Clip its thread to the right (wire placement too) and climb up past them to the two-finger-pocket. Bear leftwards to a larger pocket (cam) and pull up to the easy ramp.
FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping), Simon Fletcher

8 **Killer Ant** 10m E4 6a (8.84)

Surprisingly bouldery and strenuous (F6c equivalent?). From the ledge, climb the right side of the steep wall past an *in-situ* thread (using the crack on the left for your left hand) to a pocket on the left (cam). Take the clean rib above to the top, keeping to the left of the loose slab.
FA: Jon Bassindale, Kevin Bassindale

9 **Orc Words** 10m E4 6a (27.11.2003)

Full-on, if only for a few moments. Start at the right edge of the platform at the top of the crack of *Thorin*. Reach a sloping hand-ledge and make very awkward moves past an undercut to a good finger-pocket. Climb the rib and groove above to the top.
FA: Martin Crocker (solo with backrope)

10 ***Orcrest** 25m VS 4c (18.3.72)

A fine climb so long as the ravens are not *in-situ*! In the steep wall above the top of the cleft is a broken groove with a wide chimney slot. Follow the cleft of *Thorin* and transfer into the groove. Climb it, with some cool jamming, and continue up broken ground above to the top.
FA: John Moss, Bob Bennett, Bob Walker

11 ***The Black Riders** 25m E1 5b (6.80)

Excellent; and well protected where it's hard. Climb to the top of the cleft of *Thorin*, and then take the thin finger-jamming crack which curves slightly rightwards up the steep wall. Climb more broken and less well-protected ground above to the top.
FA: Steve Briggs, Richard Broomhead

The next three climbs start from a raised ledge beneath an overhung recess 4m right of the cleft.

12 ****The Israel Blues** 25m E3 5c (11.83)

Intricate, technical, and engaging; but not quite a *Ladder of Desire*. The right wall of the cleft of *Thorin* is formed by a pinnacle flake. Climb to the top of the pinnacle by the crack on its right-hand side. Step right into a groove and follow it energetically over a bulge to easy ground. Climb broken ground to the top.
FA: Jon Bassindale, Julian Chapman (*So called because Bassindale's climbing partner had whisked herself away to a kibbutz.*)



Eagle Rock (left)

13 **Hollow Ring** 25m E4 6a (15.5.88)

Unleashes a whole load of problems your way. From the centre of the recess, power over a bulge just left of a peg (the original, so beware); then step left to the groove of *The Israel Blues*. Move up the groove, but traverse left below the bulge on undercuts before hard moves gain a prominent jug. Pull up – still hard – to a small tree. Climb broken ground to the top.

FA: Jon Bassindale, Annette Jones. *'I doubt its future popularity; still there it is – I knocked the bugger off!'*

13a Variation: **Stuckfinger** E4 6a (11.7.2004) Forge up the finger-crack in the left side of the pinnacle, taking care not to do what the first ascensionist regretted doing. Step up onto the pinnacle's wobbly top and make a hard pull straight into the undercuts of the parent route.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

14 **Frodo's Problem** E4 6b (11.7.2004)

Eliminate moves up a notable feature. Follow *Hollow Ring* to the left arête of the *Glamdring* corner. With protection from a wire in *Israel Blues* to the left, climb the arête to easier ground (peg). If you stick to laybacking the arête you'll avoid using the jugs on *The Israel Blues*, and hence stick to the point of this otherwise pointless exercise.

FA: Martin Crocker, John Harwood

15 ***Glamdring** 25m VS 4c (20.6.71)

A good line, which can be protected well. Climb the crack out of the right-hand side of the recess. Follow the V-corner – lots of fist-jams – perhaps even struggling a little to gain ledges up on the left. Climb broken ground to the top.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams (started by stepping off the rectangular block on the right.)

16 Route March 25m VS 4c (3.84)

Climb the right arête of the *Glamdring* corner, gained via the groove to its right. Step across left onto *Glamdring*, and climb broken ground to the top.

FA: Jon Bassindale, Annette Jones

The next main feature is an ivy-choked gully (if you must, this is *Golfimbul* 20m D (13.11.71); FA: Keith Williams (solo)). The buttress to the right has the tendency to attract ivy growth and some of the rock is poor (ivy-covered in 2019, once again).

17 Gloin 12m Hard Severe 4b (22.1.72)

Climb the interesting groove right of the gully to a tree; just about clean enough in 2019.

FA: Bob Bennett, Keith Williams, Bob Walker

18 Battle with the Bulge 12m E2 5c (11.83)

Start 5m right of the gully, behind a tree. Move up to a bulge, and make awkward moves over into a scoop. Now – well above bouldering height – reach up and then step right onto a small pedestal.

Climb loose, broken rock leftwards and then direct to the top.

FA: Jon Bassindale (solo)

19 Wasteline 12m E4 6a (28.10.2003)

No gear, and nasty. Start 6m right of the gully. Reach an obvious undercut, and then use another above to muscle direct to the small pedestal. Finish as for the previous route or trend rightwards up cracks into *Bifur*.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

To the right is an attractive slabby wall demarcated on its right by the deep off-width crack of *The Hobbit*. Two ash trees at its base have been ‘mysteriously’ (and unjustifiably) sawn down, but the lower one has sprung back to life (here termed ‘the resurgent ash tree’).

20 Jampols 18m HVS 4c (13.3.2012)

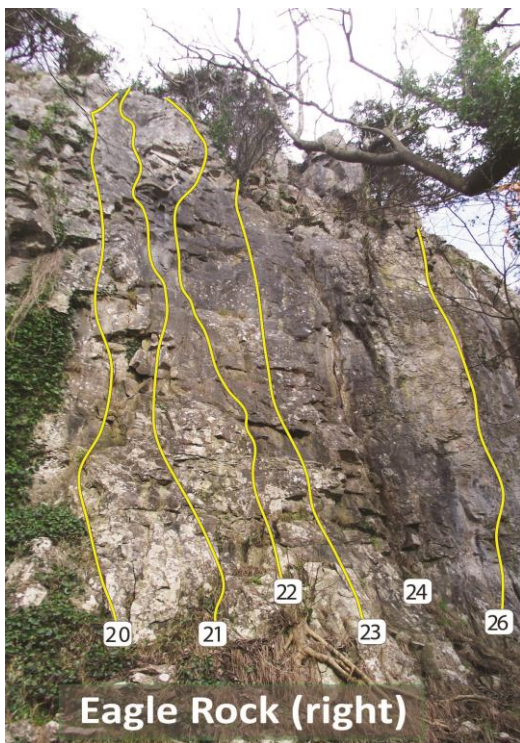
Best stay clear of this one: indistinct, vegetated, and it doesn’t avoid bad rock to its left. Start 2m left of the resurgent ash tree. Climb a trying shallow groove slightly leftwards onto the small pedestal of *Battle with the Bulge*. Trend right to link up with *Bifur* in its groove.

FA: Brian Mullan, Helen Seaborne

21 *Bifur 18m VS 4b (23.1.72)

An enjoyable and protectable climb which has shaped up well over the decades. Start a metre left of the resurgent ash tree and 3m left of a deep wide crack (*The Hobbit*). Climb up large holds past a rock spike to a second, sounder rock spike. Step up and move left, pulling into a groove past a long-suffering ash sapling (using it is not allowed, but wrapping a sling around it for additional protection is just fine). Climb the groove (harder if climbed direct) to a ledge. Yew tree belays 5m up right.

FA: Bob Bennett, Keith Williams ‘*An extremely dangerous undertaking due to loose rock*’.



Eagle Rock (right)

22 Scrambling Remains 18m E2 5c

(1983)

Good, testing climbing bar one hollow block. Start at the resurgent ash tree, 2m left of the deep crack. Climb the face leftwards to the second rock spike of *Bifur*. Keeping just right of the *Bifur* sapling, make a hard step up onto the rock-spike and another hard move over a bulge, stretching right for an incut. Pull up and continue up a narrowing pillar (tricky to exit past the hollow block).
FA: Jon Bassindale (solo) *It is probable that the line of this route became mixed up with Kick the Hobbit; in any event it had been led as described by the mid-80s.*

23 Kick the Hobbit 12m E2 5b

(24.11.2003)

Climb the wall a metre or so left of the crack of *The Hobbit*: A rewarding eliminate involving long moves between positive fingerholds. There is good wire protection at half-height. Finish into the gully above *The Hobbit* or step left into *Scrambling Remains*.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping), but it could well have been done before.

24 *The Hobbit 15m S (9.1.72)

Deserves a retro-star for the line. The off-width crack with two useful and hopefully stable chockstones; jam or don't jam according to taste. Take care when moving around in the gully above because of loose stones. Good yew tree belay 5m above the gully.

FA: Bob Bennett, Keith Williams

25 Twixt Towers 12m E5 6b (24.11.2003)

Unashamedly eliminate. A very bouldery first 5m; the landing is poor, and the grade assumes the use of a mat. Start between *The Hobbit* and *White Tower* and, without using holds in either, climb very thinly to get your right hand on the obvious undercut in the front of the tower. Another tricky move slightly left gains better holds (and gear) in a thin crack right next to *The Hobbit*. Don't step into that route, but finish up the crack rightwards to large shaky holds and the exit of *The White Tower*.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

26 *The White Tower 18m E4 6b (6.80)

A rite of passage of the Combe that comes with a more realistic grade this time round! (But it would get E5 in The Peak.) Reach and follow the steep, pocketed crack in the front face of the tower right of *The Hobbit*. You can finish up the arête of a pillar, but the rock is poor; or step right to the top section of *Gift Tolkien*. Fingery, polished and precise; but protectable (if you can hang on!).

FA: Richard Broomhead, A Burnham

27 Dead Wood 9m E6 6b (27.11.2003)

A solo, which is not as tight as it looks, that requires hard balance climbing right from the word 'go!' Start a metre right of *The White Tower*. Go straight up the wall, starting with your left hand in a recessed hold. Use a pinch to gain a large hold right of the crack of *The White Tower* and, keeping away from that route, use sloping holds to begin a final delicate sequence over a narrow overhang. FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping). *'Above two of my late nan's cushions on a small life raft of dead branches.'*

28 Gift Tolkien 18m S 4a (21.12.91)

Worthwhile; climb the groove 2m right of *The White Tower* and easier ground to yew tree belays. FA: Simon Mooney (solo)

29 The Holly and the Eddie 18m E1-E4 5c/6a (16.3.2007)

The ultimate Goblin eliminate, but on clean rock. The grade options reflect a range of possible tactics and body heights though the first ascensionists avoided use of both gear and holds in adjacent routes. Tackle the slim wall between *Gift Tolkien* and *The Gnome King*, the meat of the route – a very long reach – being the short leaning section (RP placements).

FA: Alex Barrows (after top-roping), Matt Tomlinson

30 *The Gnome King 18m HS 4b (1.1.72)

A great little line; start under the left-facing corner in the right-hand side of the cliff. Climb the polished corner past a difficult jamming section at 6m (not much for your feet and – as luck would have it – the only foothold is sometimes wet!). Above, easier ground leads to yew tree belays.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams, Bob Bennett

31 Shots of the Almighty 18m E5 6a (13.12.98)

The groove in the right arête of *The Gnome King*: an intense and serious start (first gear at 6m). Keeping strictly out of *The Gnome King*, climb the groove using blind layaways around to the right, and gain a bulge (small wires). Pull through to proper holds, and a junction with *Bilbo's Revenge*. FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist). *The shots were those of nearby clay pigeon gunmen who caused leadshot to cascade over the climber – highly distracting.*

32 *Missed! 18m E4 6a (15.8.2019)

The arête: more independent than its neighbour. Boulder boldly (V3) up the rounded arête (blind microwire at 4m, just right) to a break. Stretch to place wires in the crack in the arête above; then balance up the tip of the arête (no holds on *Bilbo's Revenge*) to ledges and the finish of that route.

FA: Martin Crocker (after top-roping), unseconded

33 *Bilbo's Revenge 18m HVS 5a/b (7.83)

An amenable route with a few technical moves. Start 3m right of the left-facing corner of *The Gnome King*. Climb onto a ledge containing a sapling. Climb the smooth thin wall above on the right to ledges. (At this grade you use a few holds on the right for your right hand, but keep your feet on the wall.). Step up and follow a rib to a traverse left to the higher yew tree.

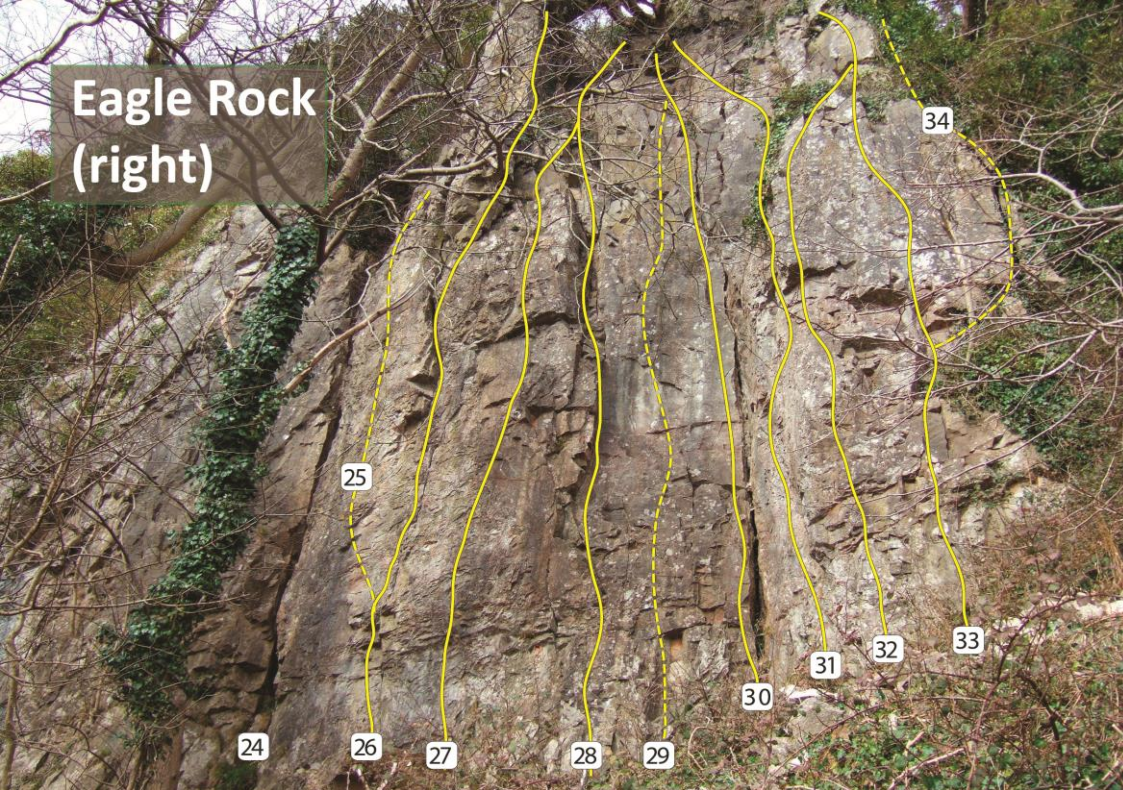
FA: Julian Chapman, Matt Ward

34 Golfimbul 18m VD (13.11.71)

The crack just right of *Bilbo's Revenge* and left of a grotty rift is normally guarded by a wall of brambles. However you can gain it readily from the low ledge on *Bilbo's Revenge*.

FA: Keith Williams (solo)

Eagle Rock (right)



There is a traverse but you might consider the first ascensionists' assessment: 'It has plenty of loose rock and rope drag, but may be of interest if you've already done everything else – twice!'

35 **Waiting for the Drain** 29m HVS (14.5.92)

A hellish left-to-right traverse (featuring loose rock and lots of ivy on Pitch 1).

1 15m 4c Follow *Gloin* to the top of its groove (possible/advisable belay). Traverse right, passing above the sapling of *Bifur*, to reach a semi-hanging belay just above a chockstone on *The Hobbit*.

2 14m 4b Make a rising traverse rightwards, keeping below the broken rock, to the corner of *The Gnome King*. Either continue right and finish up *Bilbo's Revenge* or finish up the smooth groove just to the right of the twin cracks (better).

FA: Simon Mooney, Neil Burton

The 'terminal tower' far right has a love/hate relationship with ivy and brambles. It comes and goes subject to the machinations of local enthusiasts. In 2019 the routes were totally 'gone'.

36 **Barking Madly** 12m E3 6a (16.1.2015)

Can you hear the damn hounds? The left arête of the tower: no gear but a soft landing. Start with left foot on the boulder in the rift and transfer right onto the arête. Use layaways on the arête and make a long move to reach a hollow block hold; pull direct through overlaps above. Scramble to a yew tree.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo, after top-roping)

37 **The Route with No Gnome** 10m VS 4b/c (16.2.92)

Climb the crack in the front of the terminal tower to a belay on shrubs.

FA: Simon Mooney, Neil Burton

37 **Wielding the Mystical Sword of Ould Bulchyt** 10m VS 4b (28.2.93)

Start up the central crack and then move right to gain a small, hanging pinnacle. Continue up the middle of the rib above with interest.

Nige Scales, Kev Manchand, Mark Turnbull, Tony Warburton

Beyond Eagle Rock, skirting right from the descent gully are some low rocks set in trees. They may yield a couple of micros, though only at the cost of an environmental ruckus.



The Gnome King (HS); Simon Fletcher



The Carrock (a.k.a. Runway Rock)

A Goblin escapee from all, well, almost all, of those damn Hobbit names; can you blame it? This is a small crag boasting wonderful views. It is open, south facing, and, since it is well-elevated, gets more sunshine than any other crag in the Combe (along with Toot Rock). The hard routes are definitely worth the outing, making the crag better than one 80s activist suggested: ‘The Carrock has some steep possibilities but it is barely worth the walk.’ However, if you do decide to take the walk **approach** it by continuing along the valley track, past the main crags, to the point where the track goes through a gap in a stone wall across the valley. Immediately on the left, behind the wall, is a RoW that is followed steeply and when contouring right a few hundred metres. Keeping your eyes peeled and – just short of the top of the slope (and near a cluster of yew trees) – look for a small outcrop to the right. Here a faint path breaks right and traverses the cliff-edge onto a grassy platform overlooking the Combe (wooden benches for the weary to rest). The buttress containing the climbs is directly below. You can also reach the top of the crag from above Eagle Rock by following paths eastwards along the top of the valley (10-minute walk). The only belays are the trees 8m back from the cliff-edge. Care should be taken not to position any unattended belay ropes that could cause a trip hazard.

Rock Stability and Loose Stones Caution

Some of the rock is weak and requires careful handling especially on the easier routes. There has already been one accident here that caused fractures in the access situation. Also do mind your heads: the cliff-top is covered in loose stones and if that weren’t enough cans and bottles have the habit of ‘falling’ down the cliff too (*lager, lager, lager.....louts.*)

The crag is dominated by a bulging buttress under the viewpoint. The rock and easier routes to either side are much more broken, untrustworthy, and prone to vegetation.

The crag lies within both the SSSI and the Avon Wildlife Trust Nature Reserve.

1 Roac 15m S 4a (4.12.71)

Bounding the left-hand side of the bulging buttress is a corner. Climb the lower face delicately and pull over a bulge past a mini-cave into the corner. Typically the corner is filled with scrub, which will do little to enhance your mood in your summit bid.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams

2 Air Choir 18m E1 5b (11.5.2005)

Although the first ascent was soloed, this climb is protectable (and there is a mystery retro-peg in place too). Low in the grade. Start below the left edge of the bulging buttress. Climb up to intercept a leftward-rising ramp at 4m. Stretch up for an obvious flat hand-ledge above and, using a cracked flake on the left, step nervously up on to it. Move up (m. peg) and right, and take the solid grey rib above to the top.

FA: Martin Crocker (solo after top-roping)

3 *Runaway 18m E3 6a (11.5.2005)

Climb up grey rock to undercuts in the leftward-rising ramp. Clip a sticking-out peg overhead (placing a tape hero-loop on it is advised), and then swing right to grapple awkwardly into a crack. Follow the crack to more broken ground and take the solid grey rib to the top as for *Air Chorus*.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

4 *Black Box Recorder 18m E5 6c (14.6.2005)

A savage eliminate up bulging ground. Lift up your undercarriage for the falls, when they come. From a layaway in the bulge, stretch for a two-finger-pocket for your *right* hand (peg). A mono and/or crimp up left is hard to gain and heinous to leave. Bigger holds above (retro-peg) lead to the sapling of the previous route. (Keep off holds on *Runaway* for this grade.)

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist, the record stating: 'after at least seven slamming falls')

5 *Everything must be Recycled 18m E4 6b (11.5.2005)

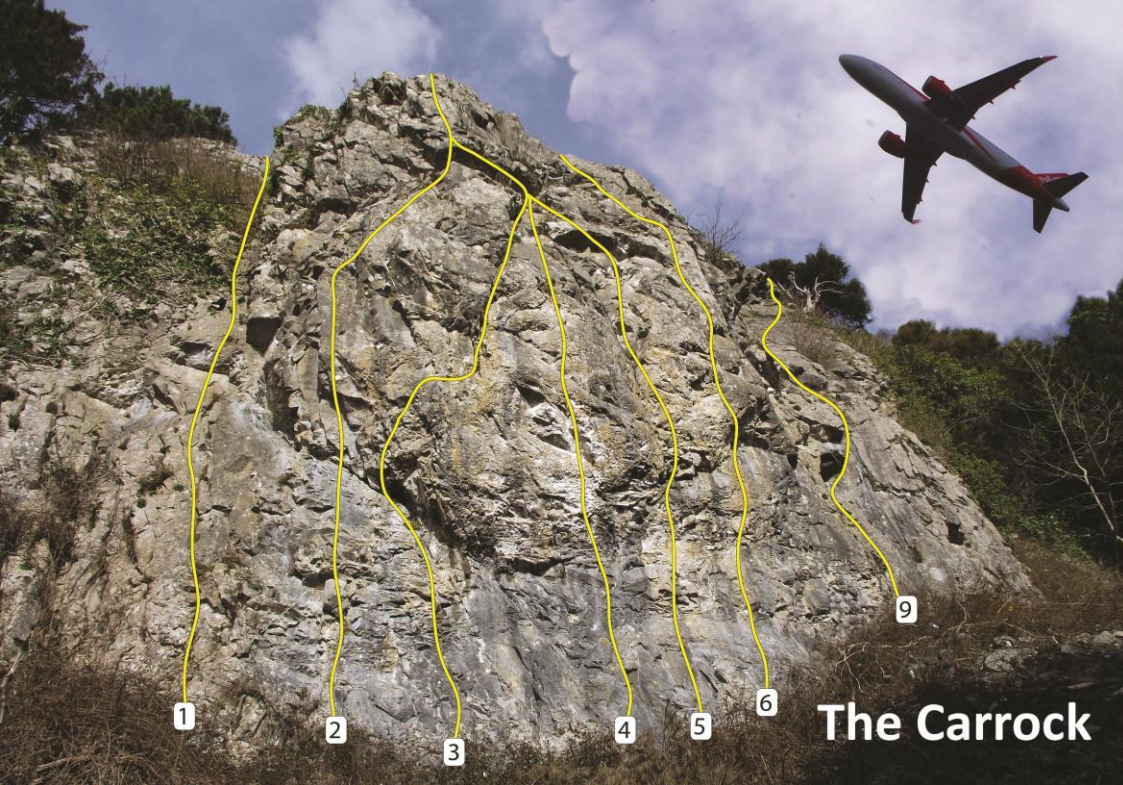
Pretty damn good; dynamic and bouldery – and good wire protection can be placed. Start below a bottomless groove in the centre of the buttress. Climb up until hard moves (peg; then the key wire placement) force an entry to the groove. Climb the groove (retro-peg) and then swing left and take the solid grey rib to the top, as for *Air Chorus*.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)

6 *In-Flight Entertainment 15m E4 6a/b (11.5.2005)

The entertainment is the puzzling sequence to get you off the ground. Start below a scooped white overhang 5m up. Climb direct (peg up and right – precarious clip), and then power around the roof. Better holds in the sinuous crack above lead to broken ground and a loose exit groove.

FA: Martin Crocker (led with Soloist)



A distinctive feature of the right-hand side of the cliff is a square-cut little roof forming the underside of a projecting block.

7 In the Company of Talking Trees 15m HVS 5c (11.5.2005)

A boulder problem leads onto a pleasant slab. Start under the right-hand end of the bulging buttress. Follow a thin flake crack and groove (peg of *In Flight Entertainment* on the left if desired) into a better-defined groove left of the projecting block. Step left onto good footholds on a steep grey slab. Move left again to finish up the preceding route.

FA: Martin Crocker (led on-sight with Soloist, pre-I-FE peg)

8 Korc 15m HS 4a (13.2.72)

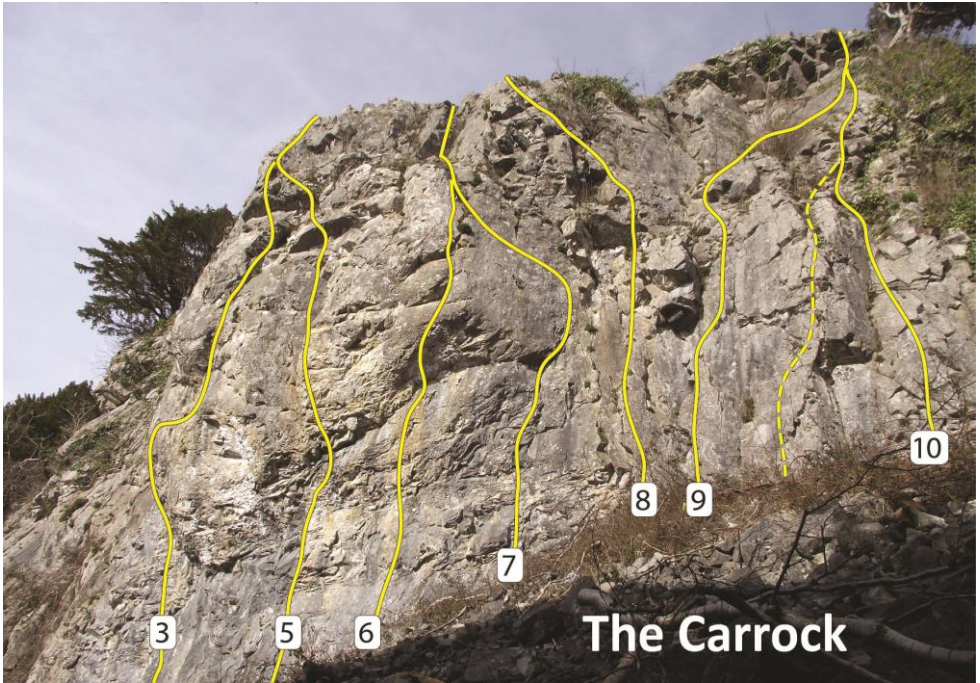
Take care with the rock. Start under the projecting block. Climb the groove left of the block; then trend left above overhangs and just below a small tree (runner); then finish up the exposed rib on the left.

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams

9 Carc Left-hand 15m HS 4b (13.2.72)

Not bad, but take care with the rock. Start under the projecting block. Climb the corner immediately right of the block and mantle up onto ledges. Move into a gravelly groove, but quit that grot for the smooth slab on the right. Bear right up the slab and exit over the right-hand end of the capping overhang (just left of a half-dead yew tree).

FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams



10 Carc Right-hand 15m VS 4c (13.2.72)

Potentially a good climb, but only when clear of brambles and the mid-height hawthorn isn't too touchy-feely. Again, take care with the rock. Climb the right-most corner/groove on its right wall, moving up past a rattling flake onto ledges. Pull over a pocketed bulge onto a rounded rib, and follow this and the slab above to exit over the right-hand end of the capping overhang as for *Carc Right-hand*. An equally worthwhile entry can be made up the arête between the two initial corners. FA: Bob Walker, Keith Williams

Finally, according to the 1972 guidebook: 'Other routes have been made to the right; most are quite pleasant – especially the short corner.' Maybe somebody's given them names now.