



GREAT BRITISH  
ROCK CLIMBS

# EXTREME ROCK

COMPILED BY  
KEN WILSON AND BERNARD NEWMAN







## 17 Bitter Oasis and Footless Crow

by Martin and Bob Berzins

*Martin:* 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 hill-side, 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 an 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 left-hand groove of the buttress but keeps moving left to share the stances of Praying Mantis. The sheer difficulty of Athanor didn't encourage most people to inspect the rock further right too closely. But Pete Livesey did just that. The result, in the spring of 1974, 'after several spectacular failures,' was 'an incredible 180ft. pitch that never relents for an inch.' This was Footless Crow, and shortly afterwards came Bitter Oasis, 'just as hard but not as serious'.

Footless Crow starts up the initial groove of Athanor, but continues over a bulge where Athanor traverses left to the stance of Praying Mantis. A long, rising traverse rightwards is made to a ledge with two old bolts below the centre of the yellow bulge. An improbable line up and left through the bulge is then followed to the top. Bitter Oasis starts further right, at the spikey tree in the centre of the buttress, and follows the open groove of the old aid climb. About ten feet below the ledge with two bolts on Footless, Bitter Oasis breaks out right along a rightward sloping slab, the oasis, which leads to a stance on the edge of the buttress. Pitch two is a mind-blowing traverse back left above the bulge to another steep, direct finish in a spectacular situation. Both routes were described by Livesey as 'harder than anything Wales has to offer' and were said at the time to be his hardest yet.

Such propaganda, and Livesey's reputation, combined to deter all but the brave and talented or the young and reckless. There was no doubt about the category that we were in. Sticky August 1975; after two days rest and a sleepless night on my part,

brother Bob and I stood at the foot of a supposedly unrepeatable Bitter Oasis. I was terrified.

*Bob:* Martin, as usual, had screwed his mind up so much that actually stepping on to the rock was bound to be an anticlimax. He wobbled and gibbered and didn't stop cold-welding runners into cracks until well-established on the slabby oasis. Why a bitter oasis? He didn't much notice me seconding; he was too busy staring at the beetling overhangs the next pitch traversed between.

*Martin:* Pitch two started with awkward moves up past a pathetic protruding peg. It was covered with chalk! Traversing left from the peg, above the yellow bulge, was airy-scary to a sensationally positioned downward-pointing flake. A pocket almost, then after a quick bash, nicely took a nut runner: stretch left, clip, nice bolt runner. Fantastically exposed moves led steadily up a crack to another bolt and a step left. The steep little wall above, the crux, had just enough tiny pockets for my complaining fingers. The scramble above was euphoric.

*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.

*Martin:* 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, to 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 settled in, so I belayed to the bolts. Steve effortlessly climbed up to join me and we abseiled off. Soon afterwards, 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?'

**Routes** Bitter Oasis, E3 5c, 165ft/50m; Footless Crow, E5 6b, 190ft/57m.

**First Ascents** Bitter Oasis – P. Livesey, R. Witham, April 1974; Footless Crow – P. Livesey, J. Sheard, March 1974.

**Cliff** Goat Crag, Borrowdale.

**Maps** See page 72 (265165).

**Guidebook** See page 72.

**Approach** From the end of a rough track from Grange to the Hollows Farm campsite (250167). ½ mile/300ft. Allow 10 minutes.

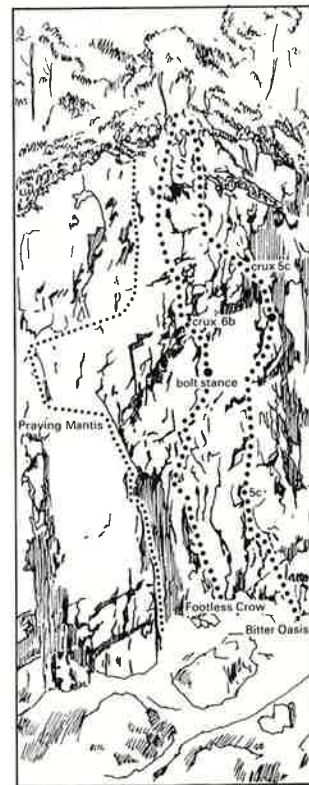
**Conditions** April to September, allow two or three days after rain.

**Campsites / Huts** See page 72.

**Bibliography** *Lakeland Commentary*

by Pete Livesey (Mountain 39). *A Short History of Lakeland Climbing – Part IV* by Ron Kenyon and Al Murray (F.R.C.C.J. 1986). *Lakeland Climbing in the Seventies* by Rob Matheson (Mountain 54).

*Left: A Friend behind the top undercut now protects the crux of Footless Crow – a very thin traverse to the left from this point. The hanging stance is sometimes used to split the 165ft. pitch but most leaders still seek to climb the route in its original form. Climbers: Chris Gore and Pete Kirton / Photo: Al Phizacklea*







## 21 Lost Horizons and Shere Khan

by Martin Berzins

The junction of the east and south-east faces of Scafell's East Buttress is an unfriendly sort of place. Standing 20ft. out from its base a cleverly placed stream spits contemptuously in your face. Intimidating? Not really, though an inspection reveals several enormous smooth corners which slant leftwards and outwards, and insignificant, sloping ledges guarded by bulges or smooth leaning walls. The rock is overhanging and unrelenting.

Round to the left, towards the south-east face, the angle eases and the rock yields to offer 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 in to 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, the crux, involves easing up from a precarious bridging position to reach the ledge. There was some dispute about whether Livesey free-climbed the next move on the first ascent. What is certain is that I, for one, grabbed the peg, and that the move was unquestionably free-climbed by both Bob Berzins and Alan Murray some five years after the first ascent.

Once gained, there are problems in quitting the ledge. The wall above must be climbed out of balance and on sloping holds with no clear view of what will arrive. Things do improve however, though the face climbing remains intricate and still on sloping holds.

Technically it's not too hard, but the exposure and the run-out 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 to this was neat, effective, and tied on to the other end of the rope. Chris 'Steelfingers' 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 on to 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 seemed to deter others, until Ed Cleasby and Rob Matheson 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 20ft. 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 I led this pitch I was sufficiently 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 20ft. of scary groove-climbing with no runners until just before the belay. No place for the faint-hearted, and testing for mind and body.

The ledge provides a spectacular belay. Chris's consolation prize was the carpeted groove above, awkward to pull into, delicate and airy to climb up, it 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 set the seal on a magnificent climb.

**Routes** Lost Horizons, E4 6b, 245ft/74m; Shere Khan, E5 6a, 240ft/73m.  
**First Ascent** Lost Horizons – P. Livesey, J. Lawrence, September 1976; Shere Khan – E. Cleasby, R. Matheson, May 1977.  
**Cliff** East Buttress, Scafell.  
**Map** See page 72 (210068).  
**Guidebook** See page 80.  
**Approach** See page 83.  
**Conditions** See page 83.  
**Campsites / Huts** See page 80.  
**Bibliography** See pages 72 and 80.



Left: Moving up from the end of the ramp on Shere Khan. Climber: Neil Foster / Photo: Bernard Newman

## 32 Capital Punishment and Suicide Wall

by Chris Hamper and Bonny Masson

**Routes** Capital Punishment, E4 6a, 160ft/48m; Suicide Wall, E2 5c, 100ft/30m.  
**Cliff** The East Wall of Idwal Slabs, Cwm Idwal.  
**First Ascents** Capital Punishment – M. Boysen, D. Alcock, September 1971 (1pt), FFA M. and R. Berzins, C. Hamper, July 1976; Suicide Wall – C. Preston, R. Morsley, J. Haines, October 1945.  
**Map** O.S. 1:50,000 Sheet 115 (645589).  
**Guidebook** C.C. *Cwm Idwal* by Zdzislaw Leppert.  
**Approach** From the car-park by Ogwen Cottage on the A5 (650603), 1 mile/500ft, Allow 25 minutes.  
**Conditions** Suicide Wall is well drained but its high, shaded aspect means that it is slow drying except in windy or warm summer conditions.  
**Campsites / Huts** Numerous campsites and huts in Ogwen valley, and Capel Curig area.  
**Bibliography** *Suicide Wall* by N. Shepherd (Mountain 66); *Welsh Rock* by Trevor Jones and Geoff Milburn (Pic Publications).

Cwm Idwal is the place most people start climbing. Easy-angled, low-grade slab routes abound. I did my first climb on the Slabs at the age of 12 with a party from school. It was a wet day and water flowed in torrents down the rock. We climbed Ordinary Route and I remember water pouring into the left arm of my cagoule and out of the right. Why I ever took up climbing after that experience I'll never know. Suicide Wall sticks out amongst these easy slab routes like a white shark in a goldfish pond. Although well-camouflaged it's definitely there. As you walk up to the Cwm the shark's fin is just visible, but to feel its teeth you need to get a bit closer. The name Suicide Wall was coined even before its first ascent. It doesn't take much imagination to realize why. To try to climb this steep, apparently holdless wall must once have seemed completely suicidal, and probably still does to the average non-climber.

Chris Preston the first ascensionist, was a sergeant in the army, stationed during the war at a training camp on Llanberis. Although he probably never trained specifically for climbing, what training he did seemed to do the trick, and when he set off on his attempt at the wall in 1945 he was as fit as many top climbers are today. His ethics for the first ascent were partly laid down for him by his CO, David Cox, who would not allow him to attempt the route on sight but ordered Preston to inspect it by abseil. However, after making this stipulation it does seem strange that Cox then allowed Preston to attempt to solo the route. This attempt failed, but later the same year he returned and led the route, seconded by Dickie Morsley and Jack Haines.

Preston's route had to wait until 1951 before Joe Brown made the second ascent. He was impressed by its difficulty, which is hardly surprising since he climbed it in socks. Over the next 20 years activity on the wall was not exactly brisk. In this time only two more routes were added: Suicide Groove by John Lawton and D. Haworth and the imaginatively-named Suicide Wall, Route Two by Pete Crew and Baz Ingle.

In 1971 Martin Boysen and Dave Alcock added three more routes, using some aid on each. The first route to fall to this pair was Capital Punishment, which starts as for Route Two but soon breaks out left on to an obvious triangular slab. Technical moves on small holds lead up the narrowing, harrowing slab to a groove. Boysen placed two pegs at this point, then pulled carefully on the top one to reach improving holds leading up and out of the groove. A

belay was then taken on one of the wall's grass moustaches. The second pitch followed a short rib, free but not easy, to the top. Their other two routes were Suspended Sentence, which follows an on-line left of Suicide Groove with one point of aid, and The Garotte which is a girdle of the wall, using four points of aid. These routes remained unrepeatable for five years.

### CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Hard training on the Leeds Wall and then a week in Wales with the Berzins brothers, Martin and Bob. After completing some good routes we thought we were ready for the fame and glory, and the poor protection, of Suicide Wall. As we approached the crag along the stony Idwal path I had ample time to contemplate what lay ahead. I didn't mind taking long falls on to good runners, but even lowering off poor ones made my teeth curl. I longed for the dark clouds above to burst and put an end to my worries.

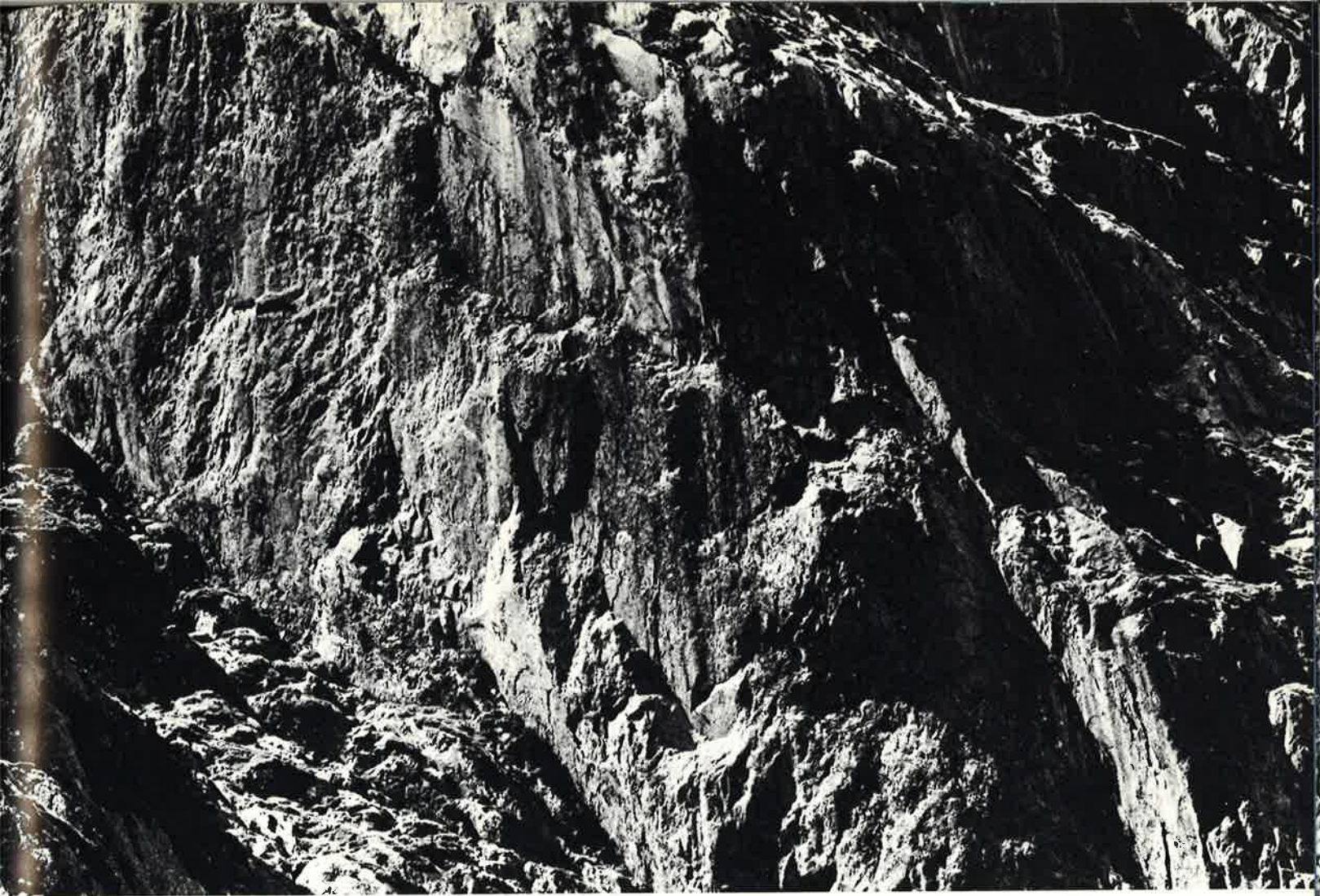
Arriving at the crag behind the others I found that plans had already been made. The cold conditions called for a warm-up so Bob led Suicide Groove, which we seconded rapidly. Next on the sports plan was Suspended Sentence, which I was suckered into leading. This gave us a feel for the climbing, and a taste of the imaginary protection that could be fingered into bubbles, and behind wafers on the rock. I thought the runners would have held, but Martin's insane laughter as he blew them out convinced me otherwise.

Bob soon decided that he was ill, leaving Martin and me sentenced to Capital Punishment. Nigel Shepherd wrote that 'Capital Punishment demands either a cool head or no brains at all'. Martin qualified on one count, and went through his usual ritual of tightening EBs and carefully chalking up before he was ready to start.

The only description we had was memorized from the guide at Brown's, so the start was a bit tentative. Once started, however, Martin slid up the triangular slab only to be suddenly woken up on landing at its apex by the shock that he was runnerless. (This had been the site of Boysen's aid and protection pegs, but where he put them I can't imagine.) By this time, Martin was looking worried. Fidgeting with some runners he eventually managed to balance a Moac between two flakes and, being careful not to knock it out, tip-toed past. His movements accelerated and his breathing stopped as he skinned the groove and greased up the wall, not daring to think of the fall.







Suddenly the tension snapped as he swung off a hidden jug. More important than the hold was the thread runner it provided, giving him confidence to gorilla the final wall to the ledge.

Anyone who has climbed on this wall will have a lasting memory of the pathetic belays found on the grass moustaches. If you really want to live dangerously, just climb on the wall without a hammer and pegs. Luckily Bob had carried up the necessary gear, which was quickly flown up to Martin. After a bit of hammering he got a belay and I followed the pitch. I thought it was pretty hard, but my competitive nature prevented me from letting on. The next pitch was mine, and my confidence was instantly boosted when I saw a wire in place a few feet up. When I got to it I nearly fell off with shock. Only one strand of wire was intact, and that was well rusted. (It has now snapped completely). I calmed myself down with a dose of chalk, clipped into the runner with a light krab so as not to snap it, and climbed on!

I kept on telling myself that it can't be that bad; it was free anyway. There must be runners somewhere. Thirty feet above the belay with no runners the climbing got wicked. I was standing on a rounded green arête with two side-pulls and a foothold by my

chest. The numbers were obvious, but dare I do it. If I had a runner I could walk it, so the search for a runner was on, scraping lichen from every little depression and would-be crack. At last I 'thought' one on to the rock, and concentrating hard to stop it slipping from my imagination, I made the move. After that the rest was easy and I climbed to the top, rolling into the wet grass.

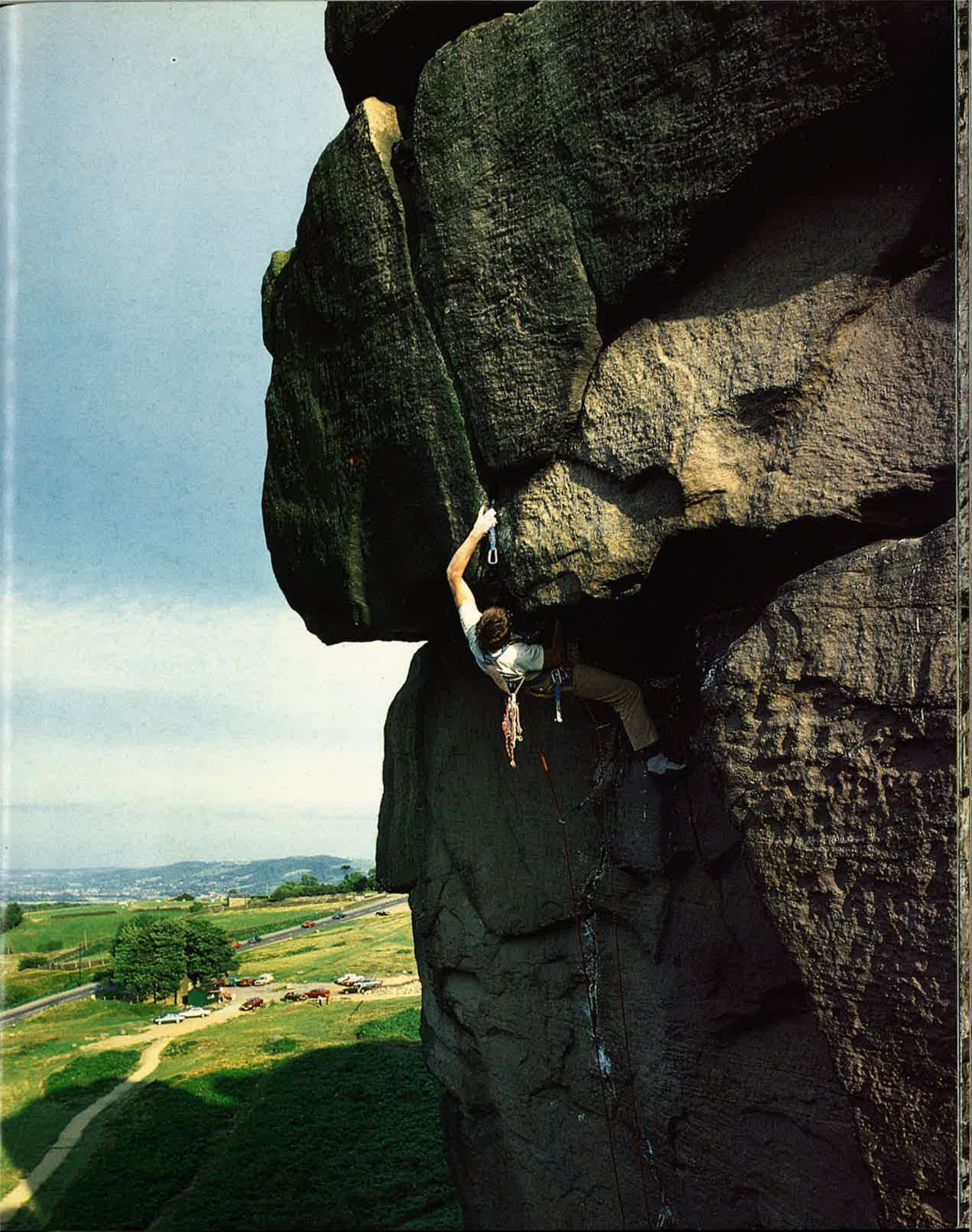
By this time, Bob had recovered and emerged from his cave, eager to get in on the act. He seconded the first pitch, joining Martin on the ledge, giving me time to sleep, dreaming of chalk fairies and witches in the park.

#### **SUICIDE WALL by Bonny Masson**

July 1982; I watched in dismay as my last wire tinkled down the rock face. I was above the second hard section of Suicide Wall in Idwal and for the first time since I started climbing I thought I could be seriously injured if I fell. I looked at the moves on to the ramp, they looked easy. I gathered myself and tried to make the moves. Now and then my dwarfish form encounters a move which is nothing for even short men but presents me with a difficult and irreversible pull-up. I had to launch upwards for a massive jug but if I couldn't pull up I wouldn't be

*Above: The Suicide Wall section of the East Wall of Idwal Slabs. Photo: Steve Ashton*







## 48 Cave Route and Pierrepont

by Martin Berzins and Martin Atkinson

**Routes** Cave Route Righthand, E6 6a, 168ft/50m; Cave Route Lefthand, E6 6c, 150ft/45m; Pierrepont, E7 6c, 168ft/50m.

**Cliff** Gordale Scar, Yorkshire.

**First Ascents** Cave Route Righthand – R. Fawcett and P. Livesey, 1975 (3pts), FFA R. Fawcett, 1982 (originally climbed as an aid route by J. Sumner and A. Knox, 1956); Cave Route Lefthand – R. Fawcett, 1982; Pierrepont – M. Atkinson with belayer, 1984 (originally climbed as an aid route, with fewer bolts, by J. Barker, M. and P. Johnson, 1969).

**Map** See page 177.

**Guidebook** See page 177.

**Approach** See page 177.

**Conditions** A dank north wall. Allow at least a week of dry summer weather.

**Campsites / Huts** See page 177.

**Bibliography** *Malham and Gordale* by Ron Fawcett (Crag 25); *Lime for the Boys* by Ron Fawcett (Crag 32).

### CAVE ROUTE by Martin Berzins

Gordale terrifies me. The dark, noisy gorge seems to be falling in on itself. The thunder of the waterfall and the babble of the endless snake of tourists only add to the fear and unpleasantness that accompany the place. Even the names of the climbs do little to inspire – Face Route, Manque, Grot and lastly Cave Route. Anywhere else but in Yorkshire this would be the name of a speleological severe. The reality is different. Walking into the gorge, the enormous, gloomy, impending right wall is cut by a couple of soaring cracks that eventually merge and lead up to a large open cave at about 100ft. Even to see the cave from the base of the route you have to stand 30ft. out from the base of the cliff. Quite simply, it is the finest crack-line on British limestone.

The free-climbing revolution of the early seventies treated Cave Route as one for the next generation. Jeff Connor used it humourously to put the prima donnas in their places in a letter to *Mountain*:

'My pet chimpanzee (his name is Harpo) recently climbed Cave Route completely free, solo and on sight... were any ethical codes broken by me abseiling down to place bananas at regular intervals?'

It is perhaps inevitable that John Sumner's classic aid climb is now a free-climbing test piece.

Early in 1975 rumours circulated that Livesey was about to free-climb Cave Route – but how? The left-hand crack does not ease at all for 60ft. but even steepens before it lies back in a more broken groove that leads to the cave. A few yards right is the right-hand crack. Less well-defined but not quite as fiercely overhanging, it leads to a shallow hole at 40ft. above which it curves left to join the left-hand crack. A harder aid climb than the other start, it needed Livesey's imagination to see that it could be free-climbed. For once Livesey's conception of the possible was ahead of his body. An aid-climber on the left-hand crack saw a tiring Livesey climbing rapidly towards him. Finally a desperate Livesey dived for a sling in the left-hand crack. Ron Fawcett finished the pitch but the resting slings used left a challenge that only disappeared when a honeymooning Mr. and Mrs. Fawcett free climbed both cracks in 1982.

Now my brother Bob hates Gordale as much as I do – we only set foot on Cave Route because it's one of the few solid routes and because we refused to be upstaged by a team being photographed on Face Route. Bob was not feeling too well so I, the ageing team wimp, was pressed into the lead. Completely

intimidated, I only wobbled up 30ft. or so before crying off at a small roof. Bob showed me the cunning moves out left to avoid it and I eventually clawed my way up to the shallow hole. The climbing consisted of one brutal pull up which led magnificently straight into the next. I could rest in the hole with my backside poking ignominiously out into space. Above, the difficulties intensified. A precarious layback and a lunge leftwards led into the left-hand crack. 'No more,' my body complained, and in a flash I emulated the Master and jumped for a sling on an enormous coach bolt. Even after a complicated sideways retreat to the resting hole I fared not much better. A couple of hours later Bob and I had both established that the crux was still above us. A series of progressively more rounded peg pockets led up and rightwards from the coach bolt. Above the last pathetic pocket was a peg runner that we couldn't even reach and beyond this was a blank section that was supposed to be the crux. All of this on top of 70ft. of overhanging climbing was just too much. We retired chastened.

Two days later Bob was keen to settle the score. Acclimatised by his previous efforts, he made light work of the climbing up to the coach bolt. He paused below the crux – reached up – and cursed as he plunged down to stop 30ft. below.

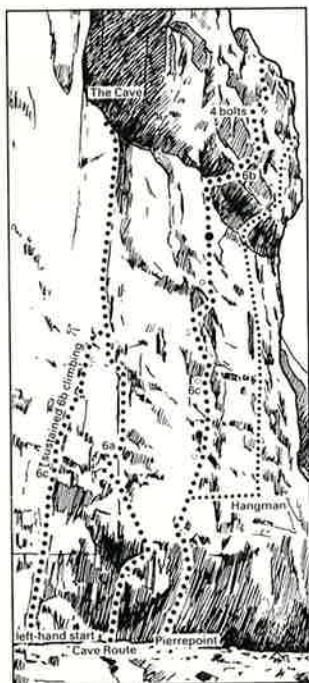
'I was gripped and put my finger through the peg,' he said.

By now the tourists were gathering to watch the sideshow we were providing. On his next attempt Bob clipped the peg and made peculiar layback moves up into the groove. In no time he was abseiling down telling me how fantastic the pitch was.

Now it was my turn to lead. I just managed to clip the peg below the crux before my forearms refused to participate. The sideways retreat to the resting hole and the moves back up were now tediously familiar.

The crux, though, was something else. It was essential to get the correct hand into the pocket below the peg – I am not going to tell you which one. A long reach and a horrible pull on a poor layback hold – footholds imagined only as my feet did a twostep on 'tinies' and then another layback move. As I struggled to find more footholds my eye suddenly focused on the ground. I seemed to be poised for ages yet it was less than a second. I wanted to let go to pacify my aching arms and lungs, but somehow I couldn't. Another pull and I just managed to reach good holds in the groove above. My concentration

Right: On the bulge at the top of Pierrepont, at 6b the easier of this fierce climb's two incredible pitches. Climber: Martin Atkinson / Photo: Neil Foster











*Left: The right wall of Goredale Scar, with teams at work on both starts of Cave Route. Climbers: Chris Gore and Ben Masterson (left) Mark Thompson and Mark Leach / Photo: Bernard Newman*

lapsed and the exposure and exhaustion roared into my tired mind. The groove was trivial, but trembling and the sense of anti-climax left no room for the much easier top pitch. Bob and I walked across the gorge and raced up Face Route in the sunshine. For once it felt innocuous. In the back of my mind, though, was a nagging feeling. After all, Cave Route does have two starts. . .

#### **PIERREPOINT by Martin Atkinson**

When Fawcett free-climbed the Cave Routes their obvious quality and difficulty laid down a challenge that simply could not be ignored. Several teams managed to repeat the Right Hand. However, the Berzins brothers ascent typified the problems these climbers encountered. In late 1982 Jerry Moffatt made a protracted ascent of the Left Hand and then went on to 'flash' the Right Hand. It became obvious that natural talent and weekend climbing were no longer sufficient to climb the hardest routes of the day. It is not surprising that no-one but Moffatt was successful on the Left Hand, featuring as it does a 6c crux and 80ft. of sustained 6a/b climbing without rests. This standard of climbing only became consolidated in 1983 with the Raven Tor routes of that year.

In 1984, after six months of full-time climbing, I managed the third ascent of the Left Hand. Suitably pleased, thoughts of attempting Hangman came to mind. However, other people were also playing the game, sometimes uncomfortably close to home: Pollitt's on-sight flash of the Right Hand and Moon's ascent of the Left Hand were only two examples of this. Time for action!

A mammoth cleaning session and it was ready. However, a one-day ascent and Steve Lewis's seconding the big pitch with fewer falls than I took confirmed my suspicions – a brilliant route, but not the desperate test-piece we had all expected.

The crackline of Pierrepoint, just to the left, was however, an obviously different proposition in terms of difficulty. Another epic cleaning session, during which people kept nicking our ropes when we found it necessary to return to Sheffield for the regular Thursday night session in The Porter, saw the route ready for a free attempt.

The first pitch took two days, similar to the Left Hand but harder, it led to a hanging stance 20ft. below the capping bulge. Overhanging 20ft. in just twice that height, the bulge had hardly looked possible on the abseil rope, let alone after having

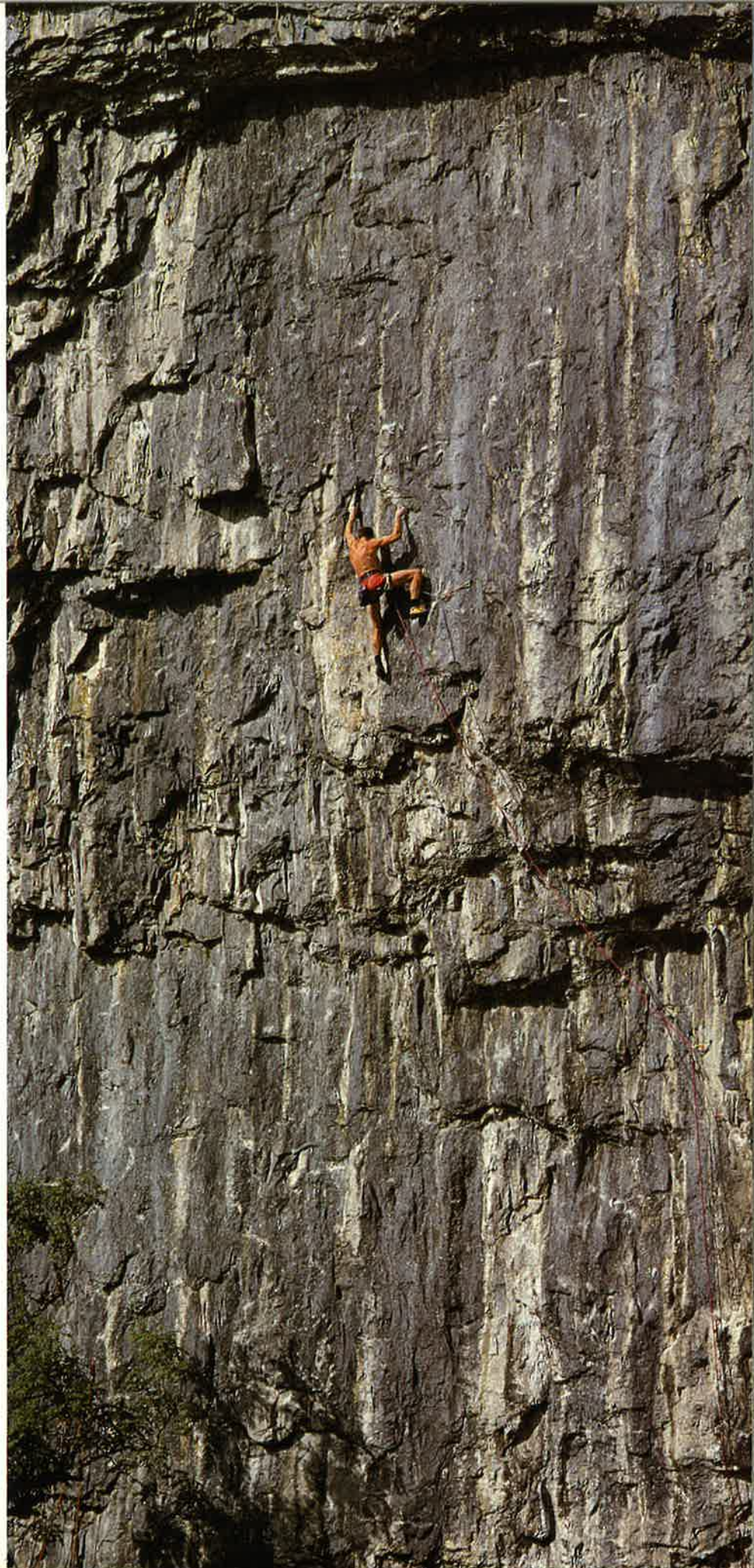




*Above and right: Two views of New Dawn showing the extremely steep climbing to cross the second belt of overhangs (above) and the magnificent position on the wall above. The climb ends at a fine stance just below the final overhang which still requires aid (abseil descent). Climber: Martin Berzins / Photos: Bernard Newman*

at a monster fall, I awoke from my concentration. I had forgotten to clip any of the bolts! I quickly got to grips with the situation, clipped into the nearest bolts and lowered down to the stance to gather myself. Christ! I couldn't believe it. Neither could anyone else, for that matter. They were all laughing at me.

With familiarity, the difficulty of the moves had eased a lot and it was a matter of stamina. Although the route is only 70ft. long, the terrific exposure made it feel twice that. Nearing the top I moved right to a line of big flakes, where I started to get gripped, thinking I was going to fall off. I moved up and made a few tricky moves left to the ledge. The second pitch of Superdirectissima was now free at E6 6b, and is possibly the best single pitch in Britain. We felt it needed an identity of its own until the whole route is freed and named it Free 'n' Easy.







A pointer to the future is Dominatrix, the first excursion on to the North Buttress proper. The left-hand edge of the leaning wall is probably the steepest, yet it displays the most features. Just right of the arête a groove rears up to a block overhang then, above a short wall, a grossly overhanging and leaning groove leads to the capping roof. A spectacular position; ever outwards is the catchword. An unbelievably steep line, it continues the tradition of being a route of myth and controversy. Originally climbed over several days and a resort to a rest point, it was destined to see much attention. Berzins, who had made the initial ascent, thought it justified to replace a peg with a bolt, albeit higher. Unfortunately after spending another day attempting the line he failed. Much to his annoyance Fawcett stepped into the breach. Luckily for Berzins, Fawcett was recovering from a leg injury and just failed to make a free ascent. At the crack of dawn the next day Berzins returned and after many hours of effort the climb was complete. Fawcett made the second ascent a number of days later. Dominatrix succumbs to a rather brutal approach, large muscles and ape-like swings. Moderately extreme climbing leads to the block overhang where a wild footloose swing leads to the technical crux. Various techniques prevail; feet up and slap an enormous reach or the delicate rock-over approach, all direct the climber to ever steeper rock. The entry to the upper groove can prove a stopper to shorties, but once entered large holds abound. The upper roof provides a fitting strength-sapping finale to an altogether strenuous climb. A mega pump for the eighties. Dominatrix is a pointer to the future of Kilnsey climbing.

*Left: Swinging through the final overhang of Dominatrix – 'a mega-pump for the eighties'. Climber: Wolfgang Güllich / Photo: Bernard Newman*