

ABOUT SCOTTISH ROCK

If you have an ambition to do all the climbs in these two Scottish Rock guides I think you'd better schedule time off in your next life. This labour of Gary's has been of gargantuan proportions. Somewhere along the way he encountered a time warp and an initial target of 1,000 climbs over a period of two years stretched to 4,500 in over a decade. Those of you who use the guides will benefit by this dedication and the sheer choice offered; if you divide the retail price of these by the number of good routes you'll realise you've got a bargain.

Volume 1 covers a proliferation of Scottish crags up to the natural demarcation of the Great Glen. They are easier of access than most in **Volume 2** and present infinite variety. Inevitably, with the march of time, progress and technique the freeing of many aid routes has come to pass and also the somewhat tedious task of cleaning on abseil has resulted in some way-out excursions being revealed. Creag an Dubh-loch is a typical example.

I have been a long-time advocate of selected climbs and the use of photographs to illustrate both climbs and action. I'm glad that this principle has been used throughout these two volumes. It gives you a push to get up and do things. Obviously Gary has had considerable time to think about layout, area intros, etc; this has been achieved with commendable clarity and lack of waffle.

The Outer Hebrides receives due attention, such as the idyllic rock playground of the Barra isles; summer sun, surf and delectable Lewisian gneiss. Just a wee way north, in North Harris, some of the intimidating routes at Sron Ulladale have, like Prometheus of legend, been freed of rock attachments. Further north, beyond the magic of Skye, in the Northern Isles even more crags are revealed such as Berry Head and St John's Head. Here at this latitude in the simmer dim you can really rock around the clock! The list seems endless and if you succeed in doing half of them you'll be a much better climber and know a lot more about Scotland — have a good decade!

HAMISH MACINNES

UIAA PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

"Climbing and mountaineering are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks and be responsible for their own actions and involvement."

INTERNATIONAL GRADE COMPARISON CHART

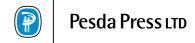
UK ADJECTIVE	UK TECHNICAL	FRENCH	AMERICAN	AUSTRALIAN	UIAA*	
Easy Moderate Difficult Very Difficult Severe HS VS	4a 4b 4c	F1 F2 F2+ F3- F3 F3+	5.1 5.2 5.3 5.4 5.5 5.6 5.7 5.8	4 6 8 10 12 14		
HVS E1 E2 E3	5a 5b 5c	F5 F5+ F6a F6a+ F6b+ F6c	5.9 5.10a 5.10b 5.10c 5.10d 5.11a 5.11b	19 20 21 22	VI- VI+ VII- VII	
E4 E5	6a 6b	F6c+ F7a F7a+ F7b	5.11c 5.11d 5.12a 5.12b	23 24 25	VIII- VIII VIII+ IX-	
E6 E7	6c	F7b+ F7c F7c+ F8a F8a+	5.12c 5.12d 5.13a 5.13b 5.13c 5.13d	26 27 28 29 30	IX IX+ X- X	
E9 E10	7a 7b	F8b+ F8c F8c+ F9a F9a+	5.14a 5.14b 5.14c 5.14d 5.15a	32 33 34 35 36	X+ XI- XI XI+	

^{*} Union Internationale des Associations d'Alpinisme

The UK trad grading system gives an adjective and a technical grade. The adjectival grade gives an idea of the overall difficulty, a measure of how sustained the climbing and of how well protected it is. The technical grade is difficulty of the hardest move or short section on the climb.



	MILD	STANDARD	HARD		MILD	STANDARD	HARD
М	Curved Ridge	Collie's Route	Afterthought Arête	F2	The Pillar	Steeple	Shibboleth & True F
	A'Chir Ridge	Dubhs Ridge	Pygmy Ridge		Torro	Club Crack	The Rat
	Broad Buttress	East Ridge, In Pin	, yany mago		Geriatrics	Plague of Blazes	The Long Reach
)	Tower Ridge	The Gutter	The Great Ridge	E3	Spock	Temple of Doom	Quality Street
	North Buttress	Final Selection	Quiver Rib		Ruff Licks	Delayed Attack	Uhuru
		Clach Glas-Bla Bheinn			Crackattack	Titan's Wall	Edgehog
/D	North-East Buttress	Agag's Groove	Arrow Route	E4	Freak-Out	Osiris	Cupid's Bow
	Observatory Ridge	Squareface			Rat Race	Mother's Pride	The Banana Groove
	Tystie Slab	Sou'wester Slabs			The Fuhrer	Sugar Cane Country	The New Testament
3	Great Ridge Direct Start	January Jigsaw	Integrity	E5	Lady Charlotte	Thor	Cosmopolitan
	Cioch West	Archer Ridge Direct	Eagle Ridge		Rest and be Thankful	Ling Dynasty	Slartibartfast
	Savage Slit	Punster's Crack	Ardverikie Wall		The Risk Business	The Raven	Agrippa
/S	Butterknife	Spartan Slab	Whither Wether	E6	Edge of Extinction	Cannibal	Wild Country
	The Clean Sweep	The Long Climb	Diibangi		The Improbability Drive	The Bonxie	Kelpie
	Rainmaker	South Ridge Direct	The Chasm		Flodden	Major-domo	The Screaming Abda
lVS	Route 2	The Magic Crack	The Bullroar	E7	Buddha	Romantic Reality	The Realm of the Se
	The Snake	Bludger's Revelation	Centurion		The Scoop	Aphrodite	Longhope Route
	Vulcan Wall	Storm	A Likely Story		Dalriada	Arcadia	Fascist Groove Than
E1	Minus One Direct	The Big Top	Yo-Yo				
	Dragon	Unicorn	The Needle				
	Trophy Crack	Grey Panther	The Pause				





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Gary Latter



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"Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off of you like autumn leaves."

SCOTTISH ROCK

The area covered by this book, the Highlands and Islands, lies entirely to the north of the Highland Boundary Fault. With its mountain landscapes, deep glens, lochs, rivers and hundreds of islands, it represents one of the most extensive and least populated semi-natural areas remaining in Western Europe. Scotland can also lay claim to the only true areas of 'wilderness' remaining in Britain, with vast tracts of uninhabited areas in the far North West, and the similarly wild and unspoilt high arctic plateaux of the Cairngorm massif. Often, by choosing your venue carefully, it is possible not just to avoid queues but to have whole mountains to yourself.

Within this incredibly varied setting can be found stunning examples of every sub-sport that rock climbing has evolved. In UK terms, we have the longest mountain routes (such as *The Long Climb* on Ben Nevis); the biggest sea cliffs (St John's Head, Hoy), which also

harbour the only multi-day big wall route in the country—the 23 pitch *Longhope Route*; the steepest cliff (Sron Ulladale, Harris). But size isn't everything. In contrast, a myriad of miniature sport routes have appeared in recent years, together with a resurgence of interest in outcrop climbing in general. There has also been the opening up of some wonderfully situated bouldering venues, together with exquisite deep-water soloing on a few esoteric locations.

This book is intended as a celebration of the wealth and variety of great climbing that Scotland has to offer. The selection of routes should have something for everyone, from the athlete to the aesthete. Climbing in Scotland is about more than the rock alone; there is the magnificent and awe-inspiring scenery, the sense of history, the wide open spaces, the clean fresh air and the possibility of solitude.

USING THE GUIDE

All the areas covered are described as approaching from the south, where the majority of visitors originate. Similarly, the routes are also laid out in the order they are encountered from the approach. Each area has an introduction outlining the style of climbing, together with detailed up-to-date information on Accommodation and Amenities – in short everything the visitor requires to familiarise themselves with an area. Each cliff or craq is described in summary, together with specific Access, Approach and Descent details clearly laid out. In addition, maps and photo-diagrams illustrate further. Routes are given an overall technical grade alongside the adjectival grade, with the individual pitch grades incorporated within the description. The abbreviations FA and FFA refer to the first ascent and first free ascent respectively. PA refers to the number of points of aid used on the first ascent. There are very few routes containing aid in this book, though in some instances the use of a couple of points of aid may give a more

consistent route, and an alternative grade is offered. On a few harder routes, usually unrepeated, rest points were used and this is mentioned in the hope of encouraging subsequent free ascents. **PR** and **PB** refer to peg runner and belay respectively; **F** and **R** to friends and rocks; **BB** and **LO** refer to bolt belays and lower-offs on the sport crags. **TIC** stands for Tourist Information Centre; **ATM** for Automated Teller Machine.

You should have the relevant Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 map and, particularly for the remoter mountain crags, knowledge of how to use a map and compass is assumed. The middle of the Cairngorms or the top of Ben Nevis is not the place to attempt to learn to navigate. The Grid Reference and Altitude refers to the base of the cliff or crag. The approach times quoted are intended as a general guide (racing greyhounds and ramblers/tortoises can make their own adaptations accordingly), along the lines of Naismith's Rule (4.5km per hour and one minute for every 10m of ascent).

I have attempted to consult as many active climbers in Scotland as possible to get a broad range of opinions and a consensus on grades and quality, but the final selection of routes is a personal one. For instance, not all the routes are on immaculate rock, with some of the older routes in the traditional character-building mode. Jim Bell's famous adage, "Any fool can climb good rock. It takes craft and cunning to get up vegetatious schist or granite." may be worth bearing in mind.

ACCOMMODATION

Information on a range of budget accommodation is included for each area, from camp sites and youth hostels to private bunkhouses. There are also a number of well-situated mountaineering club huts in all the main mountain areas. These are available for booking by members of Mountaineering Scotland, the BMC and affiliated clubs. In addition, Tourist Information Centres (TICs) are detailed at the start of each main area. These are a good source of information on bed and breakfast, guest house and hotel accommodation. Visit Scotland publishes regional brochures covering accommodation and visitor information. These are available free of charge from any of the TICs across Scotland or as ebrochures from www.visitscotland.com.

EATING OUT

One important point worth bearing in mind, (especially for those used to continental and transatlantic hospitality) is that the majority of Scotland still lurks in the dark ages when it comes to the service industry. Most pubs only serve food over a short period at lunchtime; often 12–2pm, and more importantly, the majority of pubs and hotels stop serving food at 9pm, some at 8pm even! I've had the misfortune to turn up at a restaurant/pub in Skye (in July, the height of the tourist season) to be informed "We're not serving food: the chef's on his lunch" — unbelievable. Establishments that are particularly good and worth seeking out are highlighted within the introductory section of each relevant chapter.

ACCESS

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 gives statutory access rights to most land and inland water. These rights exist only if exercised responsibly by respecting the privacy, safety and livelihoods of others and by looking after the environment. The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (www.outdooraccess-scotland.com) provides detailed guidance on the responsibilities of those exercising access rights and those managing land and water.

- Take responsibility for your own actions and act safely.
- Respect people's privacy.
- Assist land managers to work safely and effectively.
- Care for the environment and take any litter home.
- Keep all dogs under proper control.
- Take extra care if organising an event or running a business.

WILD CAMPING

In the rural areas it is often possible to camp at the side of the road. If in doubt, ask permission locally from farmers and crofters. Remember to remove all your litter, all trace of your tent pitch and not to cause any pollution. It should almost always be possible to camp in the hills, except perhaps in some areas during the stalking season.

CARAVANS

Those wishing to bring caravans please don't – go to the Lakes, the Borders or some other rolling hills well away from the Highlands and Islands. Even better, stay at home and play tiddlywinks or golf, or take up macramé or embroidery or some other suitably sedate pastime. Alternatively, travel under the cover of darkness, preferably at 3am on a Sunday morning.

BIRDS

Some of the sea cliffs are affected by nesting seabirds and should be avoided during the nesting season of April – July inclusive. Almost all birds, their nests and eggs are protected. The proliferation of guano on such cliffs makes it in the climber's interest to choose another venue. In particular, some popular routes, such as the *Old Man of Stoer* and *Hoy*, have the occasional fulmar nest

on ledges, and it is definitely in the climber's interest to avoid close encounters, as they have the nasty habit of vomiting semi-digested fish oil onto uninvited visitors. It should still, however, be possible to climb these routes during the nesting season. In the unlikely event of coming across birds of prey (especially peregrine falcons, golden or white tailed sea eagles — all Schedule 1 birds) choose another route or cliff. It is an offence, under the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981, to disturb any Schedule 1 bird, with fines of up to £5,000 and possible imprisonment. Their continued existence is surely more important than another tick in the guidebook? Information on current restrictions is available from Mountaineering Scotland (01738 493942; www.mountaineering.scot).

SEASONAL RESTRICTIONS

The grouse shooting season is from 12 August (the 'glorious' twelfth) – 10 December and deer from 1 July – 20 October for stags and 21 October – 15 February for hinds. More information at www.outdooraccess-scotland.com. There are few crags or cliffs included where access problems have been encountered in the past. A caring, responsible attitude towards parking, litter, conservation and a polite approach to landowners should ensure that the present situation continues. If any difficulties are encountered, contact the access officer at access@ mountaineering.scot. No commercial stalking takes place on National Trust for Scotland properties (such as Glen Coe and Torridon), ensuring access at all times.

DIRECTIONS

All directions (left and right) are given for climbers facing the crag, except in descent. Any ambiguous descriptions also include a compass point, but if you don't know your left from your right, chances are you won't have a clue where the North Pole lies.

CONSERVATION

Try to adopt a minimum impact approach at all times, leaving the place as you would like to find it. Approaches to some of the cliffs can be greatly aided by the use of bicycles. Their use should be restricted to solid paths

such as private and forest roads or rights of way, not soft paths and open hillsides where considerable erosion can occur. Where there is a substantial time-saving advantage, such information is included in the approach information. Where repeated abseils from trees is the norm (such as on Creag Dhubh), slings and karabiners or maillons have been left in place, and their use is encouraged to prevent ringing of the bark, leading to the eventual demise of the trees. Always park with consideration for others, and avoid damage to fences and walls. And of course, as the country code stresses, avoid 'interfering' with animals (Aberdonians and Rick Campbell take note!). Do not leave any litter, including food scraps, finger tape, chalk wrappers and cigarette ends and remove any left by others. Bury or burn toilet paper. Scratching arrows or names at the base of routes can clearly be viewed in a modern light as nothing short of vandalism. Established markings are mentioned to aid identification, and it is hoped no further additions will be thought necessary. Many of the areas covered are within National Scenic Areas (NSA), National Nature Reserves (NNR) and Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), controlling development and ensuring the retention and preservation of the natural environment.

STYLE, PEGS & IN SITU PROTECTION

"Ethics change the experience for others, style only changes your own personal experience."

The use of chalk is no longer a burning issue.

Nevertheless, its use should be kept to a minimum, hopefully only on extremes. Chalk has been spotted on descent routes (I kid you not) and on VDiffs, such as Agag's Groove, which must be an ultimate low point.

Hold improvement is unacceptable on natural rock. If you can't climb a piece of rock with the holds available, leave it unclimbed rather than resort to the hammer and chisel. The use of hammered nuts should be discouraged, as their rapid deterioration soon blocks the placement possibilities for subsequent ascentionists.

Whilst the style a route is climbed in is a personal one, I feel obliged to make a few comments. The use of 'rest

points' (i.e. aid) and prior top-roping should be reserved for routes that are pushing new frontiers. It is true to say that such tactics percolate downwards. Try to give the rock a fighting chance, and approach the route on its own terms, in accordance with local practices. The majority of active pioneers in Scotland have attempted to push standards, and many very audacious leads have been achieved on-sight or ground up.

QUALITY ASSESSMENT

I had originally intended to adopt the Farguhar rating system, with its two extremes of PS and FB, but as hopefully there are no 'pure sh≈@‡' routes herein (unless included for historical interest, or to aid in craq descriptions) and masses of '#µ©k*≈g brilliant' routes, I have decided to opt for the conventional star rating system, with three star routes being of truly outstanding quality. As the climbing in Scotland is clearly superior to anything south of the border, a few exceptional routes have the honour of four stars. These are absolute 'must do's' that would rate amongst the best anywhere on the planet, such is their undeniable brilliance. On a few isolated routes, a wire brush symbol denotes that the route may require prior cleaning in its present state, and the stars assume the route is in a clean state. These are routes which were originally climbed following cleaning on abseil, but at the time of writing have not had much repeat traffic, and may require a quick abseil with a wire brush prior to an ascent.

CLIMATE

"They'll all be doing them when the sun comes out."

- Don Whillans.

The Highlands and Islands are dominated by the prevailing southwesterly winds, bringing moist and usually mild air from the Atlantic. In addition, many of the Atlantic depressions pass close to or over Scotland. "It always rains up there" is a commonly held myth. It is easy at first sight to confuse a map of annual rainfall with that of a relief map, for the two are closely linked. The wettest belt extends from the Cowal peninsula (south and west of Arrochar) in a broad band as far as

the hills just south of Torridon. In the mountains an annual precipitation of between 200 – 300cm and more is the norm, these dreich figures dropping markedly to 150 – 200cm on the coastal fringe. Within this broad belt there is much variation. As an example, at Dundonnel at the head of Little Loch Broom the annual rainfall is 180cm; 10km south it is 250cm, and 10km further north in Ullapool the average is 120cm.

The coastal promontories, especially in the north, and the Outer Hebrides receive only 100-150cm. Similarly, low ground around the Cairngorms and the eastern edge of the Central Highlands (such as Craig a Barns and The Pass of Ballater) benefit from the rain shadow effect of the hills further west (70-90cm). The higher ground in the Cairngorms receive around half the precipitation than the hills just in from the main Atlantic seaboard, with an average of 225cm recorded on Cairn Gorm summit. Lying in the centre of the country, their climate is more continental, with warmer summers than on the coasts. Many districts in the north and east have, on average over the four summer months from May - August, a total rainfall of less than 25cm, comparing favourably with the drier parts of England. Throughout the country the driest and sunniest period is from mid-May to the end of June, the next driest from mid-September to mid-October.

In the Outer Hebrides gales are recorded on over 40 days of the year, and in the Northern Isles this figure is even greater, though most of these occur in the winter. Prolonged spells of strong wind are uncommon between May and August. Especially in the Western Isles and along the west coast, May is the sunniest month, closely followed by June. April is sunnier than the popular holiday months of July and August. The temperatures on the west coast and the islands are generally a couple of degrees cooler than inland, with the Northern Isles a couple of degrees cooler again. Finally, in midsummer there is no complete darkness in the north of Scotland, with Shetland receiving about 4 hours more daylight (including twilight) than London.

TIDAL INFORMATION

In general, the tide ebbs and flows twice daily. As a rough guide, the tide takes 6 hours to come in, spends a half an hour 'on the turn', then 6 hours to recede, before repeating the same process. Spring tides occur after a new and full moon, and have the greatest amplitude. Tide tables are published annually for specific areas and are available from yacht chandlers and in many newsagents, or from harbour offices. Tidal predictions up to 7 days in advance also available at www.tidetimes.co.uk.

WEATHER INFORMATION

Radio: BBC Radio Scotland broadcasts an outdoor conditions forecast daily at 18.25 weekdays and 07.00 & 19.00 at weekends, in addition to general forecasts at the end of each news bulletin.

TV: BBC Reporting Scotland broadcasts a good general forecast daily at 18.50 weekdays, 17.25 on Saturdays and 18.25 on Sundays.

Online: www.bbc.co.uk/weather provides a detailed weather forecast including details for the week ahead, coastal forecasts and tide tables. In addition to the above www.metoffice.gov.uk provides daily mountain forecasts, as does www.mwis.org.uk, which issues a detailed 3-day forecast daily at approximately 16.30. Another popular option is the Norwegian website www.yr.no.

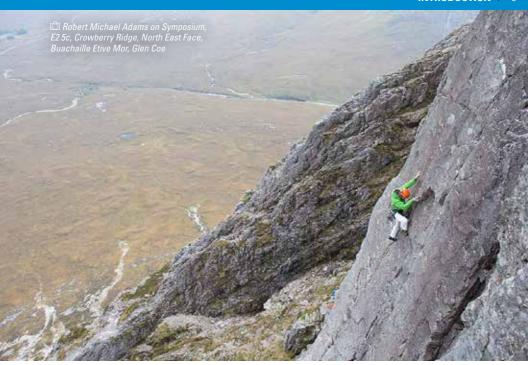
WEE BASTARDS

Little biting creatures, which the vast majority of touristorientated brochures and guidebooks fail to mention, can make a massive difference to one's stay in the Highlands and Islands. Of the thirty-four species of biting midge found in Scotland, only four or five species bite humans. By far the worst and most prevalent, accounting for more than 90 percent of all bites to humans is the female of the species *Culicoides impunctatus*, or the Highland Midge. This voracious creature first makes its appearance around the end of May and can persist until the end of September in a mild summer, with early June through to August being the worst periods. They are particularly active on still, cloudy or overcast days, especially twilight (which lasts throughout the night in Scotland in summer). Wind speeds above a slight breeze force them to seek shelter. Mosquitoes are less of a problem, though the cleq (or horsefly) feeds mainly during warm bright days. Finally, sheep or deer ticks, small black or brown round-bodied members of the genus arachnid rest on vegetation, awaiting a host. The tick sinks its head into the victim's flesh, until it eventually swells up and drops off. Ticks in the UK can sometimes carry Lyme Disease, a potentially serious infection, so they should be removed as soon as possible. Remove with a tick removal tool or tweezers and apply antiseptic cream. If flu-like symptoms persist after a tick bite, you should see a doctor immediately. Avoid ticks by keeping your arms and legs covered if possible; wear light-coloured fabrics so you can see them easily; read about correct tick removal and always carry a tick remover. For more information: www.bada-uk. org; www.nhs.uk; www.mountaineering.scot. There are many insect repellents commercially available. Although most contain varying concentrations of diethyl toluamide (DEET), non-toxic alternatives are available such as Smidge, Bite Free and the Wee Midgie range.

MOUNTAIN RESCUE

In the event of a serious accident requiring medical attention, call 999 or 112 and ask for Police and Mountain Rescue/Coast Guard. Give concise information about the nature of the injuries, and the exact location, including a six-figure grid reference or the name of the route if possible. Try to leave someone with the casualty, who should be made as comfortable as possible, if injuries allow. If unconscious, be sure to place in the recovery position, ensuring the airway is clear.

If you need to call assistance but cannot make voice calls due to poor mobile phone reception, you can contact the emergency services using a text from your mobile but only if you have already registered with the emergency



SMS text service. To register, text the word 'register' to 999. You will get a reply and should then follow the instructions you are sent. More information at www. emergencysms.org.uk.

In a few instances Mountain Rescue posts (containing a stretcher and basic rescue kit) are located in the hills, and are noted within the introductory text at the start of relevant cliffs.

GRADES

Routes are graded for on-sight ground up ascents, and the climber is assumed to be fully equipped with a wide range of protection devices. On some of the hardest routes skyhooks may be found useful. It goes without saying that people should make their own judgement regarding any in situ equipment encountered including fixed abseil points, all of which will rapidly deteriorate through exposure to the elements. I have tried to be

as consistent as possible, though minor regional variations may occur. Any crucial runner information, especially relating to obscure gadgets or hidden or hard-to-place protection has been included where known. Where a route has only received an ascent after extensive top-rope practice this headpointed ascent has been highlighted within the first ascent details where known, in order to record such prior familiarisation.

DISCLAIMER

The author, publisher and distributors of this book do not recognise any liability for injury or damage caused to, or by, climbers, third parties, or property arising from such persons seeking reliance on this guidebook as an assurance for their own safety.

GEOLOGY

by Dr Darren McAulay & Gary Latter

"For its size Scotland has the most varied geology and natural landscapes of any country on the planet."

- Alan McKirdy and Roger Crofts, Scotland: The Creation of its Natural Landscape, Scotlish Natural Heritage, 1999 Scotland hosts a wealth of rock types and topography, each of which provides unique characteristics and opportunities to the climber. The intricate geological history has been at the forefront of study; indeed many of the major earth moving mechanisms (e.g. thrust and fault movements) have been understood by analysing relief and rock outcrops throughout Scotland.

Rock climbers cannot escape the fact that geology plays a major role in the formation of their playground and many have more than a passing interest in the subject. An in-depth description of Scottish geology can be found elsewhere, but the following notes give an insight into how rock type influences not only the formation of our vertical arena but affects frictional qualities, hold type/shape and quality, and the provision of opportunity for the placement of protection.

A BRIEF GEOLOGICAL HISTORY

The age of the Earth is estimated to be in the region of 4,500 million years. Scotland's oldest rock, the Lewisian gneiss, is dated at 2,300 - 2,600 million years, being some of the oldest rocks to outcrop in Europe. The gneiss originally formed part of a huge landmass that included Scandinavia, Greenland and Northeast America. This landmass was uplifted and then eroded to give an undulating landscape that can be seen in the ancient topography of the NW mainland and its namesake of the Isle of Lewis. Around 1,100 million years ago, the gneiss was covered by around 5,000 metres of red sandstone called the Torridonian which was deposited by rivers flowing from the north. Following this and further to the south in more marine waters, sediments were being heated and folded (metamorphism) to produce the Moine schists.

Around 570 million years ago, the sea level rose and a series of sandstones, siltstones and limestones formed on the Torridonian/Lewisian basement - called the Cambrian. The next event, which had major consequences, started around 450 million years ago and involved the collision of two landmasses over 130 million years. The result was the Caledonian mountain belt, believed to be of Himalayan stature, which produced the Dalradian schists, which together with the Moine schists make up most of the Highlands. Aside from the massive folding of the rocks during this time was the series of northeastsouthwest trending faults that came into existence. The Highland Boundary Fault, which runs through Arran, Loch Lomond and on to Stonehaven now forms the dividing line between the Scottish Highlands to the north and the Central Lowland Belt to the south. During this period heating allowed molten rock to rise up into the schists, sometimes reaching the surface forming volcanoes (Ben Nevis and Glen Coe) but generally solidifying as granite deeper in the crust (Cairngorms, Starav, Rannoch). At this point Scotland was still connected to a landmass that included North-east America and Scandinavia. After the Caledonian shake-up a further series of sandstones were produced; the Old Red Sandstones, which are no longer represented in the Highlands but still occur in Orkney and NE Scotland. The period between 360 – 100 million years ago produced various rock types including more sandstones, limestones, coal measures and shales (source of oil and gas) but apart from in the Central Belt these rocks are not widespread and are of little interest to the climber. However, the Great Glen. Fault (now filled by Loch Ness) was active at various times in this period causing a lateral tearing of the earth (as the San Andreas Fault does today in California). It has been shown that the area to the north of the Great Glen has moved 100km relative to the south. Major rock forming events were still not finished though, as around 60 million years ago great movement occurred when North America broke away from the European continent. Apart from the obvious geographical (and some say fortunate!) consequence, the earth movements created substantial heating with the result that huge volcanoes

were formed along the NW margins of Scotland (a line from Arran to Skye to St Kilda). Subsequent extensive erosion by elements such as changes in climate and periods of glaciation have reduced the mountains and

volcanoes to the remnants left today. Fortuitously, these remnants offer a western coastline that is 260 miles from north to south but over 2 000 miles in outline, with 550 Hebridean islands, 40 mainland sea lochs and hundreds of mountains and cliffs to enjoy.

ROCK TYPES

Lewisian Gneiss – Ancient rocks that have undergone such extreme heating and pressure that all trace of original structure has been lost. The Lewisian rocks originally formed part of a great continent that was worn down to a low lying, gentle landscape, subsequently covered (in Scotland) by the Torridonian sandstones. Typically forms rounded and rocky outcrops (due to the lack of jointing) with exceptional friction when weathered, because of the coarse-grained nature and streaked texture that permits the formation of flat, banded holds and rough pockets. It occurs on Lewis and Harris and the Barra Isles, on almost all the worthwhile crags and cliffs in the Gairloch district, including the remote Carn Mor, and in bands in Sutherland, including around Sheigra.

Torridonian Sandstone - Transported by the action of large rivers on the margins of a mountainous continent to the north, the Torridonian deposits generally consist of coarse-grained, red sandstones that contain frequent pebbly bands. The Torridonian exhibits its original bedding, since it has escaped the mountain building forces imposed on many other rock types in Scotland. Good friction and quick drying, the holds often have a rounded feel and friends/cams ensure peace of mind in the sometimes flared cracks and horizontal breaks. The outcrops around Torridon, and almost all the cliffs and crags in Coigach and Assynt, are composed of this rock.

Cambrian Quartzite - Deposited on top of the Torridonian sandstones but with a southeast tilt. this quartzite is the result of heating of quartz-rich sandstones. They are brittle and well jointed which tends towards sharp flat holds. This rock outcrops mainly as resistant summit caps on the hills of Assynt and Sutherland where frost-shattering forces produce abundant sharp, blocky screes. Further south the extensive Coire Mhic Fhearchair on Beinn Eighe and the Bonaidh Dhonn overlooking Loch Maree are two of the finest examples.

Moinian/Dalradian Schists - These are the predominant rock types of the Highlands, the result of metamorphism (intense folding, alteration by heat and pressure and even melting) caused by the meeting of two crustal plates. They formed a chain of mountains of Himalayan stature as huge folds and thrusts occurred, sometimes causing older rocks to rise up over younger, with the culminating edge being the Moine Thrust which runs from Skye to the north coast near Durness. The metamorphism of original sandstones, mudstones and possibly igneous rocks caused a slaty cleavage to develop which cross cuts the original bedding planes. Hence, the schist crags vary enormously depending on



the local variations in the folding, and can even vary from route to route. At Creag Dhubh, for instance, the majority of the holds are of a horizontal, sometimes sloping nature whereas The Cobbler exhibits a variety of holds from slopers, to jugs and pockets, to quartz knobs. One notable property of the schists is that they offer poor friction when wet or lichenous, particularly the mica-schists in the Southern Highlands. Other locations include Glen Nevis, Craig a Barns, and venues as diverse as Glen Ogle and the alpine Aonach Beag.

Old Red Sandstone — Not a common rock type in terms of climbing (and geographic distribution) in Scotland, with the exception of the Northern Isles and the Old Man of Hoy. It is generally well bedded which results in many horizontal breaks and cracks (often rounded or flared). The friction is good where the rock is clean, the quality is generally impeccable on the dark russet coloured walls and it is at its best on some of the upper sections on Rora Head.

Jurassic Sandstone – Although most of the rocks from this period tend to be soft and friable, some climbing can be found. A notable exception is the quartz sandstone of Suidhe Biorach (Skye) which like the Cambrian quartzite has a tendency to produce sharp, flat edges and, where eroded by the sea, has numerous pockets.

Granite – The granites can be found all over the Highlands, formed when large amounts of molten rock rose up through the folds and faults of the Caledonian mountains and solidified. The quality of the granite can depend on the rate at which it cooled. Rapid cooling producing a fine grain such as at Binnein Shuas and Dirc Mhor, whilst slower cooling produces a coarser grain as in the Cairngorms. Typical granite holds consist of cracks and flakes of a rounded nature, which are the product of blocky fractures formed during cooling. In addition ice-scoured slabs can be noted for their absence of holds and scarcity of protection (Etive, Arran and some of the cliffs in the Cairngorms). Gullies, formed by preferential weathering of intrusions and minor faults, tend to be



very loose, formed of a fragile substance more closely resembling Weetabix than rock. Many routes follow lines produced by similar intrusions including the quartz vein on *Swastika*, and pegmatite band on *Ardverikie Wall*.

Andesite & Rhyolite — Forming similarly to the granites above, but in areas where the molten rock was able to penetrate the surface, are a range of lavas and granites. Most notably in the Ben Nevis and Glen Coe areas, huge blocks of schists were undermined by molten rock, which caused a subsequent collapse and outpouring of lavas. Although the lavas have long since been eroded away, leaving mostly schist and granite, the collapse (estimated at 1,600m in Glen Coe) resulted in some rocks (mainly rhyolites and andesites) being dropped to a level that was not removed. The rhyolites and andesites are very resistant to erosion compared to the surrounding schists and so make up the higher parts of the mountains. The Ben Nevis complex experienced at least four episodes during the collapse and subsequent granite intrusions

and the differential cooling has resulted in a variety of coarseness, the area around the Carn Mor Dearg arête being fine grained as the result of a smaller, later subsidence. The summit block of the Ben consists of a resistant andesite that is the core of the collapse. The main cliffs still rest on schists that are 600m above sea level. Everywhere on the cliffs there is an inward sloping trend that results in good ledges/holds. Both rhyolite and andesite are fine grained, and fracture to give good sharp holds, though some of the best climbing in Glen Coe is on wonderful compact rough bubbly brown-pink rhyolite, at its best when water washed and well weathered. A number of dykes, mainly of porphorytic microdiorite have eroded to give features such as the distinctive Ossian's Cave and the descent route down from the Terrace Face. both on Aonach Dubh.

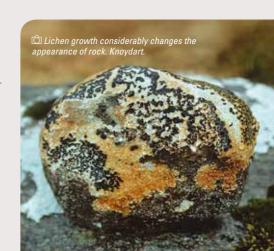
Dolerite & Basalt – Huge basaltic lava fields covered much of the area of what is now the western coast of Scotland. They poured out from huge volcanoes that have long since been reduced to their roots but many layers built up over time. Dolerite is a fine-grained lava and where it was intruded between layers (as a sill) it often cooled in the famed columnar form seen at Fingal's Cave (Staffa) and Kilt Rock (Skye). Basalt is generally unreliable for climbing, but the harder dolerite can form excellent cracks and vertical columns giving sustained jamming, its long parallel cracks being well protected with an ample supply of cams.

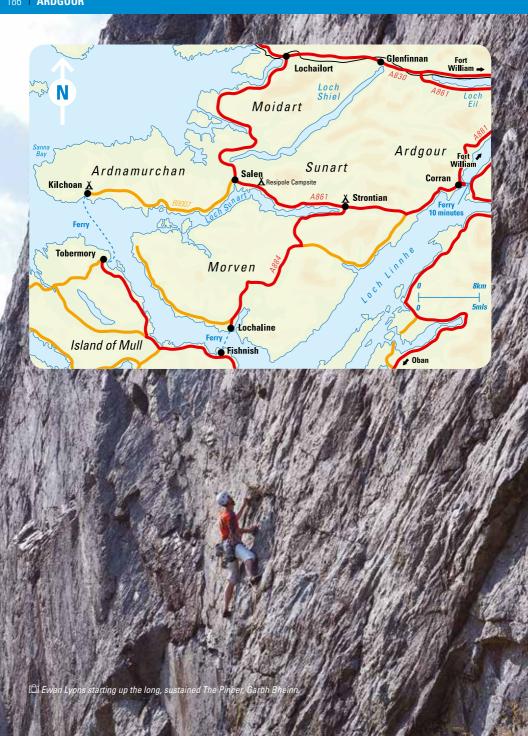
Gabbro – This coarse rock is famed for its roughness and great friction. The origin of gabbro is associated with volcanic activity but unlike the dolerite and basalt lavas it solidified deep within the root of such volcanoes. Solidification was slow which accounts for the coarseness of gabbro. Subsequent pressuring caused fissures within the volcanic complexes, with the result that much of the original rock was crosscut by smaller basalt intrusions (dykes) that radiate out from the centres; *The Snake* on the Eastern Buttress of Sron na Ciche follows the line of one such prominent dyke. These basalt dykes are fine-grained and less resistant than the gabbros and

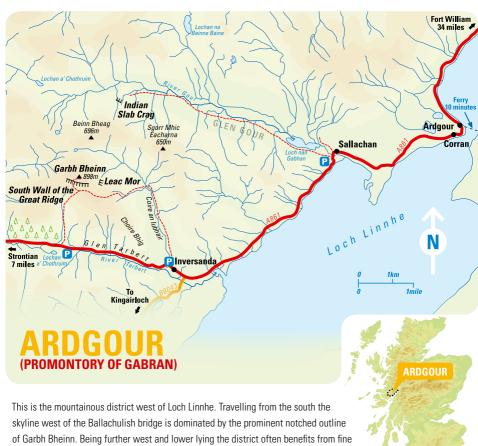
although weathering often removes the dykes to form gullies and ledges, caution must be taken when climbing as the rock can be brittle and has poor friction when wet. Gabbro on the other hand retains good friction even in the rain, which is fortunate considering their location on Skye and Ardnamurchan.

In addition to the above, there are lesser outcroppings of other rocks, such as slate, limestone, greywacke and conglomerate throughout the Highlands and Islands, though (with the exception of the conglomerate crags of The Camel and Sarclet) none of the venues are deemed worthy of consideration from a climbing point of view to date. The rapid pace of exploration in recent years, together with the acceptance of the worthiness of rock quality in other parts of the UK, will undoubtedly reveal other yenues.

Finally, it should be noted that erosion of the mountains and crags is continually taking place. Notable examples in recent years include two huge rock falls (1995 and 2000) on the right wall of *Parallel B Gully* in Lochnagar, the top corner of *The Giant* and the third pitch of *Cougar* on Creag an Dubh-loch, large fresh rock fall scars around the base of *Collie's Route* on Skye's Sron na Ciche, the repositioning of huge chokestones in *The Chasm* on Buachaille Etive Mor, and the collapse of the natural arch that joined the top of the Old Man of Hoy to the mainland cliff as recently as just over one hundred years ago.







of Garbh Bheinn. Being further west and lower lying the district often benefits from fine clear weather when Glen Coe is enshrouded in cloud. It is also considerably quieter.

Accommodation: Wild camping anywhere in the hills, though permission from the estate may have to be sought during the stalking season — (www.ardgourestate.co.uk). A better option (sea breeze to dissuade midges) may be to camp on one of the many beaches (plenty of driftwood) thus avoiding the attentions of the landowners. Caravan & campsites: Sunart Camping, Strontian (© 01967 402080; www.sunartcamping. co.uk); Resipole Holiday Park (© 01967 431235; www.resipole.co.uk); Ardnamurchan Campsite, Kilchoan (© 01972 510766; www.ardnamurchanstudycentre.co.uk).

Bunkhouses: Ariundle Centre, Strontian (© 01967 402279; www.ariundlecentre. co.uk); Lochaline Dive Centre (© 01967 421627; www.lochalinedivecentre.co.uk).

Numerous B&Bs locally — TIC at Strontian (Mar — Oct; © 01967 402382). Chalets and self-catering accommodation further west in Strontian and Salen. Amenities: Small supermarket and petrol station at Clovullin just off the A861, 1 mile/1.6 km west of the Corran ferry. The Inn at Ardgour is the nearest pub.

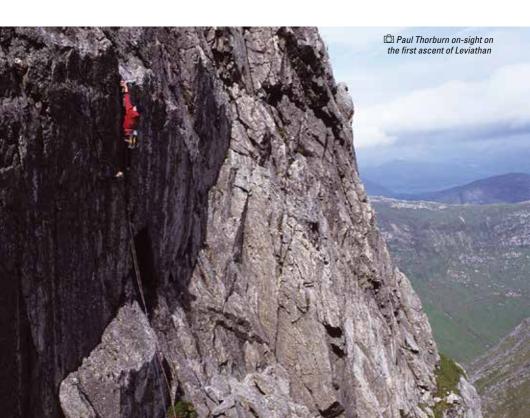
"On the one hand ranged a vast array of the mainland mountains ... on the other the Atlantic Ocean and the small isles of the west. This truly is the combination to which the Scottish hills owe all worthiness – rock, water, and the subtle colours of the seaward atmosphere."

W H Murray, Undiscovered Scotland. (J M Dent & Sons,1951)

ARDGOUR HISTORY

The first route here was the classic *The Great Ridge* climbed by John Bell and Willie Brown back in 1897. Ken Barber and J Lomas climbed the long Route II up all four tiers of Leac Beag in 1939, improving on the earlier wandering Route 1. In 1952 Dan Stewart and Donald Mill had a productive weekend, adding a number of routes including The Great Ridge Direct Start and the fine Scimitar. A few years later, Jimmy Marshall and Len Lovat added further good lines with Sgian Dubh and Razor Slash, Marshall returning with others to snatch the superb Butterknife. Other harder routes were added throughout the sixties, including further additions from Marshall (The Clasp) and Robin Smith (The Peeler), but some of the best finds were in the seventies. Ken Crocket and Colin Stead added the improbable Excalibur. Les and P Brown and Ian Davidson opened up the fine

Indian Slab Crag in Glen Gour with a number of good routes, including *Indian Slab* and *Outrider*. Later, in 2000, Colin Moody and Cynthia Grindley added Time Traveller and the superb Mullennium. Dougle Dinwoodle raised standards with his ascent of The Pincer in 1978, but it was Murray Hamilton who took things further with a series of contrasting adjacent routes, first with Chela, then Tru-Cut. Pete Whillance added the bold White Hope in 1984, and a couple of years later Hamilton succeeded on one of the most impressive pitches in the mountains with the technical and very sustained Kelpie. His second on this occasion. Rab Anderson returned in the nineties. to climb two of the three remaining cracks on this steep wall with *Cutlass* and *Sabre*, and later contributed *The* Contender. The final central crack gave Paul Thorburn The Epeeist in 1996.





Glen Gour is the large flat-bottomed glen running west from Sallachan, north of Garbh Bheinn and just south of the Corran ferry. Despite being north-facing, this fine gneiss craq dries remarkably guickly and receives a fair bit of sun due to its open aspect and low angle. The routes give excellent climbing with fairly spaced protection, generally on superb rock.

Access: From the Corran ferry, follow the A861 road west for 2.4 miles/3.8km to a small loop road running close to the north bank of the river flowing into Camas Shallachain. Park on the south side of the bridge.

Approach: Follow the track west close to the south side of the river and Loch nan Gabhar then along the south side of the glen until it peters out after about 5.5km. Head diagonally left up the hillside to the base of the cliff. Although rough going at first, mountain bikes can be taken 3.5km along the glen as far as the sheepfold (free on the ferry).

Descent: From the large heather terrace at the top, traverse left and across the stream bed then down the slope just to its right (east), re-crossing the stream lower down and slanting down left to regain the base.

The prominent left-facing corner at the left side. Walk up left to a path crossing the crag. Ascend the initial slab then move right above the tree to gain the initially grassy corner. Continue up the slab left of the corner. Best climbed in three pitches (no obvious belay at mid-height).

Ambush **

40m HVS 4c

FA Mike Pescod, Rose McKie & Donald King 15 May 2003

The left edge of the hanging slab above *Outrider*. Climb Outrider to above the tree and step right to belay in the higher corner.

Time Lord **

205m VS 4b

FA Colin Moody & Cynthia Grindley 1 July 2000

Slightly better protected than Indian Slab. Start right of a vertical grassy crack up and left of *Indian Slab*.

- 1 50m 4b Climb up using a flake then direct to belay beneath the path. Walk left to belay at the base of the rib.
- 2 40m 4a Climb the rib and continue to belay beneath a black bulge.
- 3 50m 4b Move left round the bulge to follow the left edge of the obvious slab.
- 4 50m 4a Straight up.
- 5 15m 4a Finish up left on ripples.

Indian Slab ***

220m VS 4b

FA Ian Davidson & Les Brown Easter 1972

Good climbing, particularly on the first and third pitches. Start at the base of the black-streaked slabs, down and left of a steep section.

- **1 50m 4b** Follow the slab to a grass ledge beneath a steepening.
- 2 50m Continue up to cross the path then follow ribs and heather leading up left to beneath the prominent slab.
- **3 50m 4b** A superb sustained pitch. Climb the slab crossing the overlap at 30m.

4&5 70m 4a Trend up right to finish.

PALE FACE

Obliquely up and left of the main crag, on the opposite side of the open gully is an obvious pale slab.

Descent: Down the right side of the crag.

6 Paleface ★

30m HVS 4c

FA Gary Latter (on-sight solo) 16 August 2002

The prominent thin crack. Climb the crack, finishing by an easier ridge at the top.



30m E2 5a

FA Donald King, Rose McKie & Mike Pescod 15 May 2003
The front face of the slab.

5 Mullennium Direct ***

200m Severe 4a

FA Colin Moody & Cynthia Grindley 1 July 2000; pitch 1 Gary Latter & Jeremy Birkbeck 16 August 2002

Four excellent full length pitches towards the right side of the slab. Start at the very toe of the crag, down right of the shelf at the base of *Indian Slab*.

- 1 50m 4a Move up right over initially broken ground to gain the superb smooth slab and follow this, taking the cleanest line trending slightly right to gain the base of the original route.
- 2 50m 4a Ascend the pale slab to belay a few metres left of a group of small rowans.
- **3 50m 4a** Traverse left to the edge and ascend the slab overlooking *Indian Slab*.
- 4 50m 4a Continue directly to finish.





The most southerly significant outcropping of gneiss in the country, Garbh Bheinn is an excellent mountain with as varied a range of routes as anywhere, from one of the best ridges on the mainland to a clutch of excellent extremes, and everything in between. The fact that the summit lies just below the three thousand foot mark makes it all the better for that, being devoid of all those boring Munro-baggers. The panorama from the summit is stunning — choose a fine clear day and savour.

Access: Take the ferry over Loch Linnhe at the Corran narrows to Ardgour (7.00-21.00 in summer; 10 minutes crossing time) and follow the A861 south-west (left) for 7 miles/11 km, turning off right 0.3miles/0.5km beyond the Kingairloch turn off, onto the old road which loops round. Park just before the old bridge.

Approach: (A) Follow a stalkers path on the right side of the stream (Abhainn Coire an lubhair) up the very boggy strath of Coire an lubhair (Corrie of the Yew Tree) to cross the stream after about 4.5km (1 hour). Continue steeply south-west up the right side of the burn emanating from

a faster, drier and steeper approach up the coire at the back can be made. Drive a further 2 miles/3km west along Glen Tarbert to park on the old road on the left overlooking a tiny lochan (100m before the road crosses the Allt a' Chothruim). Follow a vague path steeply up the right (east) bank of the burn flowing down Coire a' Chothruim (Corrie of the Balance, unnamed on 1:50,000 map, but immediately south of the summit) then slog up hillside rightwards (north-east) to the bealach between Sron a' Gharbh Choire Bhig and Garbh Bheinn. From the bealach continue left up the ridge by a path then cut across easy-angled slabs to gain the upper left end of the

South Wall of the Great Ridge. 1½ hours.

(C) An alternative approach to the bealach, much drier underfoot than the first described and not as tortuous as the second, is to cut up left from the old bridge and follow the ridge which eventually drops down into the bealach 2½ hours.

Descent: Head left (west) along a well worn path along the summit ridge and down to the left end of the cliffs, or continue further to a path into the coire from the bealach.

LEAC MOR (GREAT SLAB) 🔕 👌 2hr





NM 909 627 Alt: 550m

This large secluded cliff lies on the east flank of the mountain, out of sight from the coire. It is divided into four tiers by three terraces, the third tier the Leac Mor. Approach: Either contour right from low in Garbh Choire

Mor, or continue west up the glen by a good path on the north side of the stream then cutting across directly up to the base.

Descent: Either continue up to the summit and down the path to the bealach or from the top of the cliff descend north-west down the ridge to a small col then follow a vague path down a steep grassy slope to arrive just east of small lochan. Head back down the glen by a good path on the north bank of the burn.

🚹 Route II **

365m Very Difficult

FA Ken Barber & J.Lomas July 1939

A long sustained route up the full length of the cliff. Start beneath the left edge of the first tier (the first 100m is avoidable by walking round the left side).

- 1 40m Climb the left edge of slabs to a ledge on the left.
- **2 50m** Step back right and up an easy grassy groove.
- 3 10m Easy slabs. Walk over to base of the next tier.
- 4 35m Start just left of the left edge of a smooth pale wall. Up a slab to a vertical crack; up this and a groove to belay beneath a short vertical wall.
- 5 40m Traverse diagonally right to the end of a steep wall then go up to the base of a long narrow grassy chimney on the next tier.
- **6 40m** Climb a narrow grassy vertical fault to belay in a grassy alcove 5m above a large block.
- 7 45m Traverse right then up rightwards by cracks/grooves.
- 8 35m Continue straight up. 9-10 80m Either finish by any line on the







The cliff left of the obvious *Great Gully*.

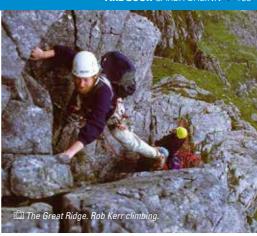


165m Severe 4a

FA Dan Stewart & Donald Mill 12 April 1952

A good sustained approach to the upper ridge. Start down and right of the prominent right-slanting ramp on the right side of the craq.

- 1 20m Up the shallow steep ramp, starting on huge pockets then slightly left to belay at base of huge right-sloping ramp.
- 2 50m 4a Up the ramp (belay possible at 25m, at block just right of old PR) and continue in the same line to move up a steep flake then a short slab to belay on a long grassy ledge.
- 3 20m Move left round the edge and up easy slabs to belay on grassy ledge below a prominent flake chimney.
- 4 30m 4a The awkward chimney then leftwards over jumbled blocks then up a slab by a wide crack. Flake belay on the left at the back of a grass slope above.
- 5 45m Scramble up right then follow a rib, traversing right then up grass to a block belay up to the left of the base of *The Great Ridge*.

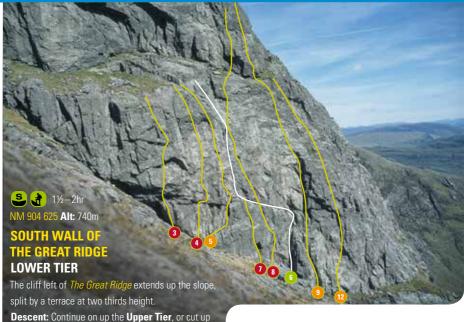


2 The Great Ridge ***

250m Difficult

FA John Bell & Willie Brown April 1897

A fine long mountaineering expedition, especially when combined with the *Direct Start*, with a stunning somewhat abrupt finish right on the summit of the hill. The ridge projects south-east from the summit, with the distinctive Great Gully cutting deeply into the face just to its right. The climbing becomes very much easier just below half-height. Continue up left from the base of the Direct Start to just before the base of a steep 50m cliff just beneath the bealach. Ascend a short step then traverse diagonally right along a grassy rake which leads almost into Great Gully. Climb the right edge of a slabby buttress overlooking a shallow open gully then walk up right to a block belay just up left from the base of the ridge proper (45m). Climb over sharp flakes left of the edge and move right to the crest. Continue up this to belay at the base of a short steep V-groove (35m). Climb the groove on good holds then a short ramp on the left (15m). Continue easily up grass to beneath a steep wall. Traverse left along the ledge then climb diagonally right to regain the crest of ridge. Continue up this to belay on the ledge above (40m). Continue up the crest, outflanking a steeper section on the left to a large grassy ledge. Climb a short right slanting grassy gully on the left, with a short rock step at its top then more easily up the obvious line to easier rocks leading to the summit cairn.



3 Brack *

40m E3 5c

FA Murray Hamilton & Rab Anderson 21 June 1986

A good steep airy pitch up the left side of the crag. Start at a short prominent arête. Climb the arête to the break, pull left over the roof (crux) and cross the next bulge to the wall above. Move right and pull over the third roof at a break then continue passing left through two bulges to finish on the terrace.

the easy-angled slabs leftwards beneath the base of

the **Upper Tier** then down the path to the bealach.



40m E3 6a

FA Gary Latter & Paul Thorburn 24 June 1996

The prominent thin crack-line up the wall left of *Scimitar*. Start 3m left of the broken rising ledge system of *Scimitar*. Climb the initial cracked wall with difficulty (crux) to move right at the prominent horizontal break to easier ground. Continue up the crack, moving right on side-pulls into the steep finger crack which soon relents. Continue more easily in the same line, past a short steep wall near the top.

Scimitar ★★

105m VS 4c

FA Dan Stewart & Donald Mill 13 April 1952

From the base of the broken rising ledge system, about 30m up left from the huge boulder at the base of *Butterknife*.

- 1 30m 4c Follow the ledge up right until it becomes horizontal. Go up a steep crack above the left end to an overhang, move right spectacularly to good holds on an edge. Move up and left to a ledge and belay at the base of a corner.
- **2 25m 4a** Continue directly up slab and open chimney leading to the terrace.
- 3 50m 4c Climb a smooth vertical groove then move right to a flake. Continue either up the left-facing corner or the slabs on its left leading to easier angled slabs to finish on the crest of the ridge.



75m Severe 4a

FA Jimmy Marshall, Len Lovat & Archie Hendry 1 April 1956

Start at the huge boulder set against the face about 30m down from Scimitar.

- 1 25m 4a Climb the boulder and step into a dièdre which is climbed to a platform.
- 2 20m 4a Traverse horizontally left along the ledge

- for 8m to the base of an obvious layback slab edge. Climb this ledge, occasionally laybacking, and at the top move out delicately over a nose (crux) then right and back left to belay.
- 3 30m 4a Follow the left diagonal fracture cutting across the prominent chimney of *Scimitar* to finish on the terrace.

Leviathan *

20m E3 6a

FA Paul Thorburn, Neil Craig, Rick Campbell & Gary Latter 28 June 1997

The wide overhanging crack left of *The Golden Lance*, so named because it is "nasty, brutish and short." Gain the crack and follow it forcefully to end on a broken ledge. Scramble off left and down easy ground.

The Golden Lance *

98m E2 5c

FA Rab Anderson & Alan Russell 30 June 1984

The prominent thin crack-line left of *Butterknife*. Start on top of the large boulder.

- 1 18m 5c Climb the thin crack then up left and back right to belay on the traverse ledge of *Razor Slash*.
- 2 40m 5c Step right and climb the thin crack-line then over a short leaning wall. Continue in the same line to the terrace.
- 3 40m 5b Above is a short corner terminating at a small roof. Climb the corner and pull over rightwards to reach easier ground. Move up and leftwards into the centre of the wall then climb up to a short leaning wall. Pull over this and finish up easier ground.

9 Butterknife ****

105m HS 4b

FA Jimmy Marshall, Archie Hendry, George Ritchie & Ian Haig 15 September 1956

Stunning climbing, with a particularly fine second pitch.

Start directly beneath the main corner, 10m right of the large slanting boulder leaning against the base of the crag.

- 1 25m 4a Up the groove which slants left to belay on a block-strewn ledge below the corner crack.
- 2 25m 4b Up the superb corner on excellent holds to belay at its top. Well protected large hexes/Fs useful.

- **3 25m 4a** Easily up the slab above to belay below a roof at the right end of the terrace.
- **4 35m 4b** Cross a small roof low down and follow a direct line to the top.
- **4a VS 4c** *Direct Finish* A fine 45m pitch takes the prominent thin vertical crack midway between the short left-facing corner of *The Golden Lance* and the original finish. Cross the initial overhang on good holds and follow the crack over a steepening to a short diagonal left-slanting crack. Up this and trend slightly rightwards on easier ground to join the crest of *The Great Ridge*. Well protected.

™ Bodkin *

75m E1 5a

FA Ken Crocket & Stuart Smith 10 June 1979

The right arête of *Butterknife*. Start 3m right of that route.

- 1 25m 5a Climb to a steepening at 15m, step left (crux) and continue up and left to belay on the edge below some bulges.
- **2 25m 5a** Move right then up to an overhang. Move left to the edge and continue more easily up this.
- **3 25m 4a** As for *Butterknife* to the terrace.

Poniard **

60m HVS 5a

FA Gary Latter & Dave Greig 28 June 1997

Surprisingly reasonable climbing up the wall between Butterknife and Mournblade. Start 10m right of Butterknife, beneath a prominent shallow pale groove. Climb the groove then move rightward and climb to an undercut flange beneath a small overlap. Cross this and the main overhang above on good holds. Move up a short way to another overlap, step left and finish up the groove, easing towards the top.

12 Mournblade **

65m VS 4b

FA Ken Crocket, Colin Grant & J.Hutchinson 31 July 1976

The corner parallel to and 12m right of *Butterknife*. Start at a rough flake 6m right of *Butterknife*.

- 1 30m 4b Climb up then right to the base of the corner. Follow the corner, step right into a groove and climb it to a good stance at a pinnacle.
- 2 35m Climb the bulge directly above on good holds and continue more easily up the wall on the left.



Descent: Follow the well worn path left down the

🔞 Sgian Dubh **

50m Severe 4a

FA Jimmy Marshall & Len Lovat 1 April 1956

Fine steep climbing up the left side of the wall. Start beneath the prominent deep chimney, just left of the very impressive smooth overhanging wall.

- 1 20m 4a Climb the open chimney, making use of a fine hand crack in the back, to a ledge. Walk along the ledge to belay in its centre.
- 2 30m 4a Climb diagonally leftwards following a line of flake cracks to beneath a bulge. Step left and pull up on good holds to gain the base of an easy-angled right-slanting ramp. Go up this then steeply on good flakes to a thread and nut belay on the ledge above. Scramble up to finish.

FA Alan Taylor & Rab Anderson 20 June 1982

Climb a flange/crack just left of *Menghini* to where a diagonal crack comes in from the right and continue up to a ledge. Move right and finish up the wall above.

👣 Menghini ***

30m HVS

FA Alan Taylor & Rab Anderson 20 June 1982

The prominent crack just left of *The Peeler*.

🌇 The Peeler ★

47m HVS 5h

FA Robin Smith & James Moriarty June 1961

The hard climbing is well protected and concentrated in the first 9m. Start on the outer edge of the Sgian Dubh flake.

- 1 12m 4b Climb the crest of the flake to belay on the platform.
- 2 35m 5b Climb the groove on the right to pull up and leftwards round a roof. Continue up a short steep crack which soon falls back into a groove leading to the top.

📆 Cutlass *

60m E4 6h

FA Rah Anderson 6 June 1992

The leftmost crack-line on the leaning wall, immediately right of *The Peeler*. Good climbing, though a bit close to The Peeler at times.

- 1 40m 6b Climb the awkward short groove in the arête just left of Sgian Dubh to gain ledges. Climb to beneath the roof, pull round left then move up and right to follow the prominent left-slanting crack to a junction with The Peeler. Either belay here or move up and right to a grass ledge.
- 2 20m Easy ground to top.

18 Sabre **

60m E5 6b

FA Rab & Chris Anderson 6 June 1992

Excellent climbing up the thin crack near the left side of the leaning wall.

- 1 40m 6b Climb the initial corner of Sgian Dubh to the ledge. Place the high runners on Cutlass and extend them then hand traverse out right for 3m to attain a standing position below the crack. Climb the crack to beneath a small roof, step up left and pull up to easier ground. Move up and climb the cracks in the wall to the right of Cutlass to reach a grass ledge.
- 2 20m Easy ground to top.

19 The Epeeist ***

50m E5 6b

FA Paul Thorburn & Gary Latter 23 June 1996

Excellent varied climbing up the central blocky crack in the leaning wall, directly above the very prominent black seep. From the top of the initial chimney of *Sgian Dubh*, first hand then foot traverse the shelf out right with increasing difficulty to the base of the crack. Pull the ropes and move the belayer to below (or drop a 3rd rope). Up the crack with a hard move low down to follow excellent holds which lead out left near the top. Finish up the easier wall above on excellent rock to spike belay. Scramble off.

20 Kelpie ****

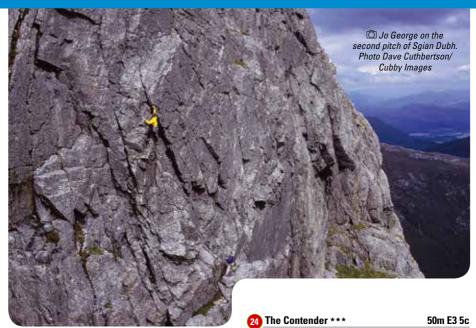
45m E6 6b

FA Murray Hamilton & Rab Anderson 21 June 1986

A stunning line, giving one of the best routes of the grade anywhere. Start 5m right of the hanging flake, at the right side of the leaning wall.

1 25m 6b Pull over the roof and up to good nuts in the crack. Traverse left into the steep hanging flake and up this with hard moves up slightly rightwards to good holds at the base of the crack. Powerful sustained climbing up the crack leads to a belay at the top of the leaning wall.





21 Tru-Cut *

50m E4 5c

FA Murray Hamilton & Rab Anderson 13 June 1982

Start as for *Kelpie*. Gain the groove above the initial overlap from the left. Follow this to pull out left and continue up to a move right to reach a ramp/groove. Follow this over the initial bulge to reach a belay, or continue to the top.



45m E3 6a

FA Murray Hamilton & Al Murray May 1981

The prominent smooth left-facing groove. Bold & sustained.

- 1 25m 6a Climb the groove to a nut belay.
- 2 20m 5b Continue more easily directly above.

23 The Pincer ***

45m E2 5b

FA Dougie Dinwoodie & Bob Smith August 1978

Fine open climbing up the right side of the right arête of the *Chela* groove. Follow the arête, passing the left side of a bulge to reach a small overhang. Turn this on the left to enter a steep corner, and follow this and its left arête to finish.

FA Rab & Chris Anderson 11 August 1994

Brilliant sustained climbing following the thin hanging crack up the left side of the white wall. Many small wires (R #1—5) required. Start in the centre of the wall, behind a prominent projecting block embedded in the ground. Climb directly to the right end of a short left-slanting crack at 6m and follow this to gain a jug up on the left. Move up to a large rounded pocket, step left and follow a thin crack over bulges into a groove. Cross a bulge at the top of the groove and follow a ramp a short way then swing out right and up a short crack to ledges. Ascend a niche then a rib on the left finishing up a slab to a thin grass ledge just below the top.

25) White Hope ***

50m E5 6a

FA Pete Whillance, Murray Hamilton & Rab Anderson 5 May 1984

Excellent sustained climbing, following a direct line up the centre of the clean white wall. Start immediately behind a large embedded flake, below a thin vertical quartz seam in the centre of the wall. Climb this to a right-slanting flake at 12m. Make hard moves directly up from its right end to gain jugs beneath a small isolated roof. Pull over its right side and climb direct, moving

slightly left then back right to below the final leaning wall. Move up leftwards to a short crack and pull over to a belay. Scramble to the top.

26 The Clasp *

60m E1 5a

FA Jimmy Marshall April 1960

A left-trending line below the leftmost end of the lower of the two large roofs. Start beneath the right end of the roof.

- 1 15m 4c Climb the steep wall and trend left to a belay.
- 2 45m 5a Continue up under the roof, traverse left to a shallow groove then up to a chimney trending left to the top.

The Foil ★

80m E2 5c

FA Paul Moores & Mick Tighe (1 PA) 29 May 1978

Sparsely protected climbing across the steep wall sandwiched between the two roofs. Start at a short wall beneath the right end of the upper roof.

- 1 40m 5c Move up to the roof, move left directly below it and follow it left with difficulty to where it fades. Exit left onto steep slabs.
- 2 40m Finish up the cracks in the slab.

28 Excalibur ***

65m HVS 5a

FA Ken Crocket & Colin Stead 10 June 1972

Impressive situations, with two fine contrasting pitches. It gains and traverses the lip of the smaller second roof system. Start at the pale open groove beneath the right end of the long roof.

- 1 20m 5a Climb the central and deepest of three faint groove-lines on good holds to pull out right to a good spike on the rib. Continue steeply up this with hard moves to gain a good ledge level with the lip of the roof. Belay here.
- 2 20m 4c Traverse left above the lip of the roof by a line of good hand holds, past a prominent thin diagonal crack-line then up to the base of the steep bottomless corner. Up this to a good spike at its top. Step round the edge and down to belay on a good ledge.
- 3 25m 4a Move left 3m and easily up slabs to finish.

29 Guenevere **

35m HVS 5a

FA Rab Anderson & Mark Garthwaite 3 September 2000

Fine airy climbing. Climb steeply up the arête/rib immediately right of *Excalibur* to where that route swings round from the left. Move up slightly right then back left to climb a short, smooth leaning wall (good gear in the horizontal breaks). Bold climbing directly above (passing just to the left of a large detached flake/block) on good holds gains vague cracks in the wall/tower feature directly above. Continue up the cracks, moving up left just below the top. Easy ground gains the top of the hill.



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GUIDEBOOK SYMBOLS

Aspect: Cardinal points for main direction the cliff faces (as well as all directions 'A').



Approach: As described from the access parking places. On foot downhill, across level terrain or uphill. Additional approach symbols for steeply uphill (scrambling), abseil approach, use of bicycles or small boat/kayak.









Sea cliff exposure: Tidal (cliff exposed to waves and the base of routes may flood at high tide). Semi-tidal (parts of the cliff may be exposed from time to time). Non-tidal (dry sea cliff routes above high water mark).







Bird restrictions: Nesting raptors or rare birds. Nesting seabirds.





Wire brush: Route may require prior cleaning on abseil (any stars assume the route is clean).



Stars: Give an assessment of the quality of the route.

★ One star – a recommended route on the crag. ★★ Two stars – a great route for the area.

★★★ Three stars – an outstanding route.





Deep Water Soloing:

- **So** Safe at most tides or crux not too high.
- **S1** Care required or moderately high crux.
- **S2** More care required or crux higher up.
- **S3** Serious water too shallow or too far away!



THE AUTHOR

A native Scot, Gary Latter has climbed extensively throughout Scotland for over three decades, pioneering hundreds of new including major new routes and early repeats in all the major climbing areas throughout the country. During the dozen or so years researching and compiling these guides, he has documented, amassing an extensive collection of photographs

His favourite places in Scotland are the islands and the north west – anywhere with the possibility of finding new unclimbed rock, secluded beaches, and hopefully some decent weather and nae midges! Amongst these, Mingulay, Pabbay and the small tidal island of Erraid, off Mull, are some of the most

