

The Story of Borrowdale Climbing

These five short historical summaries were originally published within the FRCC Borrowdale Guidebooks and view the development of rock climbing in Borrowdale from the perspective of the times. Copyright FRCC.

1. 1890's – 1968 by Morley Dobson, June 1968

The first recorded rock climbs in Borrowdale were made in the 1890's. The Abraham brothers, who did a great deal of exploring of the lesser crags near Keswick, were concerned in many of these. From this period come three excellent gully climbs of difficult to severe standard: Mouse Ghyll, Raven Gully on Glaramara, and Sergeant Crag Gully, led by Cecil Slingsby, W.A. Wilson, and O.G.Jones respectively. After this there is nothing noteworthy till the years just before the 1914 war when H.B. Lyon climbed Gillercombe Buttress, and F. Mallinson and R. Mayson of Keswick; Black Crag Buttress and Bowderstone Pinnacle.

In 1921 and 1922 Bentley Beetham and C. D. Frankland made a number of short climbs in the valley, including Brown Slabs Arete on Shepherd's Crag, which led to a succession of discoveries fifteen years later. In 1924 A. R. Thomson of Portinscale, with the Dolomite guide Angelo Dibona, investigating unconventional rocks in the north-western fells, added some pleasant moderates to the list. Ten years after this came the discovery of the possibilities of Lining Crag by Heaton Cooper.

Then began the serious exploitation of Borrowdale climbing by Bentley Beetham. For and with the Goldsborough Club of Barnard Castle School, he surveyed every sizable crag in the valley, working out very well over a hundred routes with a wide range of difficulty and interest. This exploration went on all through the war years: and in 1946 he turned his attention to Shepherd's Crag, hitherto neglected except by casual scramblers. The convenience of these rocks to the road - and the hotels - added to the quality of the best climbs and the beauty of the surroundings, immediately made this a favourite exercise ground. New and harder routes have been added since, it may yet prove that Finale of 1965 was misnamed.

The pioneers then began to look further north, to Gowder, National Trust and Falcon Crags. Notable leads were done during the Beetham period by W. Peascod, V. Veevers, L. Muscroft, P. W. Vaughan and G. B. Fisher. The work of Fisher and his friends who later formed the Keswick Mountaineering Club led to a series of extremely hard climbs by Peter Greenwood, Peter Lockey, and Paul Ross in the later 1950's. Many of these were on faces of forbidding steepness and a quality of rock that in earlier times would never have been attempted; pitons were sometimes needed, as belays or for aid. As a result, two imposing precipices - Walla Crag and the north end of Goat Crag - previously admired from respectful distances have provided fine new routes. Leaders in these developments, and in others of the past few years, included R. McHaffie, A. Liddell, J.J.S. Allison, P. Nunn, O. Woolcock, L Brown and B Henderson.

Necessarily, the emphasis in this guide is on the newer, harder routes. But the invitation to climbers of all grades conveyed in Beetham's 1953 introduction, which should be read by all whose interest is other than gymnastic, is still open. Most of the Borrowdale crags are on the lower slopes; they may seem to lead to nothing in particular, and in such rich surroundings their character is often obscured till you come to close quarters. Yet they have more to offer than accessibility and difficulty. The all-

round walker who likes a scramble will not be wasting his time if he goes with a friend or two, a good rope and an elementary knowledge of climbing technique to Intake Ridge on a fine winter noon, or to Ashness Ghyll for a summer sunset preferably not after heavy rain. The moderate climber who enjoys following a good leader up something out of his usual range will find a pleasure no less deep, if different, and a sense of achievement no less flattering on Black Crag Buttress than on Moss Ghyll. Those who hold that Borrowdale is the most beautiful of Lakeland valleys will learn that familiarity with its intimate detail only strengthens their conviction.

A couple of historical notes.

Ardus – The Name

"Ardus: Little Langdale Post Office is run by the Marion, the young daughter of Vince Veevers, best known as the unintentional author of a popular Severe called Ardus on Shepherd's Crag. He'd recorded it as Audus, to preserve the maiden name of his new wife, Elizabeth. "He always did have terrible handwriting", Marion says. Terry Gifford, *The Joy of Climbing* (Whittles Publishing 2004).

Praying Mantis – First Ascent

"When I interviewed Les Brown for the Scafell book, he came up with a comment that could go in the Borrowdale guide: "One thing that really pisses me off is about Praying Mantis, and the story that has grown up that I spent all winter cleaning the thing, it's absolute b*ll*cks, that! It was Mac that pointed out this route to me, he had tried it and said 'It all overhangs, this route, all overhangs; go and have a look, Les, I can't do it.' So the first time I went there I got up to the last pitch, and that was really vegetated, so I went back a few weeks later and abseiled down the top pitch, you know how it's pocketed, well I pulled out the vegetation from the pockets. I never cleaned anything normally, the first crack was OK and where you traverse across left and up a slab, that was just all grass. It was Bonington who cleaned that bit off, the big cleaning surge on that crag came later when Rossy started on it. So somebody, somewhere; and I think it came from Paul Nunn's article in Hard Rock, said I did all this cleaning, and it's all absolutely b*ll*cks!" "**Al Phizacklea**

2. 1968-1977 by Sid Clark, December 1977

During the nine years since the last guide was published, over one hundred new routes have been climbed. The quality and standards of the climbs have increased steadily, due largely to improved protection techniques, which has resulted in many very hard new routes, and in the reduction or elimination of aid from existing routes. The advent of indoor climbing walls has also played a large part in developing the 'steel claw' necessary for today's top performers.

The latter end of 1968 saw the intermediate development of Goat Crag with the ascent in September of Athanor by J. Adams and C. Read, whilst on Lining Crag, The Ring, The Weaver and The Limit were climbed by McHaffie, Henderson and Frelands.

The ascent of Greatend Pillar in 1969 by a combined team re-awakened interest in Greatend Crag. Meanwhile on Black Crag, boulders were being trundled by B Thompson and W A Barnes to produce The Mortician, a surprisingly good climb.

From 1970 to 1973, over thirty new routes were climbed. Notable amongst these was Nagasaki Grooves, climbed in 1972 by C. Read and J. Adams using pitons for aid. McHaffie was again active with a trio of routes on Reecastle Crag and Heron Crag. P. Livesey and J. Sheard climbed Raindrop, and made all but one peg redundant on Vertigo (subsequently climbed free by P. Whillance).

1974 was a vintage year when P. Livesey's free ascents of Footless Crow, Bitter Oasis, Nagasaki Grooves and Dry Grasp, left all gasping in his wake - but not for long. These routes have since gained a reputation for excellence and difficulty. Local climbers with fingers stiffened on Armathwaite sandstone had been steadily eliminating aid from old routes and indulging in new ones. Notable amongst these were J. Lamb, S Clegg, P Botterill and P Whillance.

In 1975 this team opened up with Blondin, Slack Alice and Juicy Lucy for 'afters', all on Caffell Side Crag. April saw the grand unveiling of Greatend Crag after a winter of secret activity: Greatend Grooves, Earthstrip and the excellent Corner, all at Hard Very Severe, were a taste of things to come from D. Nicols, C. Downer, I. Conway, D Hellier and R. Wilson. J. Lamb, alias "The Jackal", free climbed the previously aided first pitch of Aragorn.

On Eagle Crag, P. Botterill and R. Clegg climbed The Cleft Direct, dispensing with Ross's aid pegs, the Direct start being added by J. Lamb and P. Whillance. This was followed by Autopsy, climbed by Clegg and Botterill. August saw the heatwave continue, and taking advantage of a bone dry Eagle Crag, P. Whillance and S. Clegg climbed Where Eagles Dare, and shortly after S. Clegg in the company of P. Botterill climbed Verdict; both are excellent routes on the very steep central section of the crag. September found T.W. Birkett and R. McHaffie hanging from Savage Messiah on Shepherd's Crag, and a little while later, they discovered the improbable Gleaned Grooves on Black Crag.

1976 saw the creation of Tumbleweed Connection by P. Botterill and D. Rawcliffe, a 'last problem' on the buttress to the left of Praying Mantis on Goat Crag. On the same crag, S. Clegg and P. Botterill completed The Voyage, a rising traverse of Great Buttress. Meanwhile R. Matheson and E. Cleasby were cementing the bold Grand Alliance on Black Crag.

In 1977, Black Crag was again the scene of new route activity. This time it was W. Freelands and R. McHaffie with their aptly named Jubilee Grooves. This was shortly followed by a high level girdle High Plains Drifter by W. Freelands, J Lamb and S Clark. C. Downer and D Nicols found Point Blank on Goat Crag. Returning to Greatend Crag, the same pair climbed Banzai Pipeline, Punk Rock and New Wave. On Eagle Crag J. Lamb and W. Freelands climbed the hanging groove below Inquest to give Inquest Direct. Back on Black Crag a route was worked out to the right of Grand Alliance and was named Prana by P. Gomersall. Meanwhile to the left of Vertigo, Livesey was busy putting up Tristar.

Such is the pace of exploration in Borrowdale that a guide book may well be out of date by the time it is published.

3. 1978-1985 by Dave Armstrong, December 1985

As is usual with the arrival of a new guide, the following year (1978) saw an onslaught on the remaining gaps which had become apparent; and a few eliminates which were not.

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Falcon Crag received much early attention; the best of the bunch being Kidnapped, which linked old variations on Dedication, Plagiarism, climbed by Pete Botterill and Jeff Lamb, and Cyclotron, a bold and difficult problem by Ken Forsythe and Bill Birkett.

A race for lines on Greatend Crag resulted in Pete Whillance and Dave Armstrong climbing Trouble Shooter, and Pete Livesey and Pete Gomersall the contrived eliminate Hiroshima. Goat Crag saw the addition of several lines, Fear of Flying and High Flyer proving most popular, both by Colin Downer and friends.

A major event was the opening up of the quiet Watendlath Valley as a popular climbing area. A trio of excellent routes on Reecastle: White Noise (named as a reminder of the verbal banter from the second), Thumbscrew and Guillotine, all by Jeff Lamb showed the potential of this neglected crag.

The final route of 1978 was Could be the Last on Shepherd's Crag. Unfortunately this was wishful thinking!

After the previous year, 1979 was an anti-climax, both in terms of weather and new routes. Some additions were made to the Watendlath Crags; and a visit to Walla Crag, a justifiably neglected crag, resulted in three routes for Dave Cronshaw and Dave Knighton, together with a pile of loose blocks. The most spectacular routes were the result of free climbing two old artificial climbs. The formidable Hell's Wall on Bowder Crag (still the hardest route in Borrowdale, if not the Lakes) eventually fell to Ron Fawcett after a concerted effort and the use of some Yorkshire tactics! His attempt the previous year employed two points of aid. Exclamation, a ridiculously steep route on Shepherd's Crag, was free-climbed by Bob and Martin Berzins. Unfortunately, this was flawed by the pre-placing of wires and a high runner in the adjoining Shepherd's Chimney.

The following year saw only five new routes recorded, none of which merit any further comments.

After this rest period, 1981 saw a major increase in development with both grades and the quality of routes taking a significant leap forward.

Locals were shaken from their winter slumbers by the addition of three hard routes to Falcon Crag by Jeff Lamb and Pete Botterill during a dry spell in February. Three months later the South Lakes team of Rick Graham and Dave Lyle climbed a first pitch to The Mirage Finish of Bitter Oasis. When combined, these pitches give an excellent route and a fitting companion to the adjacent Footless Crow.

Action continued with the difficult, and potentially dangerous, Devil's Alternative on Shepherd's Crag being climbed by Jeff Lamb and Pete Whillance; the excellent Penal Servitude on Reecastle Crag by Dave Armstrong and Pete Whillance and three good hard routes being added to Bowder Crag.

July and August saw nine new lines added to Eagle Crag by Pete Whillance and Dave Armstrong, updating the development of 1975 and transforming it into a 'modern' crag, with some fine and difficult routes. The roofs at the left end of Shepherd's Crag also received some attention. An ascent of the much eyed problem roof direct to Vesper's traverse was made by Mark Wilford and Kevin Lindhorae. Parting Shot, to its right, was climbed by Jeff Lamb, immediately prior to his departure for Australia, where a climbing accident robbed us of a friend and the Lakes of one of its most active climbers. Once again the pace of development slowed and apart from two pleasant routes by Colin

Downer and Sue Kysow on Greatend Crag, Exclusion Zone and No Holds Barred, 1982 will be best remembered as the year when Footless Crow was re-cleaned by some Peak climbers, (Who else would abseil - inspect an existing route!). It then received several ascents, the first after a lapse of many years. A steady trickle of ascents followed and then a T.V. film of an ascent of the route dispelled the aura of difficulty and released the floodgates, opening up a superb route to - everybody?

Pete Kirton, living in the adjacent climbing hut, set to work cleaning the Bowderstone and together with Jerry Moffatt produced a number of extremely difficult boulder problems on the steep north side of this block. On a day off, Jerry Moffatt snatched the soaring arete to the left of Hell's Wall to produce the bold and technical De Quincy. Goat Crag once again came in for some attention in 1983 with the addition of several routes, the hardest being Wild Times, captured by Pete Botterill and Phil Rigby after considerable effort. Yet more uninspiring routes were squeezed out of Shepherd's Crag, then during the closing months of the year the development started which was to dominate 1984 - the excavation of Bleak How Buttress and Grange Crags.

Dave Hellier sparked off interest in Bleak How Buttress while the Keswick teams of Colin Downer and Chris Bacon, and Ray McHaffie and Pete Taylor led the enterprise on Grange Crags, in various combinations and with others co-opted to help. The Keswick teams then turned their attention to Bleak How Buttress and unearthed yet more hidden gems of all grades. A Penrith group, led by Ron Kenyon and Chris Dale, keen to get in on the action, were banished to the nearby Upper Heron Crag and there produced several pleasant climbs. The development of these crags in 1984 produced many new lines and resulted in the largest number of new routes being climbed in Borrowdale in any single year. Many proved to be quite worthwhile, and a considerable number of easier grade routes were provided, a rare event these days.

Chris Sowden and Martin Berzins stole the impressive line on Reecastle to the right of Executioner, then to 'rub salt in the wounds' called it Daylight Robbery. Later in the year the crag was to receive a further batch of routes, some proving to be very good; finally Ray McHaffie stepped in to sweep up the dregs producing three poor routes at the right-hand end.

Shepherd's Crag was once again scoured in the hope of finding some unclimbed rock and several mediocre eliminates and variations were added. As each year passes and another variation is added it becomes more and more apparent that there are no worthwhile routes left to be found on this already over developed piece of rock.

1985 dawned with great expectations of a last minute crop of new routes to add to the forthcoming guide. Alas, the weather had other ideas; after a brief fine spell in spring the desperately wet summer allowed only a few of the potential lines to become a reality. Most of those climbed were in the easier grades (for modern routes) and pioneered by the locals Colin Downer, Pete Hirst and the indefatigable Ray McHaffie, who were able to snatch routes on the odd dry days. They chose such obscure crags as Hanging Stones, National Trust Crags, Raven Crag and Thornythwaite Knotts for these routes, with only a handful being discovered on the more popular crags.

Eight years and over two hundred and fifty new routes later the new Borrowdale guide has become essential to bring the record up to date. During this period, ethics and protection have changed radically.

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Yo-yoing has become an almost accepted method of ascending the hardest routes, and regrettably, the more dubious technique of 'dogging' (hanging on rope and runners, checking holds and runners above), has become more widespread. Prior top roping of new routes has also been carried out, another unnecessary practice imported from the outcrop climbing scene. 'Micro nuts', 'Rocks' and 'Friends', together with the latest 'sticky boots' have now become required equipment for the modern climber, helping to make routes safer and coupled with the increase in training, make the ascent of more difficult and sustained routes possible.

What of the future? Protection equipment will, I'm sure, continue to be developed and improved. The placing of bolts on new routes, surely the ultimate cheat in the art of protecting climbs, has not yet spread to the Lakes, and it is hoped that this will remain the case. (That's not a challenge!)

Strength and above all, stamina, are becoming essential for one to succeed on the hardest routes and training programmes to increase fitness, are being extended and improved every year by the leading activists in an attempt to stay ahead.

Alas, virgin rock is a finite material which is becoming more and more scarce each year, particularly on the lower crags. Eliminates and variations will continue to be added - and there are one or two good hard lines left, though no hint of their whereabouts! Walking may once again have to become an accepted part of the climbing day and the more remote crags be inspected. It is evident that the acceptable route length has reduced over the years; the quality and sustained nature of the climb now being more important than footage. It is possible that this process will continue and that 'routes' will be claimed on the more isolated crags and outcrops scattered around the fellside, ultimately diminishing to boulder problems status. Time and the next generation of climbers will no doubt have an answer for this dilemma.

4. 1986-1989 by Ron Kenyon and Dave Armstrong, 1990

The pace of development prior to the publication of the last guide has continued with over 130 new routes appearing.

New crags have been discovered or in some cases unearthed; old fashioned crags such as Sergeant Crag and Gillercombe have been re-examined and modern routes discovered and finally, crags previously considered worked out or too blank have yielded some top quality routes.

Borrowdale still attracts many climbers; it has one of the three Lake District crags of international repute - Goat Crag, it also has many other excellent popular and easily accessible crags along its length.

Many of the new discoveries are on small crags, it is too early to assess the importance of these micro-routes though many are on good rock and give good lines. It is all too easy to be dismissive of this type of route however they are a welcome addition as they provide a stimulus to further exploration and prevent local climbers becoming jaded.

Shortly after the publication of the last guide in 1986, Paul Ingham was to be found battling up a previous top roped problem on Shepherd's Crag to give the desperate Geronimo. On Falcon Crag a number of hard serious eliminates were worked out by Andy Jones though are unlikely to prove popular.

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The most significant routes of 1987 are amongst the five fine routes climbed by Paul Ingham and Paul Cornforth on one of yesteryears micro crags - Reecastle Crag. These climbs and the dedication, preparation and skill required to produce them typifies the direction in which modern climbing is moving. Walls previously thought unclimbable will eventually fall to those with the 'eye of faith' - and necessary talent. Most other routes of 1987 were eclipsed by those on Reecastle though once again Andy Jones was active, finding two hard routes on the neglected Long Band Crag.

The development of smaller crags accelerated in 1988. Kit Wilkinson was at the forefront of development on the more solid lower tier of National Trust Crags and the newly developed Cam Crag while Stuart Miller instigated development of Perched Block Buttress on Goat Crag. More significantly Tom Walkington accepted the hints given in the last guide and blitzed the steep Pedestal Wall area of Gillercombe Buttress to produce several excellent short routes. About the same time Bob Smith and John Earl climbed three short but hard routes on the left-hand side of Greatend Crag.

Pete Hirst and friends carried out some extensive gardening of the areas right of Raven Crag in Combe Ghyll. Easy Street is by far the best route produced, and the most extensively gardened - gardening which would appear in this instance to have got out of hand and be the son of thing likey to annoy conservationists.

New Years Day for most would be a day spent recovering from the night before; not however for Kit Wilkinson, Ray McHaffie and Pete Hirst who started 1989 with a search for new routes. They climbed a new traverse on Mac's Wall then started developments of Troutbeck Gully Wall. Perhaps they should have stayed at home! Kit continued his assault on all rock below 15 metres, developing a small buttress left of Castle Crag. Shortly afterwards he initiated investigations of Goats Crag in Watendlath though left Karl Telfer and friends to complete its development later in the year.

The 1990s are now with us and no doubt the development of climbing styles, ethics and new routes will continue. The move to climbs on shorter crags will continue, by necessity, although there are still one or two good lines to be found on the established crags.

Hype and greed for glory leads people to use dubious tactics and get carried away with gardening, chipping, etc. The cleaning and pre-checking of new routes is now accepted and on the hardest is in fact essential. This must however be restrained to avoid spoiling lines for others. Protection; its type, placing and use has been a popular subject for debate in recent times, particularly the ubiquitous bolt. This method of protection has not been and should not be accepted on Lakeland Crags. The use of other modern, albeit at times marginal, protection is to be advocated, provided it does not cause permanent disfigurement of the rock. This will no doubt sort out the more adventurous from the sports climber.

As for the quality of new routes; when developing a new line climbers are encouraged to think ahead and ponder the future of the 'gem' which they are unearthing from the hillside and denuding of vegetation. Will it become popular or even climbed by someone other than the next guide writer or will it get left for nature to reclaim? Is it worth the destruction!? It must be remembered that Borrowdale is a sensitive conservation zone and a thoughtless attitude is likely to produce even more conflict with authorities, landowners and conservation groups.

The people pressure on the Lakes is now very great. Borrowdale, one of the most popular areas is suffering with erosion of many paths and hillsides. It has a varied collection of crags and climbs, the valley crags being extremely popular, however there are many fine though less crowded crags a short walk away. It is hoped this guide will help climbers find and enjoy their chosen routes and hopefully savour some of the lesser known areas, thus spreading and easing the pressure on overused areas.

5. 1990 - 2000 by Gary Baum and Alan Hewison, May and July 2000

It has been said that The Lake District has become something of a backwater of British climbing in recent years. The evidence of this latest edition of the Borrowdale guide suggests, however, that there is still much activity in this popular valley with over 350 new routes being recorded since 1990. Amongst the discoveries has been a small number of extremely hard and bold routes which have continued the valley's tradition as a forcing ground for climbs of the highest calibre. In addition, many good routes at more modest grades have come to light, as exemplified by the discovery and development of the superb Sergeant Crag Slabs.

As predicted by the writers of the previous historical section, much recent development has focused on smaller crags. Unfortunately, at times, the amount of gardening required to unearth routes has caused people to raise environmental concerns. Many areas in Borrowdale are highly sensitive and are designated SSSIs (see separate section). Even if they are not, it is sometimes debatable as to whether it is worth extensive gardening to produce a route that is unlikely to be popular. It is, after all, a fact of Borrowdale life that most routes will revert to their natural pre-cleaned state unless they are regularly climbed. The guide book writers have encountered many new routes that have probably received only one or two ascents and look unlikely to receive many, or indeed any, more. Rick Graham's maxim 'if it takes longer to clean it than to climb it, then it's not worth doing' is one to which new routers might sensibly adhere, and it is to be hoped they will consider the likely end result of their efforts a little more carefully in the future before reaching for their wire brush.

It also seems that climbers in general are focusing their activities on a relatively small number of the more accessible crags. As a result of this some excellent lines on less popular crags are becoming greener and less attractive. Thanks to the efforts of some selfless individuals a few crags have experienced something of a spring clean recently. If, however, more climbers were prepared to go a little further afield and put up with some less than perfectly dean rock then maybe some of the classics of the past would regain their former status.

Another trend noticed by these writers is for new routes to be squeezed in between already very close lines and for sections of existing routes to be linked up in new ways. This is an inevitable result of people wanting to create something new when there is only a finite amount of rock available. Some of these lines are really only variations or eliminates at best and have been described as such. It must be said, however, that some surprisingly good and independent lines have been created in this way and have been duly given credit.

And so to the last ten years...

The first major discovery was the work of the indefatigable Ray McHaffie, with the development of Sergeant Crag Slabs in Langstrath during the summer of 1991. This has already proved to be a mecca

for the middle grade climber, offering delightful climbing on perfect rock. Just a few hundred metres further up the valley Kit Wilkinson and Ray McHaffie found the excellent Slab Happy (E2 5c) on the fine but short Blackmoss Pot Slab. Meanwhile, Malcolm Lowerson and Nick Steen were working hard on the right hand side of Walla Crag to produce a string of harder climbs. The nature of the rock here coupled with the boldness of these climbs may, perhaps, explain why they have not become more popular. Maybe this will change with time. At the end of 1991, Don Greenop with various partners revisited Ladderbrow and Green Bank Crags and began the opening up of numerous lines that may appeal to those who have 'done it all' at the nearby Shepherd's Crag.

Ray McHaffie and Terry Richardson began the New Year in 1992 with A Fistful of Dollars (HVS 5a) on Shepherd's Crag. It is more likely, however, that this year will mainly be remembered for Dave Birkett making his mark on the valley with a series of outstanding hard routes - The Whipping Post (E7 7a), Bleed in Hell (E8 6c), Hellish (E8 6c) and Caution (E8 6c). At Reecastle, Paul Cornforth was also responsible for the powerful and technical Burn at the Stake (E7 7a). The summer of 1992 saw Ray McHaffie returning to Sergeant Crag Slabs. This time he was with Colin Downer who put up one of the best slab routes in the Lake District, Aphasia (E2 5b). A week later Stuart Miller removed one of the last aid points in Borrowdale by freeing Excalibur (E3 5c) at Lodore Crag, but how many will want to repeat it is open to question!

Over the New Year period 1992/93 Ray McHaffie worked on the previously little visited Christmas Crag. In a delightful setting and offering some fine short low grade routes, this ought to become a popular venue in the future. Also in 1993 he was hard at work on Rakefoot Buttress. Meanwhile, Dave and Alistair Nicol had been busy developing Dalt Quarry into Borrowdale's first 'sport' crag although the odd bolted route had also appeared in the remains of Bowderstone Quarry. Since then, Dalt Quarry has enjoyed a period of popularity quite out of scale to its size!

1994 saw Colin Downer and others blitzing the rock to the left of Millican Dalton's Cave to produce a number of good lines on Millican's Buttress while the Ross family took to the well hidden but worthwhile Aard Crag. In 1995, Tom Walkington took time off from new-routing in Langdale to put up a couple of further lines on the by now well established and popular Sergeant Crag Slabs. Also in this year a new local climber appeared on the scene. Adam Hocking, after honing his skills on the recently opened Keswick Climbing Wall, added the Direct Start to Penal Servitude (E5 6c). Stephen and Jilly Reid, meanwhile, put up the very pleasant Horizontal Pleasure (HVS 4c) on Doves' Nest Crag thus rekindling an interest in this traditional venue that has continued throughout the decade.

In 1996 the guide book writers were guilty of following the trend for developing small outcrops with a handful of lines at Fat Charlie's Buttress. Of much greater significance were the routes on Long Crag by Paul Cornforth and Mark Greenbank - the bold and difficult Rock Lobster (E7 6b) and Borrowdale Volcanic (E6 6b). Colin Read and Graham Swainbank bucked the small outcrops trend and showed what is still possible if you keep your eyes open by producing the excellent String of Pearls (E2 5b) at Gillercombe and the enjoyable Manhattan Project (E2 5b) at Great End Crag, a venue that had otherwise been thought of as growing back to nature. In June, Ray McHaffie climbed Final Act (E2 5c) - a new route that he declared would be his last. Over 15 more have followed since!

The poor summers of 1997 and 1998 saw less activity and only a few worthwhile routes. Amongst these were, however, Adam Hocking's Disorderly Conduct (E8 6c) at Reecastle, Duncan Booth and

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Ian Turnbull's Satan's Little Helper (E7 6b) on Black Wall Langstrath and Martin Dale's Camouflage (E7 6b) on Cam Crags. Adam (then aged only 17) also astounded some by his solo of Ker Plunk (E5 6a). The McHaffie family continued their development of Hows Crag. The better weather of 1999 saw a revival of interest, no doubt enhanced by the imminent production of this very guide, and activity was spread over a wide variety of crags. Karl Telfer and others added several lines to Green Bank Crags and Ladder Brow Crag, Dave Bodecott and Paul Bunting created Supercrack (EI 5b) at the almost forgotten Garotte Buttress and others managed to prove that there is still room for more development (just) at Shepherd's Crag. Finally, Phil Rigby and John Williams ended the nineties with the obvious line of Terrierman (E4, 6a) on Lower Falcon Crag.

With Borrowdale currently being home to talented young climbers of the likes of Adam Hocking, who in 1999 made the long awaited second ascent of Bleed in Hell (E8 6c), and James McHaffie, who in April 2000 on-sighted Camouflage (E7 6b), the near future surely looks healthy for climbing in the valley. There are undoubtedly good lines still unclimbed but who can really predict what developments the next few years will bring? Whatever happens, the valley will always continue to offer the climber first class routes at all grades in the unique and beautiful setting that is Borrowdale.

Postscript, July 2000

Just as the guide is about to go to print, three major new routes have been put up on Eagle Crag. The first, Guns of Navarone (E6), involving 6b climbing protected by a skyhook runner, was the work of Adam Hocking and Alan Wilson, accompanied by Borrowdale veteran Colin Downer. The second, The Ego Has Landed (E8), is possibly the most outrageous ascent in the valley to date, with total commitment being required to tackle its 20m of sustained 6b climbing, most of it above the only protection, a peg at 3 metres. It is fitting that such a breath-taking route should be pioneered by James McHaffie, son of Borrowdale's most prolific new route activist. He was accompanied by Stuart Wood. Finally Downer enlisted Wesley Hunter to lead The Restraint of Beasts (E5 6b, 5c) aptly described as "the line of the crag" and a climb that has already attracted several repeats. It is a sobering thought that Hocking, Hunter and McHaffie are all still in their teens. One can only wonder, what will they, and their generation, get up to next?