

Lakeland Climbing in the 'Seventies

by Rob Matheson

SINCE THE LATE 1960s, the Lake District has been the scene of a climbing controversy centred on the question of what constitutes fair play in first ascent practice. The result has been a lively interchange of opinions.

The conflict derives from the fact that many climbers have begun to adopt a highly 'professional' approach towards the making of first ascents, inspecting new lines in detail by abseil before attempting to climb them. The on-sight principle was discarded by these climbers, in the belief that a good job could not otherwise be made. Controversial methods and techniques – such as the use of pre-placed slings and protection – have been employed in order to overcome ferocious lines, all in an effort to minimize the amount of aid required. The traditional school of thought, championed by the Fell and Rock Climbing Club, made its opinions clear in 1973, when routes ascended in the 'modern' manner were omitted from the new Langdale Guide. Allan Austin, the guide-writer, summed up the situation in a letter published in *Mountain 29*, saying: "I do not see crags as impressive backcloths where ruthless men can construct their climbs." It is interesting to note that since that time the majority of important first ascents have continued to be the products of the "ruthless", professional approach, with traditional ideas on pioneering largely discarded. Techniques employed on early repeat ascents have also become more important, and issues such as chalk-use and 'what actually constitutes aid?' have become the subject of much discussion.

During this effervescent period, I have been involved in various capacities in the development of Lakeland climbing, and in this article I hope to evaluate the early controversies, and to report honestly on the affairs and practices of the most recent contributors.

For years, people had been saying that new lines were drying up, and to a large extent this was true. Having done most of

Left: Ed Cleasby attempting the crux moves of Footless Crow on Goat Crag, a route that is generally considered the hardest in the Lake District and one of the most difficult in Britain. The climb was first done in 1974 and has only been repeated once. Photo: Ian Roper

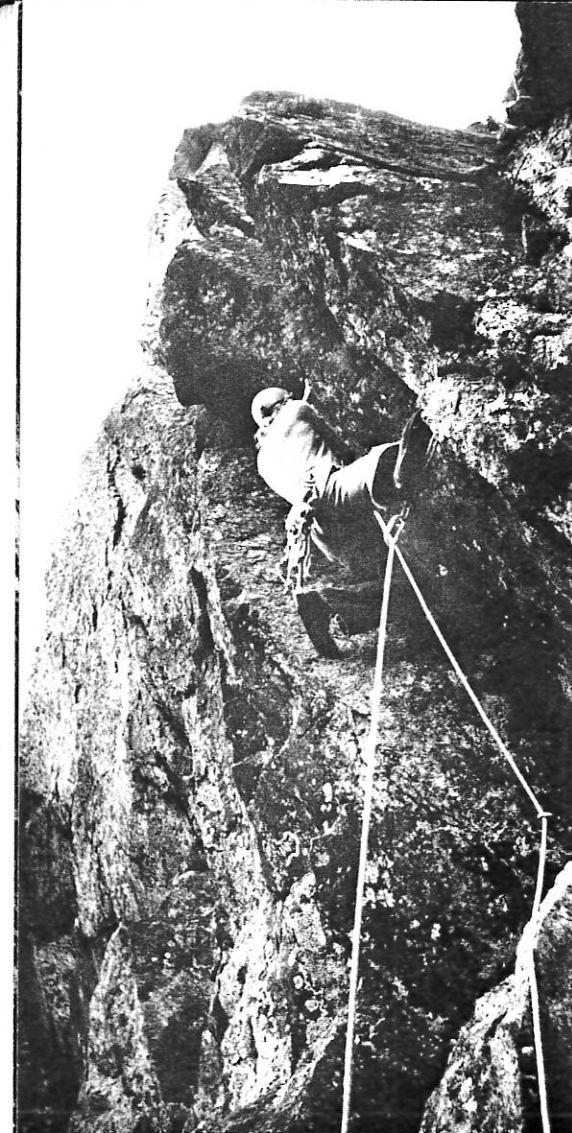
the established routes, climbers began to search for new rock, but very few natural and apparently climbable lines remained. Some pioneers turned to isolated and obscure crags, others to the vegetated perimeters of popular crags; most significant, however, were the activities of those who attempted to fill the ferocious and blank-looking spaces between existing climbs on the well established buttresses. I say 'most significant', because these lines had previously been thought to be impossible, or only possible as piton routes (a very unfashionable trend in the 'sixties) and it was these lines which were to become the most popular climbs in later years. I, for one, thought it unreasonable to attempt this type of line on-sight. It is my belief, in contrast to the official Fell and Rock view, that new routes have now to be 'created'. Two of Britain's leading climbers, Pete Livesey and Pat Littlejohn, appear to share this opinion. Whether this seems ethically right or wrong, it is a fact that most climbers want to make a good job of things during a first ascent, and one way of ensuring this is to have a prior acquaintance with the holds. A suitable example is *Paladin on White Ghyll*, a route at first partially aided and later freed. All I wanted when I did this route was a good end-product, and it took me an inspection and two ascents to attain this. As in the case of all routes ascended in this manner, the critic will say: "Why didn't you leave it to someone else?" The only answer is that we are all human, and few of us are strong-willed enough, or care enough, to throw the limited numbers of lines on to the open market. So the end-product of *Paladin* was a hard, free route, which was reported honestly for anyone who wished to follow. It started out as a partially aided route and was converted into a free route. The Fell and Rock guide-writers thought it unethical for a first ascensionist to free climb his own route. They therefore reduced what had become a very fine and ferocious free line to its original aided status, *pari passu* their own ascent. Another example arose in 1971, when Pete Livesey climbed *Fine Time on Raven Crag, Langdale*, using a long sling for aid on the large initial overhang. Many climbers know how hard it is to move off an aid point and commit oneself to exacting

free climbing – and this route involves such a procedure with very hard free moves. At the time, there was an outcry against Livesey's tactic in placing the aid sling by abseil, and even practising the moves. All I can say is that Livesey produced a highly futuristic problem, which was not repeated until 1975 and has been 'enjoyed' by very few climbers since that time.

During the same period, controversy also raged over several other routes such as *Cruel Sister on Pavey Ark*, and *Peccadillo and The Graduate on Deer Bield Crag*. Again these routes were 'created', being the outcome of 'professional' tactics. As far as *Cruel Sister* is concerned, the criticisms levelled against my use of a skyhook and a pre-placed sling had a sound basis. The long sling, placed prior to the ascent on all three routes, was not popular: climbers soon got brassed off trying to reach them on windy days and, as is well known, the wind often blows hard in the Lake District. The skyhook was a crime on two counts: firstly, I did not attempt to do the move free before resorting to the hook; secondly, people should not have to carry such specialized tools in order to climb in the Lakes. Jeff Lamb eliminated all the aid shortly afterwards, which would suggest to some people that I had no right to foul up the line with such incompetence in the first place. This may well be true, but the most important thing of all was that my first ascent was reported honestly, no secrets being kept whereby fellow climbers could be harmed. Moreover, such a first ascent malady leaves some meat for others to 'have a go at'. The *Day of the Jackal* was thus born; it being realized that fame and satisfaction could just as easily be found by making free second ascents.

Today, *Cruel Sister* is one of the best wall climbs in the Lake District, the original aid section being avoided by a short traverse from the left. Don't be deceived, however, for it is still a very sustained pitch, even when this section has been done. The *Graduate* and *Peccadillo* are also worthy of attention, as they too have lost their long slings and are quite climbable, even on windy days; but they both still employ aid points – a healthy challenge to any would-be jackals!

It would be wrong to say that all first



Livesey – a professional approach. Photo: Cleare

ascents in the early 'seventies involved professional methods. Ed Grindley was notably pure in this respect. In 1972 he produced the masterful Fallen Angel, one of the best remaining lines on Pavay Ark. Two aid pitons were used and, as these were placed during an on-sight ascent, when any necessary gardening was also done, it was clearly a very fine lead; a model to which all should aspire. (The second ascent was led soon afterwards by Martin Boysen, who dispensed with the aid to produce one of the best Lakeland pitches, the on/off feeling being a constant companion.) However, in cases like this, there is a tendency for climbers to reward their own purity by granting themselves certain secret rests (biscuits) for the purpose of gardening cracks and cleaning mossy or lichenous holds. I have seen the purest of climbers pull on slings to inspect higher holds. In my opinion it is better to sort the line out first, and then climb it in a completely honest and pure fashion. Of course the first ascent which should receive the highest accolade is the on-sight lead with no aid whatsoever, but I cannot recall any of the hardest Lakeland routes falling into this bracket.

During these earlier years the events on popular crags outside Langdale were dominated by Colin Read and John Adams. One of their 1968 routes, Athanor, on Goat Crag, illustrates a form of free-route evolution that many people would consider to be healthier than, and preferable to, a 'professional' ascent. Adams and Read used six aid points on their first ascent, indicating an on-sight approach. Over the next few years these were gradually whittled away by local teams, until Jeff Lamb, a prolific jackal of this period, finally climbed it free. The result is a very difficult route, not particularly brilliant in line, but rather exacting in execution. One must remember, however, that in 1968 climbers had little pressure on them; they could afford to climb badly and just have a good time. In the early 'seventies, growing disapproval of

Left: Views of *The Graduate* on *Deer Biold Crag*, showing John Eastham leading the first pitch (top), and Rob Matheson making the delicate moves to gain the crucial groove on the second pitch. Photos: Matheson collection



Grindley – traditional methods. Photo: Ian Roper

the use of indiscriminate aid resulted in the trend towards professional methods. In the same way, climbers were led to think more about their own ability and, with this catalyst, standards improved.

Read's and Adams' greatest achievement was Lord of the Rings, the girdle traverse of the East Buttress of Scafell, put up in 1969. It took two full days to complete, and was climbed in the purest possible way – the outcome always being in doubt. Such was the reputation of the route that it was six years before another ascent was recorded, this time by two up-and-coming young climbers, Ed Cleasby and Bill Birkett. Other repeats quickly followed, culminating in Pete Livesey's impressive solo ascent (using a back-rope on the big pitch). Another Scafell route to be hit by the jackals was Bonington's and Estcourt's White Wizard on the North Face. Put up in 1971, this utilized six points of aid – the result of an on-sight ascent by a traditionally trained pair. Should they have been more professional in their approach? In the following years the aid was gradually whittled away, leaving the way clear for the recent free ascent by Martin Berzins – a fine achievement.

At this time I was active on Dow Crag, busy creating routes such as Holocaust, Tarkus and Catacomb. The crag was not particularly popular with high-grade climbers, and was receiving little attention. Holocaust became controversial, however, because it involved two aid points on one pitch, one being a hammered nut. Nevertheless, the best climbers failed to eliminate these, which at least gave me the satisfaction of knowing that I had done a professional job. My foolish pride drove me to return to the climb in 1975 and, after some effort, I managed to climb the pitch free, by a line just to the left of the aid moves. No doubt the modern youngsters will want to know why that wasn't done on the first ascent. This I cannot answer, but I will say that in its free state the climb involves one of the harder moves in the Lakes. Tarkus and Catacomb presented no real problems and they provide climbs in the milder grade on some of the best rock in Britain.

In many ways the 1973 guidebook con-

troversies represented a turning point in Lakeland climbing. Everyone had begun to think more about their contributions, and about their own ethical standards, as well as those of others. Jackal ascents were becoming of increasing importance, taking some of the limelight from the first ascent teams, and it would appear that the professional ascent had been accepted by all but a few. A quotation from William Clegg's 1938 Langdale Guide is apposite here: "Today rock climbing enjoys more popularity than ever before . . . What new climbs will this great influx of climbers add to our sport – what new methods – what new developments? The next new guide to rock climbing . . . shall tell." Well, in 1973, Austin and Valentine failed to tell what new methods and developments had come to the fore in recent years. All they wanted to do was to "preserve the true spirit of rock climbing", in their own image. Today, the Fell and Rock is no longer the leading light in Lake District climbing. As a club it has failed to recruit the young influential climbers, and indeed its present age structure gives a certain cause for alarm.

Fell and Rock climbing guides always contain wise quotations and, in 1973, when preparing the new Scafell guide, Mike Burbage wrote: "One thing is certain, however, classic routes which use little or no aid are becoming more of a rarity each year. Will this trend be reversed by a new and more skilful breed of climbers in the future?" Taking stock of the last three years, the answer to this question has to be 'yes'. Classic routes, using very little aid and going in very unlikely places, have been produced by what one can only call a new and utterly dedicated breed of climbers.

The first and most influential of this breed was Pete Livesey. His aim was to climb new routes with as little aid as possible, using, as tools, pre-programming methods and an ever-improving ability. Along with many other pioneers, he could see no point in laying himself open to ridicule by using aid. Better to make a professional job of things first time round: there are too many jackals about today, ready to feast upon imperfect performances. The pioneer has to be careful, and Livesey has been very careful indeed! One afternoon in 1974 he thoroughly inspected Read's and Adams' partially aided Nagasaki Grooves on Great End Crag, before soloing the line with a back-rope. He employed no aid; a feat which has not been repeated to this day. Other leading climbers have either used one point of aid or skirted round the nasty blank crux. It is a very fine climb and one point of aid now seems to have become an accepted feature. Within hours of performing this feat, Livesey moved up the

Right: Rodney Valentine leads the second crux section on *Bitter Oasis* on *Goat Crag*, a route with a rapidly developing reputation for quality. Photo: Ian Roper



valley to Falcon Crag, digested the intricacies of a blank wall on abseil, and soloed back up, next to the hanging rope. Dry Grasp was the result, and it is an aptly named little nasty – hard, technical and bold.

Grindley, however, remained firm in his conviction that first ascents should be on-sight efforts and, in 1973, before moving to Scotland, he had his final fling on Pavey Ark, when he established Brain Damage. I had previously inspected the line from an abseil and had placed a piton under the top overhang, where I was sure that I would need one for a runner. The wall was so steep that I doubted if it would be possible to hang around without any biscuits in order to place protection. Shortly afterwards I got so cheesed off with the haggling and criticism I was experiencing that I virtually gave up climbing and left the line for someone else. Grindley was quickly on the scene. He removed the offending piton from a rope, but then replaced it during his ascent and used it for a rest, before completing the climb. The interesting fact about this route is that the horrific second pitch is not as difficult as the rather insignificant-looking first pitch, which involves a very long reach on tiny finger-holds. In fact, Jeff Lamb failed here shortly before making a free ascent of Fallen Angel!

Late 1973 was a period when everyone was very touchy and quick to criticize any indiscretion. The “insular Lakeland syndrome”, as Keith Myhill described it, was breached when he and Ken Jones (both Derbyshire-orientated climbers) added a fine new route called Empire to Raven Crag, Thirlmere, using two aid points. Myhill (perhaps mischievously) made big claims for the climb's great difficulty. Not unnaturally, the route received a lot of attention because of these invasion overtones, and local climbers quickly got to work to put the route into its true perspective. It was not long before Jeff Lamb eliminated all the aid, producing a very hard move on the final pitch, and the route's final demise came when Livesey, playing silly buggers, soloed it with an abseil rope hanging down next to him.

1974 was a busy year, especially for Livesey. It has been claimed that this long Yorkshireman initiated the rise in climbing standards in the Lake District. This is not true. What is true, however, is that he attacked lines on rock with a mind to free-climbing them, lines that other climbers thought would need aid. The Great Buttress on Goat Crag had only been breached by the happy-go-lucky metal merchants of the 'sixties Borrowdale Brigade; it was thus real meat for Livesey. Stories were circulating about him: he was said to spend days suspended from a rope, studying the rock face and contemplating future actions. His deliberations produced two classics: Footless Crow and Bitter Oasis. Although Livesey claims that they are both of Hard

Extreme standard, only Bitter Oasis seems to be a reasonably feasible climb. This route is now very popular, and it is without doubt one of the great Lake District climbs, requiring strong fingers and a quick technical brain to succeed.

The first crux is only twenty feet from the ground. There are two alternatives: either a layback over a small overhang, to gain a shallow groove, or, a few feet to the left, small finger-holds leading to the same position. The second crux is more frightening, as a fall would leave one dangling free. Again, confidence in small finger-holds is the key, as one traverses between roofs to reach the sanctuary of some bolt runners (remnants of the original bolt route). I think these should be removed, as the natural protection is adequate, but the job would have to be done by abseil.

Footless Crow is a bird of altogether different plumage. The first section follows Athanor through its crucial moves, before striking off rightwards at an easier standard into the centre of the face. The final section is as appalling as it looks, for it takes the stepped bulges direct. After several hard moves, utilizing a series of undercutts, a position of extreme discomfort is attained half-way through the bulges. Along with other climbers, like Ed Cleasby and Martin Berzins, I didn't have a clue what to do after that. A certain amount of prior knowledge seems to be an essential requirement for the ascent of such difficult ground. Equipped with this knowledge, Ron Fawcett and Chris Gibb managed to repeat the route, but they are the only ones to have succeeded so far.

Livesey has also been active in Langdale. With Al Manson he produced the impressive Eastern Hammer on Gimmer Crag, free-climbing the line taken by the old Ross aid route, If. On this ascent, Livesey utilized all the old pitons for protection; he then added to the controversies that regularly surround him (then and now) by abseiling down the route and removing most of the pitons. As it happens, Eastern Hammer is laden with natural protection; it can therefore be fully enjoyed for its technical attractions and its position. Although only a one-pitch climb, it is extremely tiring on the fingers and demands a confident approach. But the positions, out on the front of Gimmer's finest bastion, are superb, and the climb easily qualifies as one of the finest pitches in Langdale. Several repeat ascents have involved yo-yos, where the leader is lowered back to the stance from his top runner to rest. If this is done to excess, it obviously detracts from the achievement of the ascent. Most leading climbers have from time to time accepted the yo-yo as being a reasonable technique to employ while making a free ascent. It may not be a completely satisfactory answer, but the present state of the game permits it. Indeed, there are still many variations on the exact meaning of the

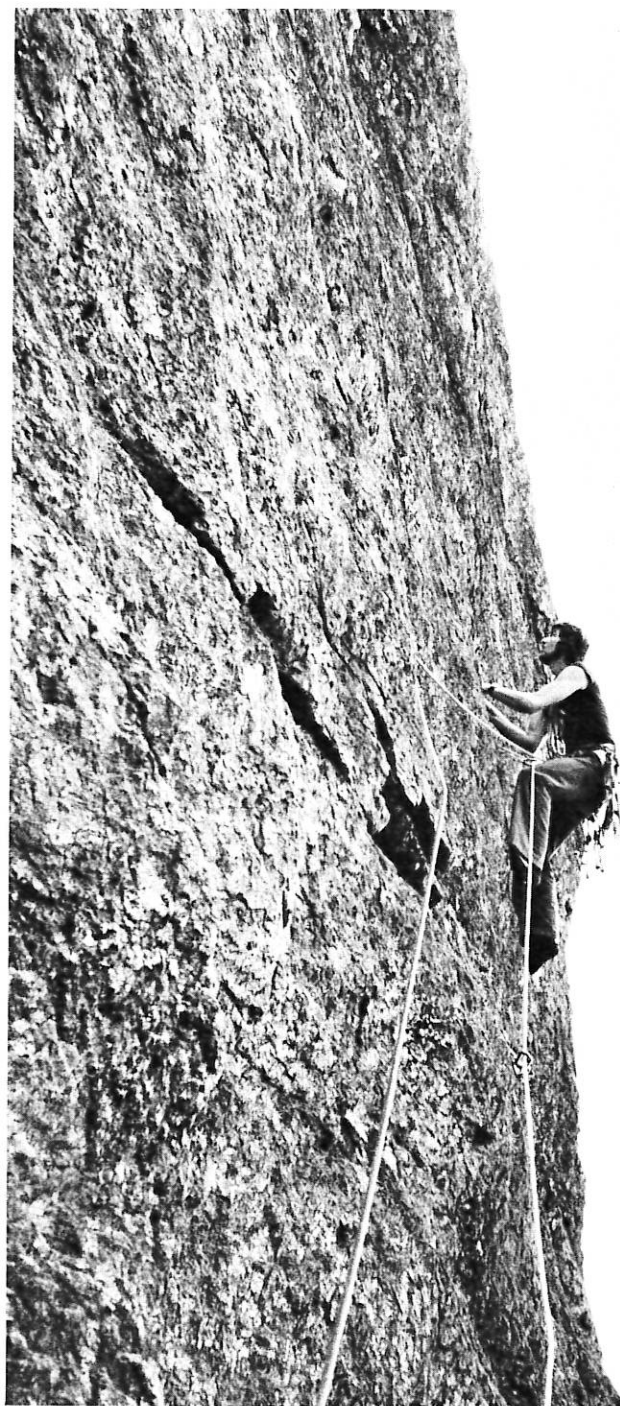
word 'free', especially in relation to the hardest routes.

Jeff Lamb, that friendly jackal from Carlisle, also got a piece of the action in 1974, when he and Pete Botterill established Zeus on Scaffell's East Buttress. This important climb follows the groove line to the left of Phoenix. It soon gained a reputation for difficulty and poor protection. Last summer, Ed Cleasby and I repeated the route for the first time, taking in a new finish directly up the arête between Phoenix and Ichabod. The first section of the climb had perfectly adequate protection and was of very high quality, involving delicate bridging of the main groove. With the addition of the arête, the climb certainly rates as one of the best on the crag.

Yorkshire-based climbers always seem to have had a strong affinity with Lakeland climbing, and Livesey's influence can be seen as part of a long tradition which includes such famous Yorkshire names as Austin and Dolphin. The current set of Yorkshire/Lakelanders includes, along with Livesey and Ron Fawcett, such climbers as John Sheard, Chris Gibb, Pete Gomersall and John Eastham, all of whom are trained in the skills and methods of their local limestone and gritstone areas.

How is it that these visiting climbers have been able to do the hardest new lines and cut aid from the most difficult recent routes? The answer is a combination of dedication, training and chalk. In the late 'sixties, gymnasium wall climbing, centred on Leeds University, became a popular and competitive pastime among the Yorkshire climbers. The better performers, such as Alan Manson and John Syrett (brilliant climbers who have virtually ignored the Lakes), pushed out the limits of what one could do with one's arms and fingers. Others followed their example, and standards soared. It was also at this point that chalk reared its messy but effective head.

The dust from the gymnasium floor was as natural as dry soil and lichen from the crags. But the dust was rapidly replaced by chalk, and soon white marks were to be seen on the local gritstone crags. In 1975, these marks also began to appear in the Lake District. Lichen and dry soil were out – the Yorkshire climbers had introduced the white menace! When fingers and minds are pushed to the limit, one result is sweat, and chalk neutralizes this factor. Unfortunately, there has been no market research into climbers' needs in this respect, and the only chalk readily available is light magnesium carbonate. Chemists must have been alarmed at the increase of stomach complaints in rural areas. But chalk in this form is totally unmanageable: it is thrown and blown all over the place, and the 'white explosion' has literally covered the crags. Climbers who use chalk should make an effort to buy solid gymnastics chalk, as this is quite sufficient to remove unwanted grease from the fingers. The pollution



Above: Ed Cleasby leads Saxon on Scaffell Crag, a magnificent new route that plugs the gap between Central Buttress and Moss Ghyll Grooves. Photo: Rob Matheson

problem would thereby be greatly alleviated. I have used chalk for about a year, and I must admit that I have found it a very useful deterrent against sweaty fingers. Of course, some climbers refuse to use the stuff, claiming that it interferes with the enjoyment of others. This important aspect has caused most users to think twice and, in the Lake District, many climbers are beginning to use chalk more sensibly – in small quantities and only on the hardest moves. Chalk, I am afraid, is here to stay but with careful management it can find an acceptable niche in British climbing. The reporting of chalkless ascents is a rather artificial step in my opinion, as some climbers suffer more from sweaty fingers than others. However, use of chalk will always be up to the indi-

vidual, even if he is forced to secrecy.

There is little doubt that in 1974 the new route scene was dominated by Pete Livesey. But since then, having adopted many Yorkshire practices, local climbers have largely taken over the lead again. Jackal ascents, on the other hand, have remained in the open market and this has helped maintain a highly competitive atmosphere. The local climbers who have been making the pace can be divided into two groups: one is based in Keswick and the other in Ambleside. Surprisingly, these two groups have always remained separate over the years, and a friendly rivalry has grown up.

The Keswick-based group has Pete Botterill, Steve Clegg, Pete Whillance and Jeff Lamb as its main figures, while the Ambleside group consists of a real mixed bag of emigré Yorkshiremen and climbers from the Furness area. Partnerships are not as settled as in the Keswick area, and teams

chop and change according to circumstances. One partnership became familiarly known as 'loud mouth and foul mouth', due to the amount of noise generated both on the crags and in the pubs. The main dynamism has come from Ed Cleasby, with back-up roles being taken by Mike Lynch, Bill Birkett, John Eastham and myself. To list all the routes done by these groups would be a long and tiresome task, and the facts can easily be gleaned from *Mountain's* information pages. However, I will discuss some of the more important recent routes and the issues they have raised.

Livesey had shown that completely free routes of the highest standards were possible with pre-programming methods, but even so, some local climbers found that they still needed aid to overcome a few new lines. On Dow Crag, I used an aid sling on Abraxas, an impressive overhanging crack line just to the right of Balrog. But the climb was soon jackalled into the realms of respectability by Martin Berzins. Berzins, an intense young Yorkshire climber, spent most of 1976 eliminating aid from modern routes, partnered mainly by his brother Bob. Nobody else has yet managed to free climb Abraxas, but, with or without the aid point, it is a very strenuous and sensational undertaking. Botterill, Whillance and Clegg have sinned twice. The first time was on their route Verdict, on Eagle Crag, where they used a nut for direct aid in the final smooth scoop, despite previous top-roped ascents. Again, Berzins managed to climb the scoop without the aid. Verdict is an enjoyable route, full of variety, and containing the most strenuous and delicate of climbing.

The other route on which they sinned was Eclipse, the open corner just left of Astra, on Pavey Ark. This obvious line had long been ignored because of its brevity and apparent impossibility. Changes in tastes made it a must, and Whillance, Botterill and Clegg, climbing further south than usual, grabbed it but employed an aid nut. A few days later, unaware of the earlier ascent, Berzins and Ed Cleasby climbed the line without the aid, creating a very hard pitch. The crux is similar to that on Verdict, so it would appear that Berzins is particularly capable on blank scoop problems.

The most recent line to be climbed with aid was Mother Courage, which takes an appalling looking overhanging wall to the left of Grindley's Brain Damage, on Pavey Ark. Both Cleasby and I inspected the line from an abseil, to see if it was possible and if it could be protected. Ed then made a very bold lead, placing a piton near the top – the quickest runner he could arrange at the time. He used the piton to rest, before completing the final fingery moves. The pitch, although not particularly technical, is extremely strenuous, with large holds a long way apart. It is a very exhilarating climb, to say the least. The inevitable free ascent followed within weeks, this time achieved by the talented Bolton climber,

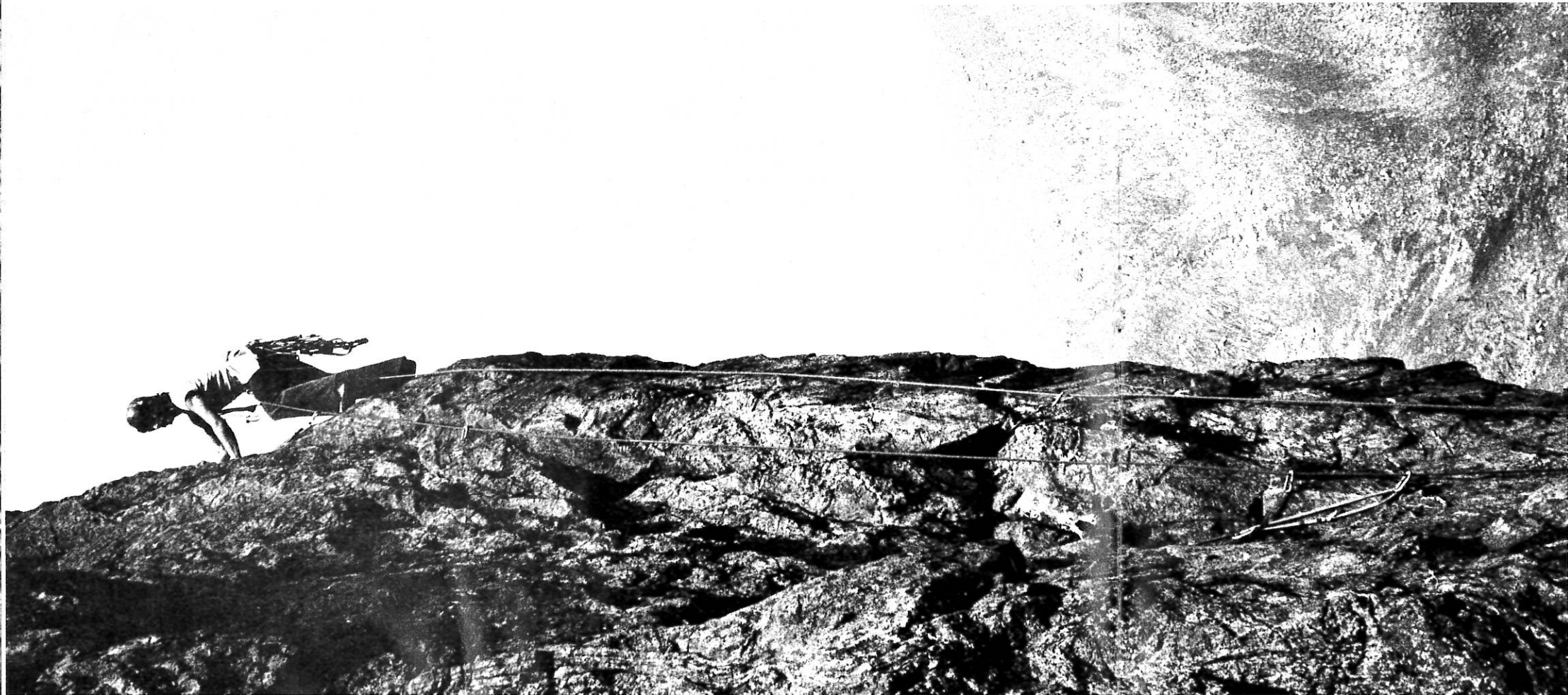
A Selection of 100 Lakeland Extremes

Route	Aid	Crag	First Ascent Details	Grading Details	Comments
Nazgul	*	Scafell Crag	1966 Brown, L/Jackson	5c+, 4c, 5a+	E3 Very strenuous pitch 1
Saxon	*	Scafell Crag	1976 Cleasby/Estharm	5a, 5b+, 5b	E2 Delightful wall climb
White Wizard	*	Scafell Crag	1971 Bonington/Estcourt	6a, 5a, 5b+, 5c	E4 Hard finger jams, sustained
Shadowfax	*	Scafell Crag	1976 Botterill/Clegg	6a	E4 Yo-yoed on first ascent
Glit Edge Eliminate	*	Scafell Crag	1969 Read/Lake	5a, 5b, 5a+, 5a+E1	E2 Excellent route
Dyad	*	Scafell East	1968 Jackson/Read	5c	E2 Short, hard sections
Leverage	*	Scafell East	1958 Smith, R/Leaver	5a+	E1
Gold Rush	*	Scafell East	1969 Cram/Young	5a, 4c, 5b, 5a+	E1 Very nice after pitch 1
Lost Horizons	*	Scafell East	1976 Livesey/Lawrence	6b	E4 Unrepeated
Ichabod	*	Scafell East	1960 Oliver/AKless/Willis	5c	E2 Good hardish classic
Phoenix (Direct)	*	Scafell East	1957 Moseley	5b, 5b	E2 Strenuous but well protected
Zeus (with Arête)	*	Scafell East	1974 Lamb/Botterill	5c, 5a	E2 Short hard section
Incubus	**	Scafell East	1972 Read/Adams	5c+	E3 One point of aid, strenuous
Holy Ghost	*	Scafell East	1965 Bonington/Thompson	5b+	E2 Bold rather than difficult
Lord of the Rings	*	Scafell East	1969 Adams/Read	5b+	E2 Sustained at reasonable grade
Central Pillar	*	Esks Buttress	1962 Crew/Owen	5a, 5b, 5b+	E2 Good old classic
Cumbrian	**	Esks Buttress	1974 Braithwaite/Valentine	6a (one rest)	E3 Bold and strenuous
Hydra	*	Esks Buttress	1967 Isherwood/Taylor	5c	E2 Quite thin
Iago	*	Heron Crag	1965 Brown, L/Jackson	5a, 6a, 5a	E3 Bold and strenuous
Balrog	*	Dow Crag	1965 Brown, L/Jackson	5a, 5c+	E2 No aid. Steep and strenuous
Abraaxas	*	Dow Crag	1975 Matheson/Martindale	5c, 6a, 4b, 5a+	E4 No aid. Exhilarating
Sidewalk	*	Dow Crag	1960 Brown, L/Stevens	5b+, 5a, 5a, 4c	E2 Bold first pitch
Nimrod	*	Dow Crag	1962 Miller/Kirby	5a, 5b, 5b+	E1 No aid. Very good route
Holocaust	*	Dow Crag	1971 Matheson/Pooler/Fleming	6a, 5b	E3 Desperate moves on pitch 1
Tumble	*	Dow Crag	1975 Livesey/Lawrence	6a	E4 Thin, sustained and bold
Catacomb	*	Dow Crag	1972 Matheson/Matheson	5b, 4c, 5b+	E1 Low in the grade
Pink Panther	*	Dow Crag	1973 Matheson/Matheson	5c	E2 Good wall climb
Rough	*	Dow Crag	1975 Livesey/Lawrence	5c+	E2 Contrived but interesting
Murray's Super Direct	*	Dow Crag	1974 Matheson/Martindale	5b, 5a+	E1 Nice climb
Silence	*	Dow Crag	1969 Read/Lake	5b+, 4c	E2
Eastern Hammer	*	Gimmer Crag	1974 Livesey/Manson	6a	E3 Sustained and fingery
Equus	*	Gimmer Crag	1976 Cleasby	5b+	E2 Beautiful rock climb
The Poacher	*	Gimmer Crag	1963 Austin/Metcalf	5b, 5b+	E1 Low in the grade
Brackenclock	*	Pavey Ark	1970 Austin/Soper/Faller	5a+, 5c, 5b	E1 Well protected. No aid
Ragman's Sally	*	Pavey Ark	1971 Austin/Valentine	5b, 5b+	E2 Overated. Poor final pitch
Cruel Sister	*	Pavey Ark	1972 Matheson/Colvin	5a+, 6a, 4c	E3 Superb sustained wall climb
Brain Damage	*	Pavey Ark	1973 Grindley/Long	5c+, 5c	E3 Hard on pitch 1
Mother Courage	*	Pavey Ark	1976 Cleasby/Matheson	5c	E3 Very strenuous and bold
Risus	*	Pavey Ark	1972 Grindley/Soper/Harding	5a+, 5b+	E2 Good climb
Eclipse	*	Pavey Ark	1976 Whillance/Botterill/Clegg	6a, 4c	E3 Very thin indeed
Astra	*	Pavey Ark	1960 Austin/Metcalf	5b, 5a	E1 Without aid point
Fallen Angel	*	Pavey Ark	1972 Grindley/Roper	6a, 5a+	E4 A modern classic
Cascade Direct	*	Pavey Ark	1971 Long/Barley	5c	E2 Pleasant enough
Paladin	*	White Ghyll	1970 Matheson	5c	E3 Strenuous and bold
Eliminot	**	White Ghyll	1957 Brown, J/Smith	5b+, 5b+	E2 No aid on pitch 1
Fine Time	**	Raven Crag	1971 Livesey/Hammond	5c+	E3 Modern in concept
Razor Crack	*	Neckband Crag	1966 Austin/Wood	5a+	E1
Gillette Direct	*	Neckband Crag	1968 (Lounds)/Wood/Austin	5c	E2 Very nice pitch
Aragorn	*	Neckband Crag	1971 Evans/Parker	5c	E2 Short but sharp
Sword of Damocles	*	Bowfell	1952 Dolphin/Hopkin/Greenwood	5a+	E1
North Crag Eliminate	*	Castle Rock	1952 Drasdo/Gray	4b, 5a, 5b+	E1
Rigor Mortis	*	Castle Rock	1975 Ross/Aughton	5a, 5b+, 5a	E2 No aid on pitch 2
The Ghost (via Loop)	*	Castle Rock	1964 Cram/Barnes/Young	5a, 5b+	E2 Steep and satisfying
The Last Laugh	*	Castle Rock	1965 Bonington/Ross and others	5c, 5c+, 5b	E3 Now free
Eliminator	*	Castle Rock	1969 Freeland/Rudd	5b, 5c	E2 Loose and poorly protected
Triermain Eliminate	*	Castle Rock	1953 Whillance/Cowan/Brown	5b	E1 Just a short problem
The Medlar	**	Raven (Thirimere)	1964 Bonington/Boysen	5c, 5b	E2 One aid point on pitch 2
Empire	*	Raven (Thirimere)	1973 Myhill/Jones	5a+, 5c, 5a, 6a	E3 Hard moves but well protected
Gates of Delirium	*	Raven (Thirimere)	1976 Botterill/Clegg	6a, 6a	E5 A modern horror
Totalitarian	*	Raven (Thirimere)	1964 Bonington/Thompson	5a, 5b, 5b	E1 Free. A good climb
The Creation	*	Raven (Thirimere)	1976 Botterill/Clegg	6a, 6a	E4 Short but hard
Extol	*	Dove Crag	1960 Whillance/Mortlock	5a+, 5b+	E2 Free. Sustained
Hiraeth	*	Dove Crag	1962 Crew/Ingle	5b, 5b+	E2 Good pitches but broken
Phobos	*	Dove Crag	1972 Read/Adams	5b+, 4a, 5b	E2 Loose on pitch 1
Explosion	*	Dove Crag	1976 Botterill/Clegg	5c+	E3 Technical but short
Problem Child	*	Dove Crag	1976 Cleasby/Barzins	5c, 5c, 5b+	E3 Poorly protected and loose
Dovedale Groove	*	Dove Crag	1953 Brown, J/Whillance/Cowan	5b, (5a+)	E1 Strenuous
Savage Messiah	*	Shepherd's Crag	1975 Birkett/McHaffie	5c	E2 Free. Short but bold
Route 1	**	Falcon Crag	1957 Ross/Lockey	4c, 6a	E3
Dry Grasp	*	Falcon Crag	1974 Livesey	6a	E3 Very thin
Dangler	*	Falcon Crag	1969 Read/Rudd	5c	E2 Piton protection
The Niche	*	Falcon Crag	1962 McHaffie/Liddell	5b+, 5b+, 5a	E2 Free. Excellent
Usurper	*	Falcon Crag	1975 Gomersall/Bulmer	5b	E1 Airy
Plagiarism	*	Falcon Crag	1962 Nunn/Woolcock	5c	E2 Free. Good pitch
Ostentatious/Vertigo	**	Black Crag	1958 (Livesey) Ross/Aughton	5b+	E1 One piton for aid
Grand Alliance	*	Black Crag	1976 Matheson/Cleasby	5a, 4c, 6a	E4 Very thin
Nagasaki Grooves	*	Great End Crag	1972 Adams/Read Livesey (free 1974)	6a+	E3
The Verdict	*	Eagle Crag	1975 Clegg/Botterill	5b+, 5b, 6a	E3 Final pitch poorly protected
Where Eagles Dare	*	Eagle Crag	1975 Whillance/Clegg	5b, 5c	E2 Excellent pitch
Cleft Direct	*	Eagle Crag	1975 Botterill/Clegg	5c, 5c	E3 Free. Strenuous
Daedalus	*	Eagle Crag	1965 Nunn/Griffiths/Ross	5b+, 5a+	E2 Free. Excellent
Post Mortem	*	Eagle Crag	1966 Ross/Lockey	5c	E2 Free. Very hard work
Rat Race	*	Goat Crag	1966 Henderson/Cook/McHaffie	5c, 5a	E2 Free. Intimidating
Voyage	*	Goat Crag	1976 Clegg/Botterill	5b, 5c, 6a	E3
Tumbleweed Conn.	*	Goat Crag	1975 Botterill/Rawcliffe	5b+, 5a+	E2 Good open climbing
The Big Curver	*	Goat Crag	1965 Ross/Wilson/Lee	5a+, 4c, 5b+	E2 Free. Long pitches
Athanos	*	Goat Crag	1968 Adams/Read	5c+, 5b, 5c	E3 Free. Sustained
Bitter Oasis	*	Goat Crag	1974 Livesey/Sheard	5c, 5c	E3 A great climb
Footless Crow	*	Goat Crag	1974 Livesey/Witham	5c+, 6b	E5 Futuristic
Pearls Before Swine	**	Deer Field Crag	1973 Long/Harding	5c	E3 Poor protection. Thin
Peccadillo	**	Deer Field Crag	1968 Read/Adams	5c	E3 Two aid points
The Graduate	**	Deer Field Crag	1971 Matheson/Pooler/Fleming	5b, 5b+	E2 One point of aid on pitch 2
Deer Field Buttress	*	Deer Field Crag	1951 Dolphin/Brown, A	4c, 5a, 5b, 5b+	E1 Low in the grade
Vikings	*	Great Gable	1969 McHardy/Braithwaite	5b+, 5c, 5b	E3 Strenuous
The Tomb	*	Gable Crag	1966 Cram/Young	5a, 5c, 5a	E2 Original way
Deimos	*	Eagle (Buttermere)	1973 Read/Adams	5c, 5a, 5a	E2 Free. Good final pitch
Lost Colonies	*	High Crag	1976 Livesey/Sheard	5c	E2 Very close to Psycho
Catalyst	*	Buckstone How	1972 Adams/Read	5b, 5c+	E2 Free. Good final pitch
Brutus	*	Buckstone How	1975 Whillance/Loughran	5c	E2 Awkward
The Wray	*	Green Crag	1974 Mortimer/Allen	5b	E1 Pleasant route

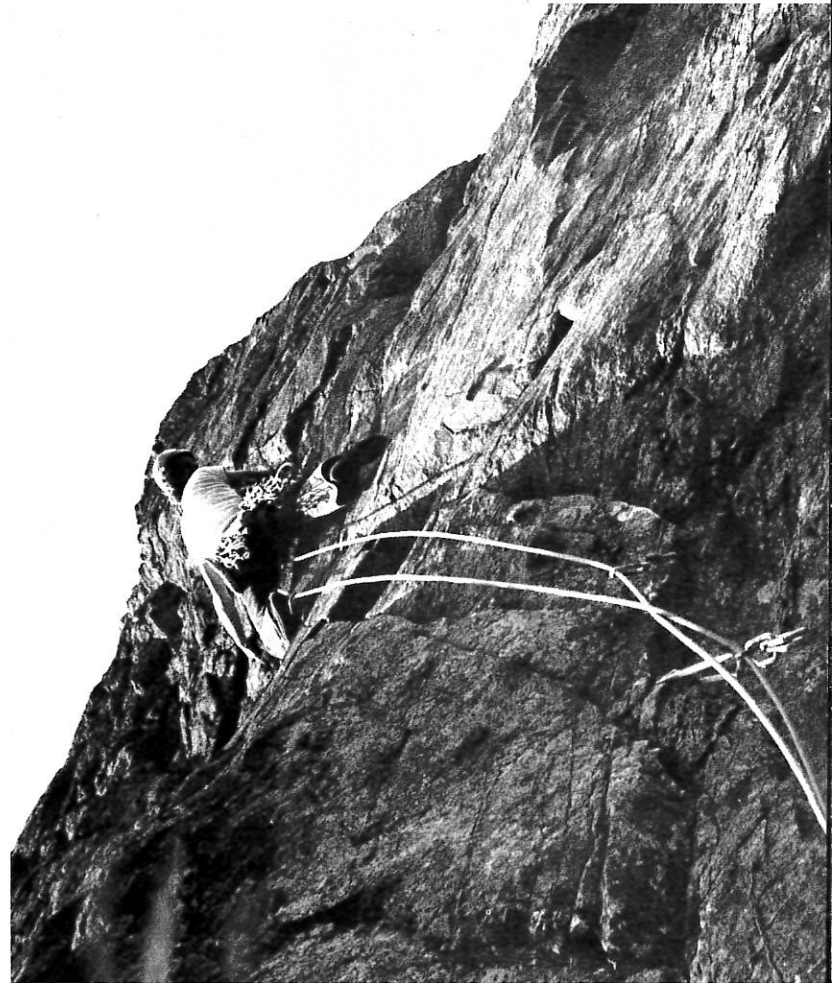
A Selection of Routes from Other Areas

Dream/Liberator	*	Bosigran	1970 Littlejohn/Cannings/Duckworth	5a, 5c, 5c	E4 Free. Brilliant
Bow Wall	*	Bosigran	1957 Brown, J	4c, 5b, 5b	E1 Sensational but safe
Eroica	*	Pentire Head	1971 Littlejohn/Morton	5a+, 5b	E2 Free
Il Duce	**	Tintagel	1972 Littlejohn/Darbyshire	5a, 5c, 5b+	E3 One aid point on pitch 2
Shibboleth	*	Buachaille Etive	1958 Smith, R/Fraser	5c, 5a, 5b+, 5a	E3 Low in the grade. Often wet
Carnivore	*	Buachaille Etive	1958 Cunningham/Noon	5b+, 4c, 5c, 5a	E3 No aid. Superb
Great Wall	*	Buachaille Etive	1963 Crew	5c+, 6a	E4 Magnificent
Jelly Roll	*	Clogwyn du'r Arddu	1971 Evans/Rogers	5a+, 5b+	E2 Good positions
Boldest	*	Clogwyn du'r Arddu	1963 Crew/Ingle	5b+	E2 Pleasant climb
Lubianka	*	Cyrn Las	1976 Cleasby/Matheson/Eastham	5c, 5b, 5c	E3 Good pitches
The Skull	*	Dinas Cromlech	1966 Boysen/Williams/Jordan	5b+, 5c, 5c	E3 No aid
Resurrection	*	Dinas Cromlech	1975 Edwards/Metcalf	6a	E4 Very sustained
Left Wall	*	Dinas Cromlech	1974 Livesey	5c	E2 Sustained 15ft. section
Void	*	Tremadoc Rocks	1975 Edwards/Metcalf and others	5b+, 6a	E3 Strenuous
Zukator	*	Tremadoc Rocks	1964 Crew/Harris	5b+, 6a	E4 Technical and strenuous
Vector	*	Tremadoc Rocks	1960 Brown/Davies	4c, 5b+, 5b	E2 Old classic
Big Groove	*	Gogarth	1966 Crew/Alcock	5a, 5c, 5a+	E2 High in the grade
Positron	*	Gogarth	1971 Rouse/Minks	5c, 6a, 5c+, 5b	E4 Very serious
T. Rex	*	Gogarth	1970 Hollwell/Drummond/Pearce	5c, 5b+, 5c	E3 Serious top pitch
Claws	*	Kilnsey Crag	1976 Livesey/Lawrence	6b, 6b	E5
Mortlock's Arête	*	Chee Tor	1976 Proctor/Birtles	6a, 6a	E5
Supersonic	*	High Tor	1976 Fawcett/Birtles/Evans	6b	E5
Bastille	**	High Tor	1976 Livesey/Lawrence	6b	E5 One in-situ aid bolt

* Originally involving aid but now climbed free. ** Aid moves still remain. A number of routes, previously regarded as Mild Extreme (e.g. Dedication, Gimmer String, Gandalf's Groove, Harlot Flinker), are now generally considered HV5.



Rough (below) on Dow Crag. This route crosses four others in 150ft. and typifies the growing interest in technical moves that can compensate for any shortcomings in a routes line. All the routes in this area are exposed and on excellent rock however, a quality clearly demonstrated in the photo (above) of the easier Tarkus. Photos: Matheson collection



Jerry Peel, who has quite a number of early repeats to his credit.

Mother Courage gives food for thought. If Cleasby had placed the piton runner before his ascent, he might have been able to climb the route completely free. Another alternative would have been to adopt a tactic that many Yorkshire climbers seem to favour – the practice of using tension from a runner above the waist. Needless to say, a well-drilled second can help the leader quite effectively in this fashion, without it coming to the notice of any interested spectators. Everyone knows that this is aid, and of course everyone is free to use the method, but guilty parties should never claim free ascents, especially if they are doing first ascents or jackal ascents. The crux of the matter is honesty: report the truth, even if it doesn't match your ethical and theoretical desires. Cleasby's other alternatives on Mother Courage could have included continuous yo-yoing until a free ascent was achieved (wasn't Fingerlicker climbed in this way?), or he could have fallen off until he had rested enough to complete the last few moves. One way or another, there is a large and assorted box of biscuits to choose from.

Climbers such as Martin Berzins argue that if a line requires aid it should be left alone. In the Lakes, over the past few years, I can think of only three important cases in which climbers have adhered to this fine, yet somewhat romantic principle, the climbs concerned being Shadowfax and Saxon on Scafell, and Tumble on Dow Crag.

Shadowfax is a steep, fingery wall to the left of Botterill's Slab. Having been inspected and left by various teams over the years, it was eventually climbed free last year by Botterill and Clegg. On Dow Crag, Pete Livesey and his faithful companion, Jill Lawrence, discovered and climbed Tumble in June, 1975. I thought all the free lines on Dow had been climbed, but Livesey had other ideas: he free climbed this very unlikely-looking groove line to the right of Holocaust (a line that Cleasby had climbed with several points of aid in 1973) before anyone really started to train. Tumble is very hard, very bold and very poorly protected by all accounts. Reputed to be a brilliant pitch, it is an example of typical 'Liveseyan' audacity.

The third route was Ed Cleasby's and John Eastham's Saxon, on Scafell Crag. This follows an intricate and delicate path up the very steep wall to the right of the Great Flake pitch on Central Buttress, until a slanting crack can be entered and followed to a good stance. Thereafter, the line is more contrived, but it still gives excellent climbing. Cleasby and Eastham derived great satisfaction from climbing one of the last big lines in the Lakes without prior knowledge and without any aid. They were certainly helped by the fact that the route required hardly any gardening and the difficulties never rose to the harder Extreme

category, but it was nevertheless a fine achievement.

Another recent free route is Livesey's latest creation, Lost Horizons, the obvious leaning corner line to the right of Centaur. It had been half-heartedly tried by leading climbers for years, mainly in spirit rather than body. Although Livesey managed to free climb the groove, he hammered in two pitons for protection. The route is no doubt very hard indeed, but many will regard it as a retrograde step, partly because of the pitons (and because they were put in by someone who has spent so much time criticizing and removing other people's iron), and partly because the route was inspected in advance. It will be interesting to see if the jackals make a meal of this one in 1977.

At this stage it might be worth referring to the large amount of gardening that has been going on recently in the creation of new routes – a fairly unusual procedure these days, with everyone craving for very hard lines on steep and generally clean rock. Dave Nicol, Chris Downer and friends (all Borrowdale based) have been well to the fore in this respect and, after major excavations, they have unearthed a number of very good routes. An outstanding discovery was Great End Corner, which was climbed in 1975 and is now regarded as one of the great classics of Borrowdale. It may be that the future will centre on freshly gardened crags or on the less popular crags that climbers like John Earl and Bob Hutchinson have been developing in recent years.

No doubt, some will describe the new routes as mere space-fillers. Such remarks are usually made by people who haven't done the routes, but it is true that climbs are being squeezed into smaller and smaller expanses of unclimbed rock between the classic lines, and this does lay them open to criticism of this sort. However, climbers are also showing a change of attitude, to accommodate and rationalize these climbs: much more attention is being focused on the actual moves, rather than on the independence or fineness of line. An early route of this type was Livesey's Longhair, on White Ghyll. Put up in 1971, it was ten years ahead of its time. It is a twenty-five foot test-piece rammed in between Laugh Not and Man o' Straw, and so far it has been virtually ignored. Several other recent routes fall into the same category, though none are as blatant as Longhair.

Dove Crag had two routes of this type added in 1976: Explosion (Botterill and Clegg) takes a groove line and plugs an empty space before the crag peters out into the hillside; Problem Child (Cleasby and Berzins) is a steep and poorly protected pitch that fills a gap between Extol and Hangover. Although not as fine as their neighbours, these routes are harder: this will be their attraction. Livesey also got in on the act with his route, Rough, on Dow Crag. Crowded on to a heavily developed

area, it crosses four other routes in its 150ft. length. Nevertheless, though difficult and rather contrived, it is a most enjoyable pitch. Two similar routes on Gimmer Crag will probably achieve considerable popularity. Equus, by Ed Cleasby, follows the shallow depression between Eastern Hammer and Kipling Groove; a hard move is needed to break through the overhang above the Kipling undercling, but thereafter the blank-looking groove provides enough small holds and adequate protection to make it one of the more enjoyable undertakings on the crag. The other route, Livesey's Breaking Point, is crammed between Gimmer Crack and Gimmer String, but, as it takes an arête, it seems independent and should become very popular.

Other examples of 'space-fillers' can be found on Shepherds Crag, where Stone Tape and Savage Messiah seem to keep the modern youths happy, even on hot days when one would have thought more satisfaction could be had on Scafell. There is no doubt that the gritstone attitude is flowing in: it is the delight of the individual moves that counts.

However, if one is thinking of pure, naked difficulty, two 1976 routes, Gates of Delirium and Grand Alliance, probably deserve to join Dry Grasp and maybe even Footless Crow as the hardest Lakeland climbs. For once, Yorkshire had nothing to do with either of them. Ed Cleasby and I pinched Grand Alliance from the locals. It takes the obvious line between Vertigo and The Lastest, on Black Crag in Borrowdale. The wall was very mossy, so we spent some time cleaning it from an abseil rope; a few days later, armed with chalk and determination, I led the pitch. It starts with a very delicate traverse between roofs and then goes directly up a bulging and desperate wall to the top. Ed described the pitch as a monster, and the Berzins brothers, who made the second ascent, showed great surprise that local climbers could climb at such a standard.

The Berzins got even more of a shock when they repeated Botterill's and Clegg's Gates of Delirium, which takes the very steep rock just right of The Medlar, on Raven Crag, Thirlmere. By all accounts, they didn't make too good a job of the second ascent: Martin Berzins used aid while seconding the strenuous first pitch, in order to save himself for a free ascent of the crucial groove pitch. One can only assume that Botterill and Clegg made a very professional job of the first ascent, making use of all the pre-programming methods available, before doing the actual ascent – which was as great an achievement as Footless Crow.

The dramatic rise in standard that has taken place in small cliff climbing over the past few years has given new impetus to the endless debate on grading. What should be the grade of these new routes? The F.R.C.C., of course, calls them all Extre-

mely Severe, which is no better than the Very Severe grade in Scotland, as it covers a vast range. The 1976 Dow Crag guide, for instance, grades both Catacomb and Tumble at Extremely Severe, which is ridiculous, as the latter route is far harder. Under the F.R.C.C. system, the writer of the guide, John Martindale, was not allowed to introduce new grades. Alec Sharp's new Cloggy guide, on the other hand, had a superior system, whereby the Extreme grade is subdivided and individual pitch gradings are given. I wish the Fell and Rock would wake up to such ideas. Their intransigence has led to increasing discussion on the grading system in Lakeland climbing circles, and some radical solutions have been advocated.

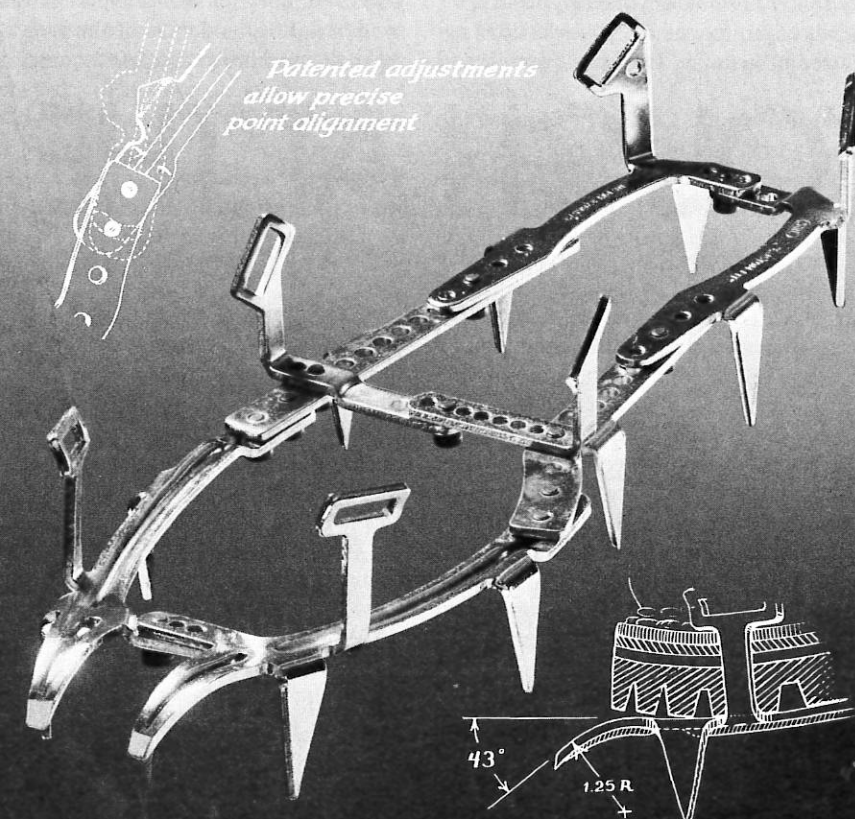
The super-fit devotees, being the influential climbers, have recently tended to downgrade the old routes, fitting the new routes into their place. Hence, under the Crew/Wilson system, the old 5c's have become 5b's, and the old 6a's have become 5c's. But the system originated at a time when 'climbing athletes' didn't exist, so 'climbing athletes' have no right to downgrade. The crux on Ichabod has always been 5c as far as most climbers are concerned, and it should not be downgraded to allow grading space for harder routes. The system is open-ended, so the 6a and 6b grades should be used. The original intention of the system was to give a technical grade, but time and use have expanded its meaning: a pitch with a whole series of 5c moves must be a 6a, and so the argument continues. Lakeland climbers, however, have now developed a new system for Extreme climbs, and this, together with the 'old' system, can be examined on the accompanying list, which was compiled after taking into account the opinions of several leading climbers. The new 'E' grade is simply an 'impression' grade for the harder climbs – based on the idea that everyone has an impression of a climb after completing it. It is a five-fold system, ranging from E1 (Nimrod) to E5 (Footless Crow). Using the Crew/Wilson system as it should be used, the crucial pitches of these climbs would be graded 5b and 6b.

What has surprised many people is the quality of the recent hard routes. Within the last few years, new routes have been discovered on almost every popular crag in the Lake District; many of them are as good as the classic climbs that previously formed the main attractions of Lakeland climbing. One outstanding route is Livesey's Bitter Oasis, which, though hard, is still within reach of many able climbers today. If one can tackle the established Extremes with comparative ease, then one should be able to struggle up some of the E3's – while failing with dignity on many!

SUMMARY

A discussion of the ethical and grading dilemmas that are taxing the current Lakeland activists.

Points of difference

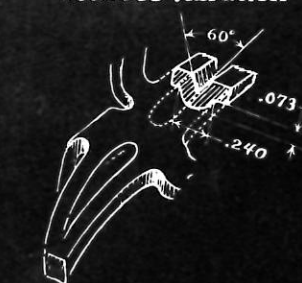


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