



general editor  
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foreword by  
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# world mountaineering



Nationalities: British unless stated.

**1802** Descent of Broad Stand to Mickledore by poet S T Coleridge.

**1882–1892** Most of the main gully lines were climbed: Deep Gill, Slingsby's Chimney, Moss Gill. Leading characters included W G Haskett-Smith, J N Collie, and C Slingsby.

**1896** O Glynne Jones emerged as one of the first rock athletes with his bold

departure from the gullies onto the steeper adjacent rock with 'Jones' Route Direct'. Unrepeated for 14 years.

**1903** F W Botterill and companions climbed 'Botterill's Slab', an astonishing lead for the time.

**1914** Central Buttress was climbed by S Herford, G Sansom, and C F Holland, employing combined tactics to overcome the infamous chockstone

section of the 'Great Flake' pitch. Far harder than anything done since.

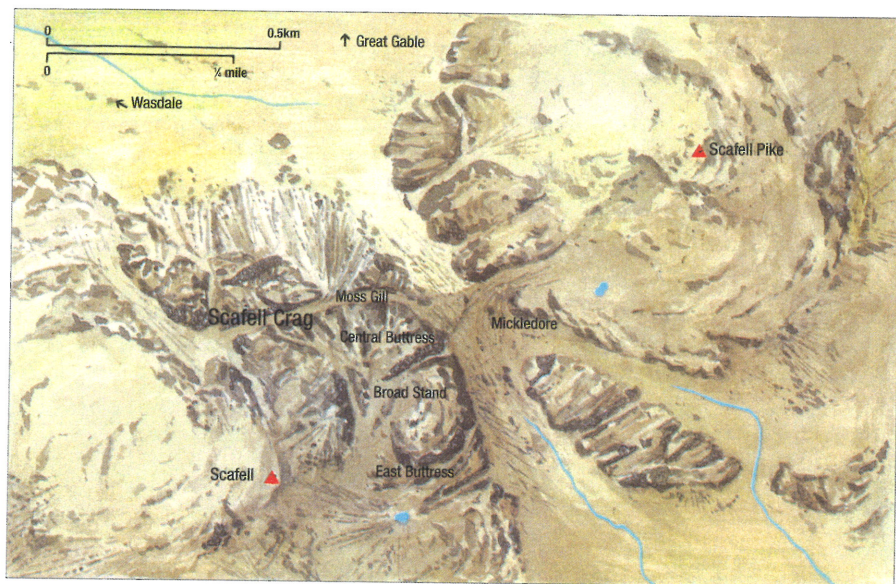
**1926** 'Moss Gill Grooves' was completed by gritstone maestro H Kelly, the culmination of seven years of effort above and right of the Central Buttress.

**1931** C Kirkus breached the extremely steep East Buttress with 'Mickledore Grooves' (VS 4c). J M Edwards free climbed the Central Buttress.

**1932** M Linnell made a bold solo first ascent of 'Bayonet Shaped Crack', a variation finish to 'Central Buttress'.

**1933** 'Overhanging Wall' on East Buttress was climbed by M Linnell, using controversial pitons for aid.

**1952** P Greenwood and A Dolphin forced the line of 'Hell's Groove' through the overhanging left end of the East Buttress.



# scafell crag and east buttress

bernard newman

Situated at the head of Wasdale in the heart of the Cumbrian Mountains, the Scafell massif is the hub of the radial pattern of ridges, valleys, and lakes that comprise the English Lake District. Scafell Crag lies near the summit of Scafell, 964m (3162ft), the sister peak to Scafell Pike which, at 978m (3208ft), is England's highest mountain.

The crags of Scafell and Great Gable, 899m (2949ft), across Wasdale to the north, are accepted as the birthplace of British rock climbing and the routes here are steeped in history. Every major phase and advance of British rock climbing is mirrored in the cliffs of Scafell. It was early Wasdale activists who developed rock climbing as a valid pursuit in its own right.

During the second part of the 19th century, alpinism became a well established sport among both the idle rich and the

professional classes. It was obvious to dedicated British climbers that training was needed for the Alpine climbs, so attention was focused on the seemingly modest crags and gullies of upland Britain. Wasdale, with its convenient public house and fine crags, quickly became the first British climbing 'resort'.

The rock of Scafell, like that of the rest of the Lake District, comprises ancient lava flows. More recent glaciation and prolonged weathering have carved out crags and provided countless cracks and edges for hands and feet. Thus a perfect environment has been created for climbing styles and techniques to evolve with the minimum of technology. The structure of the rock offered just enough natural protection to encourage a striving for ethical purity.

## ridges, faces, and peaks

The main areas of climbable rock on Scafell are confined to two huge buttresses – Scafell Crag on its northern flank and the East Buttress – lying to either side of Broad Stand, an open chimney that drops down to Mickledore, which is a strange green col joining Scafell to Scafell Pike.

As you stand on the col facing west, the huge, steep, black, north-facing wall of Scafell Crag sweeps off to the right. It is cut into three monolithic buttresses, each nearly 120m (400ft) high, separated by deep gullies. Nearest is the clean wall of the Central Buttress, topped out by slanting grooves and slab lines. Further right, across the deep gash of Moss Gill, is the more broken pillar of Pisgah and, beyond that, across Steep Gill, the aptly-named Scafell Pinnacle, a miniature Chamonix aiguille.

To the left of Mickledore Col, an elongated, barrel-shaped cliff drops away southwards. Smaller than the main crag, at around 75m (250ft), the East Buttress drips with cracks, blind grooves, and hanging arêtes, topped by steep walls and slabs.

## future climbing

Even though Scafell Crag and the East Buttress could be said to have reached 'maturity' in terms of being climbing venues, there are still many new lines awaiting the bold and fit. The natural lines on the latter demand to be climbed.

Right **Martin Berzins leads the overhanging 'Siege Perilous' on the East Buttress.**



**1957** The Rock & Ice Club announced its presence with 'Phoenix', R Moseley's soaring groove-and-wall line to the right of 'Hell's Groove'.

**1960** G Oliver put up 'Ichabod'. It is still the definitive East Buttress route.

**1966** Attention returned to the Central Buttress. 'The Nazgul', the unrelenting diagonal line left of the 1914 Central Buttress climb, succumbed to L Brown.

**1969** 'The Lord of the Rings', a girdle traverse of East Buttress, was solved by J Adams and C Read in 19 hours over two days. Unrepeated for six years.

**1976** A quantum leap in standards was launched with P Livesey's route 'Lost Horizons' on the East Buttress.

**1976** J Eastham and E Cleasby climbed the blank wall and hanging crack to the right of the Central Buttress to produce

'Saxon', one of the most popular extreme rock climbs in the Lake District.

**1977** E Cleasby and R Matheson climbed 'Shere Khan', which is the companion route to 'Lost Horizons' on the East Buttress.

**1978** 'Cullinan' on the East Buttress was the first of a series of desperately hard and very serious climbs from M and B Berzins.

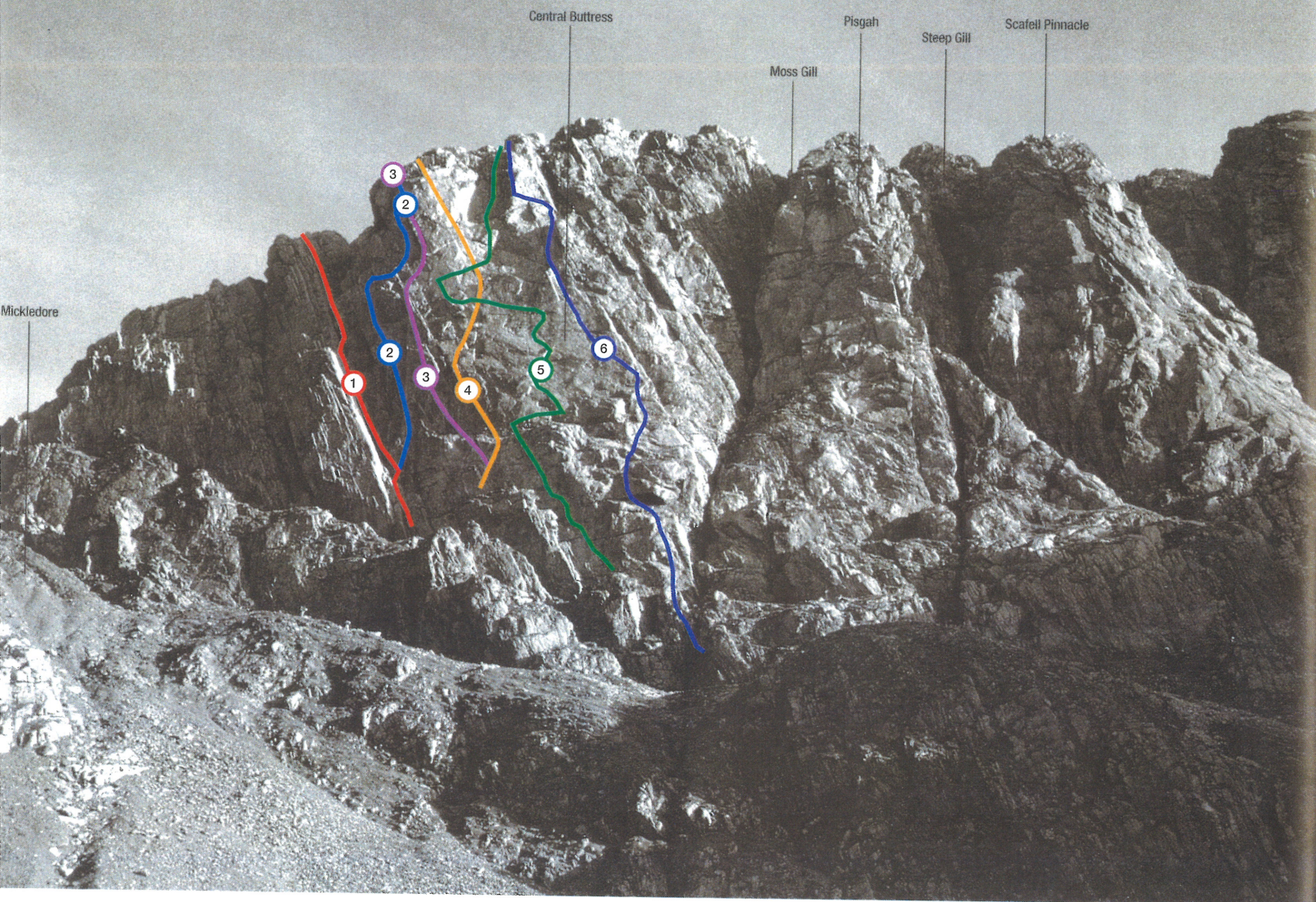
**1981** 'The Almighty', the short, thin, overhanging crack on the East Buttress, was put up by P Botterill and J Lamb.

**1986** C Sowden and M Berzins climbed 'Borderline', a fearsome overhanging groove in the blank wall left of centre on the East Buttress.

**1989** M Berzins forged 'The Siege Perilous', a futuristic *tour de force* up the leaning wall right of 'Shere Khan'.







All climbs on Scafell are excellent; these are just some of the best. Several routes can be done in one day, depending on conditions and how experienced you are.

## scafell crag

This definitely has a 'big' feel to it. In gloomy conditions it can be forbidding but, in the afternoon sun, all the routes seem do-able.

### 1 Botterill's Slab VS, 4c

*FW Botterill, H Williamson, and J E Grant 1903*  
This tackles the obvious, clean, slanting slab line, picked out by the evening sun, to the left of the Central Buttress. 87m (285ft).

### 2 White Wizard E3, 5c

*C Bonington and N Estcourt 1971 (6 points of aid)*  
*Free: M Berzins and G Higginson 1976*  
This gives magnificent, sustained groove-and-crack climbing in a superb position above 'Botterill's Slab' (1). 96m (315ft).

### 3 Ringwraith E5, 6b

*M Berzins, R H Berzins, and C Sowden 1977*  
A typical Berzins route: steep and uncompromising. The leaning wall between 'White Wizard' (2) and the Central Buttress. 94m (310ft).

### 4 The Nazgul E3, 5c

*L Brown and K Jackson (3 points of aid)*  
*Free: P Botterill and S Clegg 1975*  
This takes the breathless steep crack on the wall left of 'Central Buttress' (5), then finishes more reasonably in superb position. 84m (275ft).

### 5 Central Buttress E1, 5b

*S W Herford, G S Sansom, and C F Holland 1914*  
Six pitches of classically superb climbing, winding up the smoothest part of the face. The famous flake crack moves are much harder (5c) since the chockstones came away (sadly killing the climber on them) but can be avoided by an excursion onto the left wall at 5b. If you only do one route, do this. 121m (400ft).

### 6 Saxon E2, 5c

*J Eastham and E Cleasby 1976*  
This steep wall and hanging crack is popular. Here, commitment pays dividends. 120m (400ft).

## east buttress

This always presents a fierce aspect. Approaching along the path at its foot, the whole place seems neck-achingly steep and it's always cold!

### 7 The Almighty E5, 6b

*P Botterill and J Lamb 1981*  
This follows a thin, fierce, overhanging crack. 18m (60ft).

### 8 Ichabod E2, 5c

*G Oliver, G Arkless, and L Willis 1960*  
The classic of the East Buttress. Soaring line; good rock. 45m (145ft).

### 9 Borderline E6, 6c

*C Sowden and M Berzins 1986*  
A technical masterpiece up the

central overhanging flake-and-groove wall. Protectable – just. 54m (180ft).

### 10 Shere Khan E5, 6a

*E Cleasby and R Matheson 1977*  
A scary climb whose main feature is a steep diagonal ramp that turns out to be precarious and overhanging. Persistence is rewarded with little protection and a fierce short crack to the stance. 72m (240ft).

### 11 The Siege Perilous E7, 6b

*M Berzins and C Sowden 1989*  
*Free: M Berzins and A Phizacklea 1992*  
Possibly the hardest and most serious route in the area, this takes the overhanging wall right of 'Shere Khan' (10). 37m (120ft).

### 12 Mickledore Grooves VS, 4c

*C F Kirkus, I M Waller, and M Pallis 1931*  
This is a sweeping diagonal line across the right-hand side of the East Buttress. The first ascent was way ahead of its time. 67m (220ft).





### how to get to scafell

Wasdale, the natural starting point, is reached by car via the A595. The approach from the head of Wastwater is via Brown Tongue, a steep rounded bluff between two streams, which leads to Mickledore (GR211068). It is 4km (2½ miles) with 760m (2500ft) of ascent so allow two hours. Most of the routes can easily be reached from the col along well-worn paths.

### facilities

There is camping and a hotel and climbing shop at Wasdale Head. More campsites and accommodation are located further down the valley.

### when to go

Scafell is predominantly a summer (May–October) venue and even then it needs four consecutive dry days to bring the routes into condition.

### gear

Two 50m (165ft) ropes are essential. Carry a full rack of nuts and friends.

### maps and guidebooks

The best map is the 'Outdoor Leisure 6: The English Lakes, South Western area', 1:25,000, (Ordnance Survey).

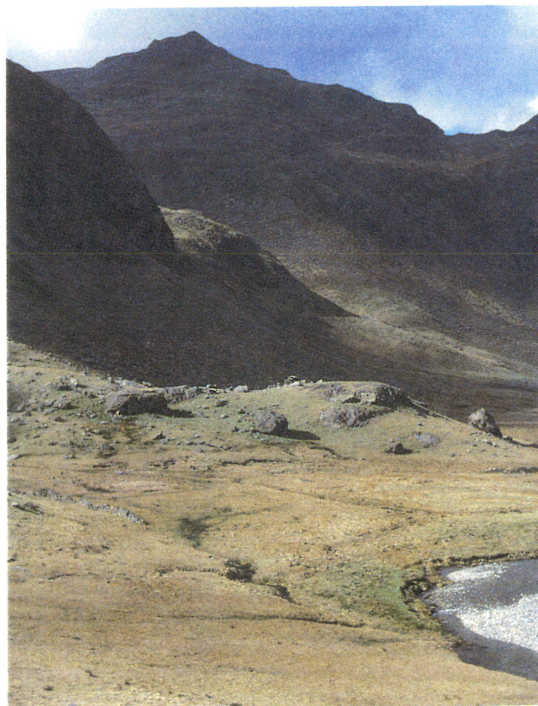
*Scafell, Wasdale & Eskdale*, Al Phizacklea (Fell & Rock Climbing Club, 1996) is the definitive rock-climbing guide to the crag and its locality. Look no further than this.

### rescue and insurance

Mountain rescue is extremely efficient. The nearest rescue post is at Wasdale Head Hotel. A kit for the rescue team's use is stored in the lee of Mickledore. Dial 999 and ask for the Police.

### red tape

None.



Left **Scafell Pike**, the sister peak of Scafell (in the distance) is the highest summit in England.