

**Holwick Scar**

OS Sheet 92 NY902269  
 Aspect North east  
 Altitude 300m  
 Approach 5 minutes

Mod - Severe	4
HS - HVS	13
E1 - E3	4
E4 and above	0
Bouldering	0

**Situation and Character**

This splendid escarpment of igneous rock is part of the Great Whin Sill, which faces northeast across Upper Teesdale near the village of Holwick. Access has been a problem at Holwick for many years. It is hoped that this situation will change with the introduction of the CROW Act. Open Access Contact Centre 0845 100 3298 or [www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk](http://www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk)

**History**

Records go back 30 years. Almost all the original development was by combinations of WE Pattison, AJK Gooding, Charlie Thew, Angus Robson, Dave Thompson, Bill McCrickard, Bob Tibbett and others of the Yackley Mountaineering Club. The Cleveland Mountaineering Club also played a part in the development. The crag was first documented in a small guide produced by the Yackley MC, then the Rock Climbers Guide to the North of England (Pointer 1980) and more recently North of England Rock Climbs by Stewart Wilson (Cordee 1992).

**Approaches and Access**

The crag is approached from the small hamlet of Holwick, which is 4 miles North West of Middleton-in-Teesdale. From Middleton cross the River Tees on the B6277 going south. Take the first right which is the minor road leading to Holwick. Park considerately in the lay-by. The crags are now clearly visible one field away and dominating the scene. To reach the crag walk to the west end of the village, where at a bend in the road, a Public Bridleway leads off to the left. Follow this for a short distance to where it divides and a branch of the Public Bridleway goes up through the escarpment in the direction of Selset reservoir. A curfew has been imposed following an unfortunate incident when climbers were climbing at night using head torches! No climbing after 9.30pm.

**Access Agreement Guidelines** Check the [BMC RAD](#) for the latest information.

Holwick Scar forms part of the Upper Teesdale Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the rich diversity of rare species and relict arctic-alpine plants. The site (including the Whin Sill crags) are also of European importance as recognized by designations of Special Area for Conservation and Special Protection Area. This area has a high level of legal protection, and anyone damaging conservation interests can be punished by a large fine and/or imprisonment. Through consultation with the Countryside Agency and English Nature, the BMC have produced the following guidance for climbers.

The BMC have now negotiated access guidelines (with the Countryside Agency and English Nature) for climbers. Holwick Scar forms part of the Upper Teesdale Site of Special Scientific Interest due to the rich diversity of rare species and relict arctic-alpine plants. The site (including the other Whin Sill crags) are also of European importance with Special Area for Conservation and Special Protection Area designations. This area has a high level of legal protection, and anyone damaging conservation interests can be punished by a large fine and/or imprisonment.

- Do not remove cliff vegetation this is an illegal (and punishable) offence under the Wildlife and Countryside and CRoW Acts.
- Climbing is only permitted on buttresses numbered 1 to 5 (in crag pamphlet).
- Do not climb on the buttress between Great Chimney and Charlie's Chimney (inc. these routes), or on the area under the black lines on buttress 3 (see pamphlet).
- Avoid climbing onto the large vegetated ledges.
- Do not abseil from the trees.
- Descend from buttresses 1, 2, and 3 down the back.

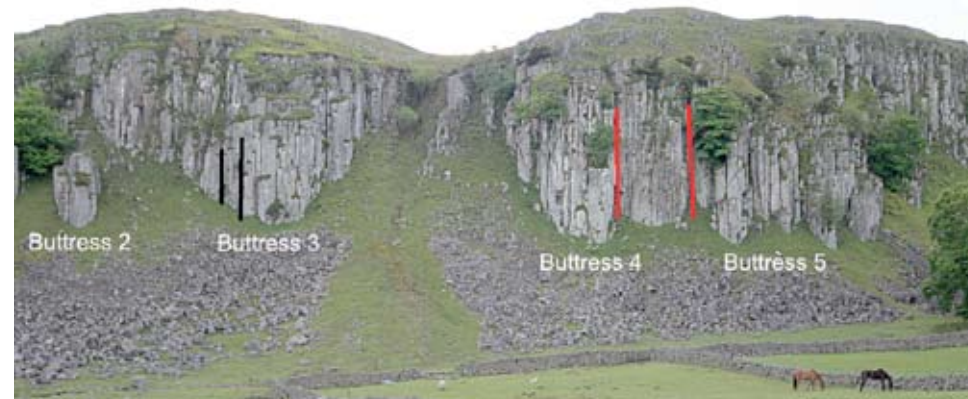
When topping-out from buttresses 4 and 5 descend via the large grassy gully on the right.

- When moving between buttresses stay on the obvious 'sheep-track'.
  - Do not walk on ANY of the scree slopes.
  - Only approach the crag by the designated access point.
  - Follow the Countryside Code.
  - If you spot Ring Ouzel's in early-mid March, call English Nature.
- Guidelines photo-pamphlet available at the crag.

**Accommodation**

The Strathmore Arms at Holwick (01833 640362) serves home cooked food and a good selection of real ales. They provide B&B accommodation and a basic free campsite.

There is a campsite near the Strathmore Arms with a toilet and a tap by the river (£2.50 per person per night).

**The Climbs**

These are described from left to right.

**Buttress One**

Descent to left.

**Appetite for Construction 9m HVS 5a**

Climb the corner crack adjacent to the left-hand arête. Well protected in the lower section. Care with some loose blocks at the top.

*Alan Dougherty 22/4./06*

**Dustbin Day Crack 9m E1 5b**

Taller climbers will be able to climb the crack-line by bridging spaced flat holds on its outside. Those unable to make the reaches, or in need of a good thrutch, will find some helpful edges inside the off-width. Size 3 – 4 Friends useful.

*Alan Dougherty and Maggie Ingram 25/8/06*

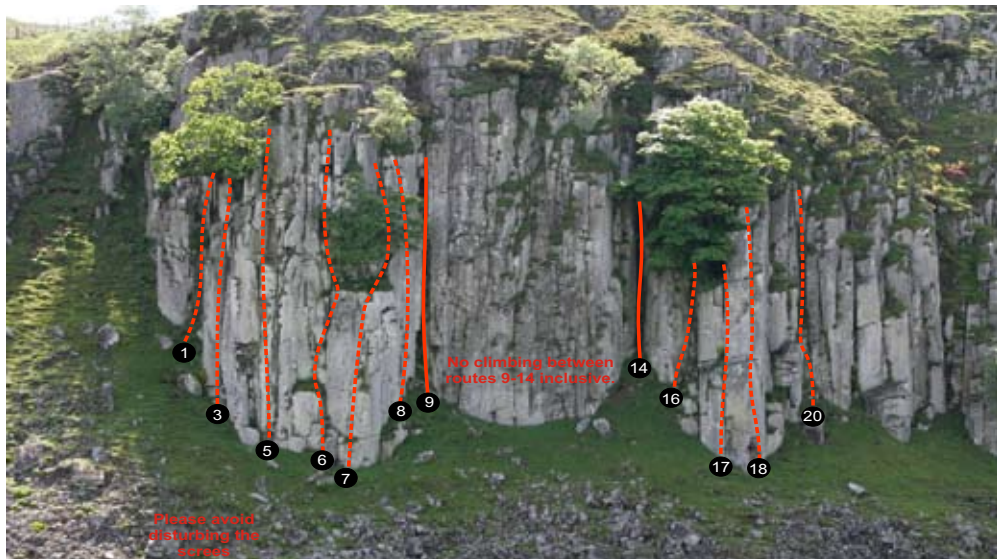
**Buttress Two****When the CRoW Flies? 6m E1 5b**

The wall right of the wide crack and left of nose. Long reach to good flake/diagonal break. **MOVE LEFT AT TOP TO AVOID LEDGE VEGETATION.**  
*Guy Keating and Alan Dougherty 14/6/06.*

**Buttress Three****Lichen Strikes 8m HVS 5a**

Straight up the well protected corner to ledge, using the thin crack at its rear and wider crack to left. **DO NOT STRAY INTO THE OFF-WIDTH CRACK FURTHER LEFT WHICH IS EXCLUDED FOR CONSERVATION REASONS.** The end of the pitch is well below the top of the crag and the exit directly upwards, passing a large flake, involves covering some vegetated and poorly protected but easy ground. **DO NOT ATTEMPT TO TRAVERSE OFF AT THE TOP OF THE PITCH AS THIS IS ACROSS GROUND WHICH IS BOTH UNSTABLE AND OF CONSERVATION CONCERN.**

*Alan Dougherty 26.4.06.*



### Great Buttress

The first route starts 6m up the wide, grassy gully on the left-hand side of the crag.

#### 1. "A" Chimney 15m D

Climb blocks in the corner until it is possible to enter the chimney proper. Straight up to a grassy ledge then trend rightwards to the top. Not recommended.

Variation Finish Severe

From the top of the chimney step across onto the right wall and climb over a loose spike to finish.

#### 2. Spiral Staircase 18m D

Climb "A" Chimney for 2m then follow the obvious line rightwards to a series of ledges and a tree (belay). Move down right to a platform, then into a groove. Follow this until a traverse right leads to a short chimney and the top.

**Variation: Carol's Delightful Hand D**

A better finish. From the tree belay climb the direct line to the top. Finish up a short chimney. Just to the right of the start of A Chimney/Spiral Stairs, an off-width crack leads to the large ledge and tree. (4c, Alan Dougherty, 11.6.06.)

*Left Escalator, Right Escalator and Derision Groove* are good climbing on relatively clean lines. All are pretty tough for the recorded grades. The moves left at the top of *Derision Groove*, onto *Spiral Staircase*, avoids, helpfully, some loose blocks.

#### 3. Left Escalator 24m HS \*

Starts 4m right of *Spiral Staircase* in a wide groove with a pinnacle on the right.  
2m 4a Climb the wide crack on the left of the groove to a tree belay on *Spiral Staircase*.  
12m Move down and right to a platform, then into a groove. Follow this until a traverse right leads to a short chimney and the top.

#### 4. Right Escalator 12m VS 4c \*

Start at the foot of the wide groove. Climb the pinnacle and make an awkward step left into a groove (delicate). Finish at the tree belay on *Spiral Staircase*.

*WE Pattison & A Robson 14/07/63*

#### 5. Derision Groove 24m VS \*

Start to the right of the pinnacle at a black groove.  
12m 5a Climb the groove to a sentry box. Belay high in a crack on the left.  
12m Bridge up the sentry box and pull across left on excellent holds to join *Spiral Staircase*.

#### 6. Master's Groove 26m VS

Start at the lowest point of the buttress 2m right of *Derision Groove*.  
11m 4b Climb easily to a grass ledge on the left. Ascend the left hand crack and move right to a big ledge and tree belay.  
15m 4c Step back left above the crack and climb a steep groove. Continue up the V-groove surmounting an overhang to finish on grassy ledges.

*WE Pattison & AJK Gooding 13/7/1963*

#### 7. Surprise 28m S \*

Start at the protruding rib of the buttress 2m right of *Master's Groove*.

12m Climb the rib direct to a ledge and tree.

16m Move right behind the tree and make a series of awkward moves up the steep gangway to the top. Note: The Rowan tree near the top is not that well rooted – good nuts can be found 3m higher.

#### 8. Rigor Mortis 23m VS 5b \*\*

Start 2m left of the obvious, deep chimney; *Great Chimney*. Climb a steep crack to a niche at 4m. Climb past three old pegs to an easier finish.

*FFA Alan Dougherty 8/8/06*

Climbers have agreed with English Nature to avoid climbing routes 9 - 14.

#### 9. Great Chimney 23m S

Start at the foot of the obvious chimney. Climb this over chock-stones and move left over blocks at the top overhang to reach the top. A fine climb.

#### 10. Cascade 25m VS 4b

Start below a groove little more than a metre right of *Great Chimney*. Climb the groove to a resting place on the right at 6m. Swing left across the groove using a flake, the bulge above is climbed on good holds and a prominent block is passed towards the finish.

#### 11. Strathmore Crescent 28m S

Starts 7m right of *Great Chimney* just beyond a thin crack, which widens into a groove higher up. Climb diagonally leftwards up the wall for 3m then traverse left into a groove. Follow the groove to a ledge and rickety spike. Step right past the spike to another ledge. Climb the rib and groove to exit right over blocks to a grassy ledge and a tree.

#### 12. Central Climb 28m S

This climb finds a way up the wall between *Great Chimney* and another obvious chimney; *Charlie's Chimney*. Climb the wall from left to right to finish on a ledge with an Ash tree.

#### 13. Sentinel's Stride 28m HS

Start below the gangway, which goes up the wall to the left of the deep-cut *Charlie's Chimney*.  
15m 4a Climb the wall for 4m then make a delicate move up right to the gangway. Climb this into a chimney and step across onto a large, grass ledge.  
13m 4a From the ledge, step back across the chimney and into a shallow groove. Move up to a horizontal crack and regain the gangway by a swing to the left. Climb over a pinnacle to the top.

#### 14. Charlie's Chimney 21m VD

Climb the obvious deep chimney.

*WE Pattison & A Robson & Charlie Thew 14/07/63*

#### 15. Groundhog 10m HVS 5a

Start at the foot of *Charlie's Chimney*. Climb the groove on the right wall of the chimney. Exit onto a grass ledge halfway up the chimney. Poor protection.

#### 16. Chimney and Slab 14m D

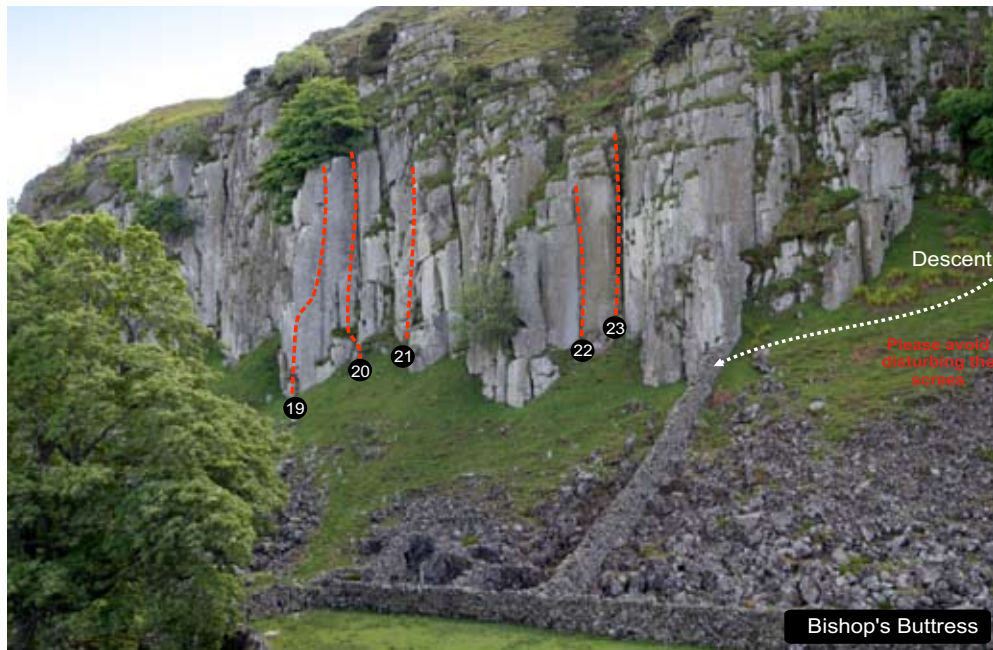
Start 2m right of *Charlie's Chimney* below another chimney. Climb the chimney and exit right onto a slab. Climb this to a tree. The corner above is climbed to the top. This route is dirty and not recommended. The chock-stone is loose and little protection is available!

To the right the crag is at its lowest height and has a bay bounded on the left by a corner crack.

#### 17. Interrupted Crack 21m VS

Climb the well protected corner crack, with some difficulty, to a good ledge. Climb the continuation crack above to an awkward exit onto a slab. Finish above the tree as for *Chimney and Slab*.





### Bishop's Buttress

This section contains some of the best climbs on the crag. The imposing face provides greater steepness and continuity than anywhere else on the crag.

#### 18. Stroll On 23m E2 5b \*

Start at a little niche in the projecting corner of the buttress just to the right of interrupted Crack. Climb up and out of the niche and pull round the rib onto the wall on the right. Climb straight up for almost 5m and move back left onto a large ledge. From the right-hand end of the ledge move up a mossy wall to finish up a the corner crack. The "mossy wall," actually well covered in lichen, constitutes the crux. It's a fine pitch but not well protected.

WE Pattison & AJK Gooding and A Robson 20/07/63

#### 19. Thrombosis 28m E2 5b

An exciting, strenuous and spectacular climb. Start at the little niche as for *Stroll On*.

Move up and out of the niche onto the right wall. Climb this on good holds until a traverse can be made to a stance and belay in the narrow chimney; *Bishop's Chimney* on the right. From the chimney move up and back onto the wall above the traverse line. Move up to holds, which are followed leftwards to a spike. Move up past the spike and traverse right to reach and climb the obvious, flake crack.

Note:

The original description, moving towards *Bishop's Chimney* (where there is a wobbly block), then back left, on largely hidden holds, "...towards a spike" is an elegant solution to an improbable looking line. The straightened-out description, as on the topo looks as if it would involve harder climbing – three old pegs are present in the independent section – perhaps that bit was aided? The chock-stone in the final flake crack moves but seems okay.

WE Pattison, AGK Gooding 29/06/63

#### 20. Bishop's Chimney 18m HS

The steep, narrow chimney in the right angle of *Bishop's Buttress*.

9m Climb the corner to a large platform at the foot of the chimney proper.

9m 4a Climb the chimney facing right. An awkward move over chock-stones leads to the top.

#### 21. Sabre Cut 12m VS

Start 3m right of *Bishop's Chimney* below a steep, narrow crack. Climb the awkward and strenuous, narrow crack.

To the right of the last climbs and about 6m left of the dry stonewall, is a pinnacle, with a recess to the right of the pinnacle.

#### 22. Straight Up 12m VS 4c

Climb the steep narrow crack, which runs up a corner in the left-hand side of the recess, with an energetic mix of jamming, lay-backing and bridging. The large block which offers the obvious hand-holds for moving onto the belay ledge wobbles and requires caution.

It should be noted that routes in this vicinity require a long ascent of vegetated and poorly protected ground to reach a safe position. It might be a better alternative to descend the chimney behind the pinnacle.

Climbers have agreed to avoid routes 23 *Yackley Chimney* and 25 *Sarongster*.

#### 23. Yackley Chimney 14m D

Start at the foot of a clean-cut chimney at the back of the recess. Climb the left wall until the chimney proper can be entered. Climb this to block belays on the left.

Various other climbs exist in the area above the drystone wall but are not recorded. Beyond the dry stonewall is a tall buttress with a climb following a series of grooves:

#### 24. G-String Grooves 14m VS 4c

Climb the grooves; the first of these is prominent and smooth.

#### 25. Sarongster 88m HVS

An excellent left to right high-level girdle. Start as for Left Escalator.

12m 4a Climb the wide crack on the left of the groove to a tree belay on *Spiral Staircase*.

19m 4c Traverse right to *Derision Groove* and continue past *Master's Groove* to a good ledge on the arête. Make an awkward move onto *Surprise* and continue to a stance and belay below the roof of *Great Chimney*.

6m 3c Move out of the chimney rightwards, passing the prominent block on *Cascade*. Enter the groove of *Strathmore Crescent* and follow it to the top. Tree belay.

12m 4a Descend the last pitch of *Sentinel's Stride* to a grassy ledge and nut belay.

9m 4a Traverse delicately right to a tree belay on *Chimney and Slab*.

20m 5a Move down and rightwards and traverse onto *Stroll On* to a peg runner below the final crack. Continue rightwards to another peg runner on *Thrombosis*. Traverse right and finish up the flake crack as for *Thrombosis*.

WE Pattison & A Robson 14/07/63

#### Kayser Bonder VS

A low level girdle traverse starting up *Charlie's Chimney* and finishing up *Spiral Stairs*. The way is obvious and is never more than 5m above the ground except for the accent of *Bishops Chimney* and the descent of *Chimney and Slab*.

WE Pattison & Charlie Thew 30/06/63

