

## Lost Horizons / Shere Khan

*Martin Berzins.*

The junction of the east and south-east faces of Scafell's East Buttress is a friendly sort of place. Standing twenty feet out from its base a cleverly placed stream spits contemptuously in your face. Intimidating - not really - several enormous smooth corners slant leftwards and outwards ; insignificant sloping ledges are guarded by bulges or smooth leaning walls. The rock is compact , overhanging and unrelenting.

Round to the left , towards the south-east face , the angle eases and the rock yields to two classic climbs. Maurice Linnell ' s ' Great Eastern ' and Les Brown's 'Centaur ' . However the eye is inevitably drawn back to the magnificent central groove. This starts steeply , eventually narrows and overhangs and then continues as a faint line up the wall above. Often considered , but rarely attempted , it was predictably and controversially manufactured into 'Lost Horizons ' by Pete Livesey and Jill Lawrence in the drought of 1976. The controversy arose in part because crucial protection was placed by abseil , used to clean the route and then left in place for the subsequent ascent. The brilliance of the creation however left the critics somewhat stunned ; a feeling that you share as you stand at the bottom.

Fortunately it's not as bad as it looks ; the first corner is good honest bridging and laybacking. The sloping ledge above is guarded by a manky peg , so

pathetic that it can only have been used for cleaning. Above the corner leans and narrows. Fifteen feet higher is another ledge and in between is the second peg. A fierce pull enables it to be reached - smashed into the hilt right by the crux - it's obviously not just for decoration. A bit of cunning enables you to free climb until the peg is at waist level but the ledge is still tantalisingly out of reach. The next move is the crux, claimed as free by Livesey but disputed by the local experts, it only achieved respectability when Bob Berzins free climbed it five years later. I for one followed the probable style of the first ascent.

Leaving the ledge is problematic and leads to intricate face climbing on sloping holds. Technically it's not too hard but the exposure and the runout slow down the delicate upward balance to the safety of a belay on Great Eastern. Above the belay is the sting, a thin overhanging crack. My solution <sup>first</sup> to this was neat, effective <sup>and according to the pitch</sup> ~~and tied on to the other end of the rope~~ Chris 'Steelfingers' <sup>could take the rope in,</sup> Sowden placed a solitary runner and raced up the crack. It was not so easy to second. Best hard route on Scafell we thought apart from one possible exception....

Shere Khan is that exception. It starts in a short corner to the right of Lost Horizons; a line of rusty pegs testifying to early attempts on the line. Climbing the initial groove is steep but not desperately difficult until you are forced to pull out right onto a long ledge that slopes up and rightwards. This is a typical ledge on the 'East', a holdless optical illusion caused by the eye seeking respite from the overhanging norm. Standing on this one only urges you to continue by teetering rightwards to its end, feeling somewhat cheated.

The position here is impressive and the overhanging rock above depressing. Little wonder then that Colin Read and John Adams retreated from here on an inspired early attempt. This failure seemed to deter others until Ed Cleasby and Rob Matheson boldly forced the line over two days in 1977. The protection at the

end of the ramp isn't too good - a collection of tiny wires and the holds all seem to slope the wrong way. The only incentive used to be provided by an in-situ wire sling twenty feet above .

Reaching it only made you wish that you hadn't bothered. It was a bashie - cold welded by fear and panic into a miserable crack. Above is another evil sloping ledge . What a dilemma ! Use the nut for aid to find the holds or risk a horrendous fall if you fail. The first time that I led this pitch I was sufficiently weak and feeble to have no choice. Ron Fawcett's free ascent merely attached guilt to a nut already overloaded by me. I returned much later to get my revenge and found the nut gone , probably stripped by some falling star . Its absence meant twenty feet of scarey groove climbing with no runners until just before the ledge. No place for the faint - hearted and a good test of both mind and body.

Once gained the ledge provides a spectacular belay . Chris's consolation prize was the carpetted groove above. This was awkward to pull into , delicate and airy to climb up and even led to a picnic ledge. What could be better ? In the back corner of this vast ledge lies a final surprise - a steep but mossy crack , a sort of furry Right Unconquerable , to confirm your pleasure and to set the seal of approval on a magnificent climb.

## Footless Crow / Bitter Oasis

*Martin and Bob Berzins.*

Once upon a time the Great Buttress of Goat Crag was almost ignored by the climbing world. The other buttresses of the crag start further down the hillside, and during the sixties were covered in a network of fine climbs such as Praying Mantis. To the right of the first corner of this route lie the smooth lower walls of the Great Buttress. The most obvious lines are two blank-looking grooves that fade into a slab capped by an enormous yellow bulge. Above are yet more steep walls and bulges - the rock is compact and smooth and is broken only by the occasional short crack.

In the sixties this buttress seemed to be fit only for the Borrowdale aid climbers. Bill Freeland and friends duly obliged with a peg climb directly up the centre. Later still, in 1968, Colin Read and John Adams again demonstrated their talent for climbing in unlikely places when they pioneered Athanor. This hard eliminate on Praying Mantis starts up the lefthand groove of the buttress but keeps moving left to share the stances of Praying Mantis. The sheer difficulty of Athanor didn't encourage people to inspect the rock further right too closely. Pete Livesey did.

The result in the spring of 1974 '... after several spectacular failures .' was 'an incredible 180 foot pitch that never relents for an inch.' - Footless Crow; and shortly afterwards Bitter Oasis 'just as hard but not as serious.' Footless starts up the initial groove of Athanor but continues over a bulge where Athanor

**Bob** -The moves above the stance didn't look easy. Twenty feet of horizontal runnerless rope going left was a great help. I dithered and shouted for numbers. He either didn't hear or just didn't care. I had to go. 5c suddenly became 6c - no chance. Why did I have to go through with this ? I grabbed the peg . SNAP ! I was dangling way out in space still clutching it. An old bolt stared at me from the bulge , so I swung in and grabbed it . Magically a line of large quartz pockets led upwards, back to the route. Quite pleased with this I even managed to climb the rest of it -.

A year later I tried Footless Crow with Steve Clegg. The climbing ,up Athanor and then the long rising traverse up and rightwards to the ledge and two bolts below the bulge was fairly straightforward. Three undercuts led footlessly , strenuously out across the bulge - nowhere. The top one creaked but took a tiny wire runner. Swing left ? What on ? The fall was uninviting. Retreat -up- one - two - three - retreat. Boredom and my wire runner both set in so I belayed to the bolts . Steve effortlessly climbed up to join me and we abseiled off. Soon after Ian Roper recorded the details of another attempt in the Raw Head hut book in Langdale.

Cleasby (in extremis ) ' Watch the rope Rob . I can nearly reach the sling ! ' .

(lurches , grabs and then swings on the sling.)

Matheson (for it is he ) ' Is it any good Ed ? ' .

Cleasby (still swinging ) ' I'm not sure . ' .


Roper (of that ilk ) ' Is it for aid ? ' .

Cleasby ' Oh no ! ' .

Eventually Ron Fawcett and Chris Gibb made the second ascent . The third , by Mick Fowler and Andy Parkin , involved a full week-end , abseil inspections and traversing off . The route lost none of its reputation.

Later still brother Bob held my rope as I bumbled back up to the crux , all

weak-kneed and wobbly at the prospect of things to come. The seige began again but there was still nothing to swing left on. The next morning anger had taken the place of timidity but I still couldn't see how to make the swing left to the obvious crack. The only hold was a tiny foothold way out left - it had to be the key. Hands on the top undercut, right foot on a pathetic friction bridge. Snake left foot out onto the tiny hold . It stuck! Cautious fingers found a small undercut to pull left on . CRACKed it ! I fixed a runner and proudly proclaimed to the to the now considerable audience.

 It's <sup>really</sup> O.K. Bob just follow my numbers .

Panic ! The little green wall on the left looked blank. I looked again and found holds. The bulge above had massive jugs , while the final slab was a mossy meander.

**Bob** - After hours of riveting spectating , at last it was my turn . Up to the bolts was easy I'd voyaged there before . As for the undercuts , well **M**artin had made them look easy , from his tenth attempt onwards that is. I arrived at the top undercut knackered. The wire popped out , but as for the swing left ... I whimpered , and the rope came tight - it was easy then. The rest doesn't really matter . There was more than enough excitement in that thirty feet . A real boulder problem in the sky and the key to one of the best pitches in the Lake District -.