

# Scottish Borders Climbing Supplement



By Michael Haywood  
&  
Davey Battle

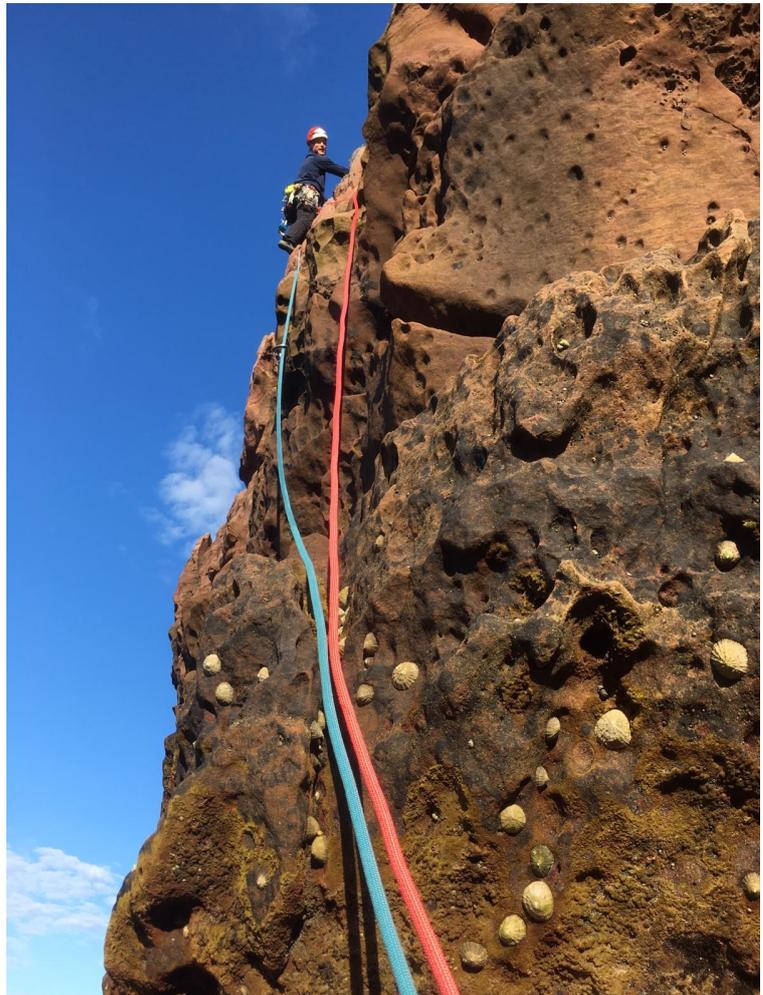
# Introduction

The purpose of this mini guide is to raise the profile of a few small Border crags that might have previously been underused or overlooked. A comprehensive guide to all the climbing in the Borders can be found in the SMC lowland outcrops guide. The best of this can be found along the Berwickshire coastline with the sea stack of the Souter and the nearby finns of greywacke being particularly recommended.

## *Photographs*

*Front cover: Davey Battle on 'Left Time Groove' Severe 4b on Cloon Craig, Ruberslaw (photo: M. Haywood).*

*This page: Michael Haywood starting up 'The Straight up Smuggler' Severe, Hilton Buttress (photo: D. Battle).*



# Contents

**Maps.....Pages 4 & 5**

**Ruberslaw, Cloon Craig..... Page 6**

**Craighouse ..... Page 10**

**Smailholm crag..... Page 14**

**Hilton Buttress..... Page 18**

## Crag access:

All venues in this guide can be accessed using legislation set out in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. Please exercise your rights responsibly.

## Disclaimer:

The authors recognise that climbing and walking are activities with a danger of personal injury or death. Participants in these activities should be aware of and accept these risks.

The informaton in this guide is correct to the best of the authors' knowledge but the authors may not be held responsible for any injury, death, loss of earnings or any other loss of any kind arising from the use or misuse of information in this guide.

## Copyright:

This guidebook, created in 2021 is licenced for distribution and modification under the Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike Creative Commons Licence. Anyone wishing to make use of any part of this guidebook outwith this licence must have written permission from the authors.

Copyright for excerpts from Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps remains with Ordnance Survey.

# Scotland map



Scottish Borders

# Scottish Borders map



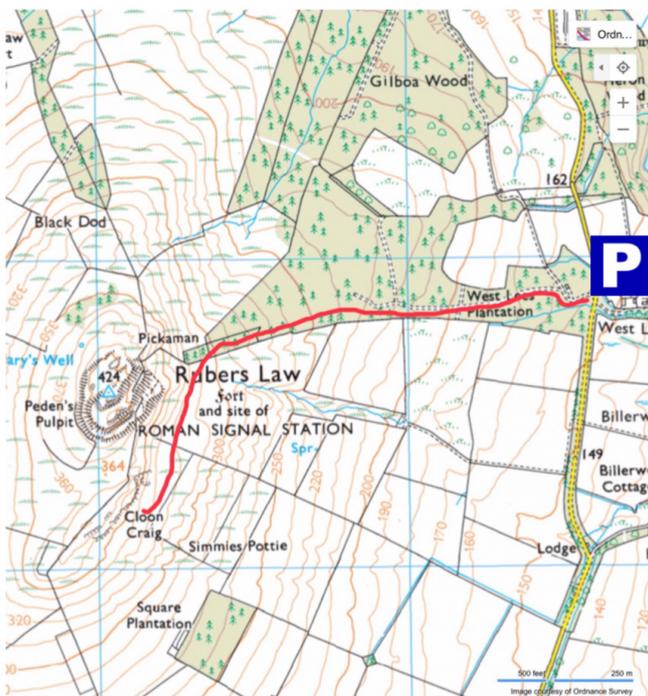
# Ruberslaw, Cloon Craig



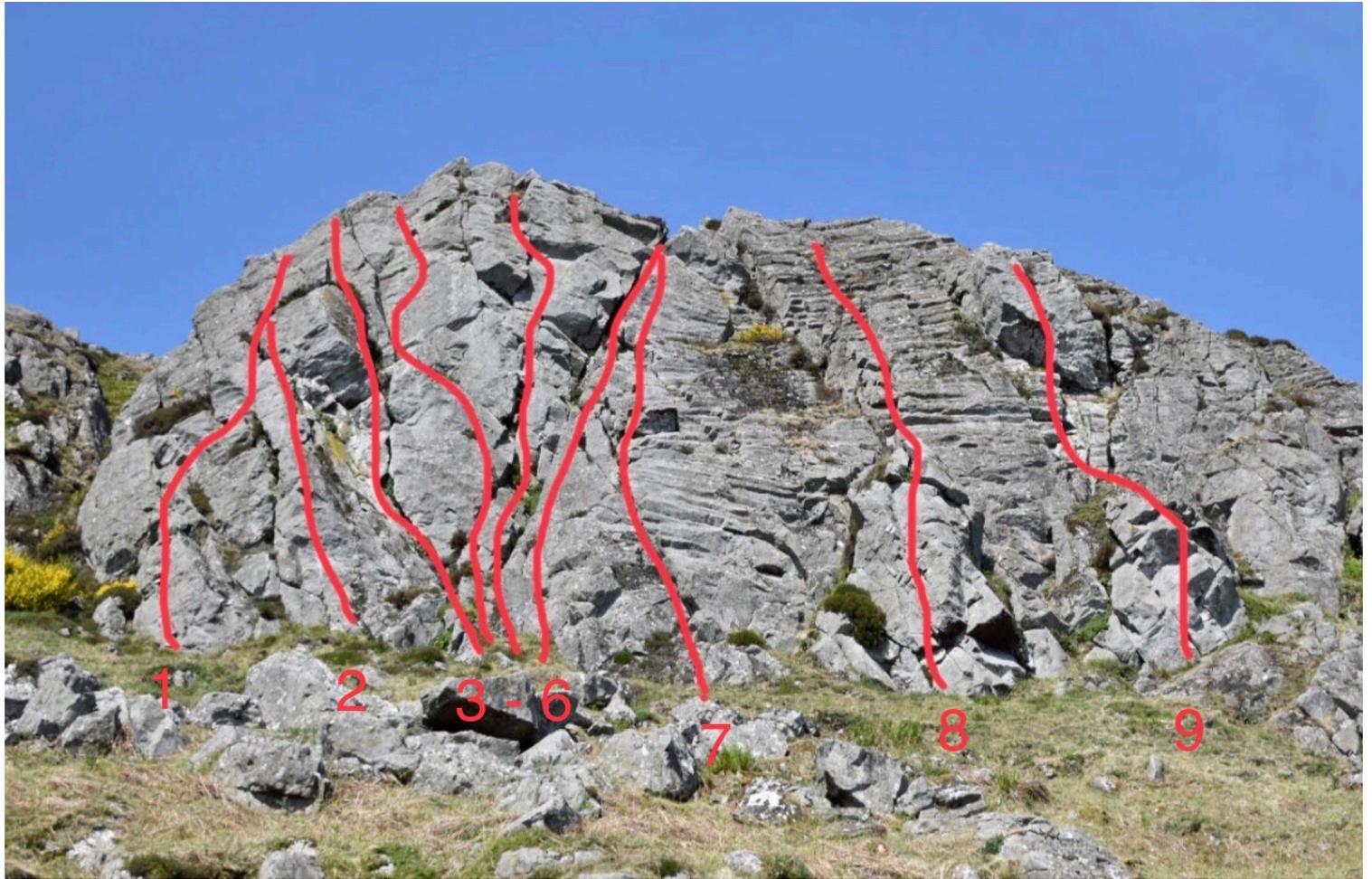
*Michael Haywood on 'High Step Arete' Severe, 4a (photo: D. Battle)*

Height: 15-20 metres  
Aspect: South East Facing  
Rock Type: Dolerite (Micro Gabbro)

Situation and character: The climbs at Cloon Craig deserve to be more popular. The setting is lovely. The rock is generally sound and well protected dolerite, with sturdy steel stakes at the top for belays. Add to this that you are climbing on a hill steeped in Borders history, from being a bronze age hill fort, a Roman signal station to a covenanter's hideaway and it's a not to be missed Borders venue! Being mainly in the lower grades, many of the routes have a nice flow to them. Doing them all in a single visit would not be unduly arduous and would give a satisfying outing. The downside is that the crag can often be covered in a layer of furry lichen, so would benefit from more traffic. Some of the routes can also feel rather escapable but there is a lot of good scrambling around so personal variation is to be encouraged. There are a few shorter routes to be found just north of the summit triangulation pillar which can also add to an outing. Ruberslaw has been climbed on for many years. Graham Little is thought to have made the first attempt to document and grade the routes in 2017.



Approach: Park at the end of the foresty track opposite West Lees, taking care not to obstruct the entrance. Follow the track uphill until signposted left towards 'Ruberslaw'. Follow the faint path through this section of woodland and then head southwards across a couple of fields until the crag comes into view.



**1. Rusty Peg Route    15m    Difficult**

Start on at the left end of the crag and follow a series of cracks trending rightwards.

**2. A Point in Time    15m    Severe 4a \***

The second arete. Climb this staying just left of the crest before joining route 1 towards the top.

**3. Ruby Tuesday    20m    Very Difficult**

Start in the heathery groove and head leftwards. Climb blocky terrain, passing to the right of the overhang and follow the same crack line to the top.

**4. Once upon a Time    20m    HS    4b**

Start up the central heathery groove and climb the right edge of the 'shield' to a ledge shared with route 3. Make a bold move rightwards past a thin crack to good finishing holds.

### **5. Playing for More Time    20m    HVS 5a \***

A good route in its upper section. Start up the heathery groove rightwards, before climbing blocky terrain to a ledge. Continue straight up from the ledge, staying right of the overhang and stepping back left above it to finish.

### **6. Time's Arrow    15m    Very Difficult**

This route sticks to the left wall of the arete and is quite bold for the grade.

### **7. High Step Arete    20m    Severe 4a \***

A satisfying route. Start at the lowest point in the centre of the crag and climb a diagonal left slanting crack until joining the arete. Follow the crest to the top.

### **8. Left Time Groove    20m    Severe 4b \***

Start on the left side of the prominent tower and climb steeply up cracks until standing on the top of this. Continue across the 'bridge' beyond and follow stepped terrain to the top. A start from 2 meters further right following the alternative crack line and joining the original route at the top of the pinnacle is also recommended and a similar grade.

### **9. Hardness Nine    13m    HVS 5a \***

Start beneath overhangs toward the right end of crag. Boulder over these to the heathery terrace and continue up stepped terrain to beneath the crack splitting the overhang above. Pull hard into the crack and then finish more easily above.

*Ronnie Stewart looking cool, calm and collected on 'Left Time Groove', Severe 4b in the summer of 1969, proving the enduring appeal of Ruberslaw climbing! (photo: John Peacock)*



# Craighouse Crag



Aspect: South facing  
Height: 10 metres  
Rock type: Dolerite

Situation and character: A great wee crag. The routes aren't particularly long, but the venue makes up for it by being 5 minutes walk from the car and boasting unrivalled views over the Tweed valley to the Cheviots. The crag is in two sections separated by about 20 meters of broken ground. The routes at the right side of the crag can suffer from some seepage after heavy rain. The crag at Craighouse is thought to have been climbed on for many years. This is believed to be the first attempt to grade and document the routes.

Approach: The best approach is to park off the road on the wide verge just inside the junction up to Craighouse quarry. Continue on foot up this road past the farm on your right. Just before the quarry entrance head right across a couple of fields to the crag.





**1. Whin at all costs 13m HS 4b \***

A good route following the rising traverse line at the left side of the crag. Keep your hands in the crack and follow it passing a gorse bush to finish up a thin crack in the right wall.

**2. Eildon View 10m Difficult**

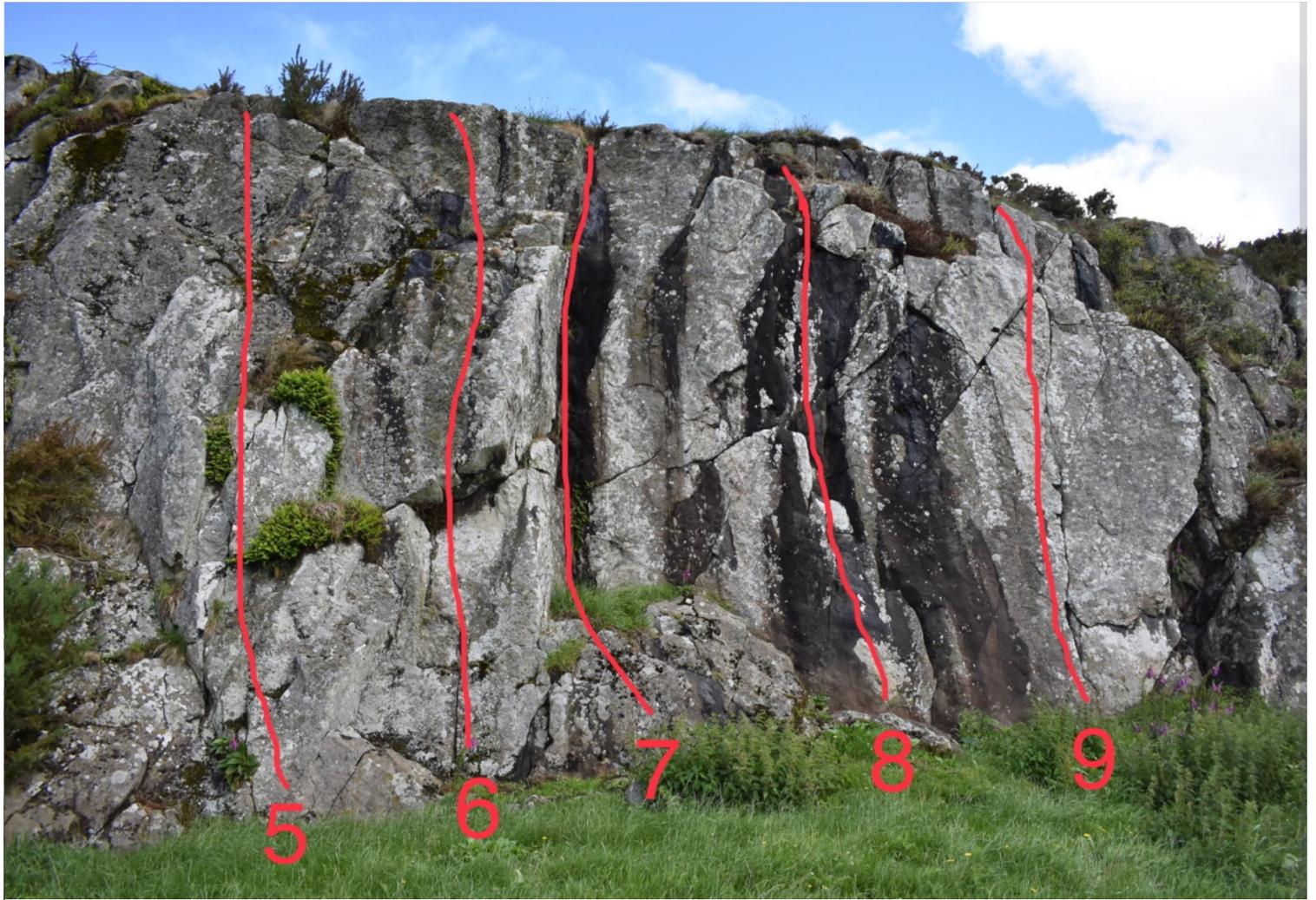
A tricky start leads more easily up the left crack line.

**3. Craighouse 10m Mod \***

The central crack line.

**4. Traverse to Smailholm 10m Very Difficult**

The right hand crack line, accessed by traversing in above the fence.



**5. Heugh Ferny-Whittingstall 12m Very difficult**

Climb up past ferns and mossy ledges to finish on the left of the gorse bush.

**6. Greenhouse 12m HS 4b**

Tackle the overhang as direct as possible - there are good holds about 1 meter over the roof. Finish with a mantle move on the right of the gorse bush.

**7. Black House 10m VS 4c**

The dark often wet corner.

**8. Housing Crisis 10m VS 4c \***

The central corner finishing steeply.

**9. Final Heugh 9m VS 5a\*\***

Good climbing up the well protected crack - the best line on the crag.

# Smailholm Crag



Aspect: South East Facing  
Height: 10 metres  
Rock type: Dolerite

#### Situation and Character:

A few short routes in an iconic Borders location. The best and tallest crags are directly under the tower and these are the routes mentioned in this guide. The sturdy cast iron fence at the top of the routes is ideal for belays although climbers may have to be subtle about this if visiting during opening hours of the tower itself. There are scrambling opportunities nearby, including towards the summit triangular pillar. The routes here were first documented by Alex McLaren who created some lovely hand drawn topos in 1959.

#### Approach:

Park in the National Trust carpark for the Tower and walk to the crag. This takes about 2 minutes.





**1. Route 1 5m Difficult.**

Climb the up the thin crack, finishing just right of the masonry.

**2. The Chimney 8m V. diff**

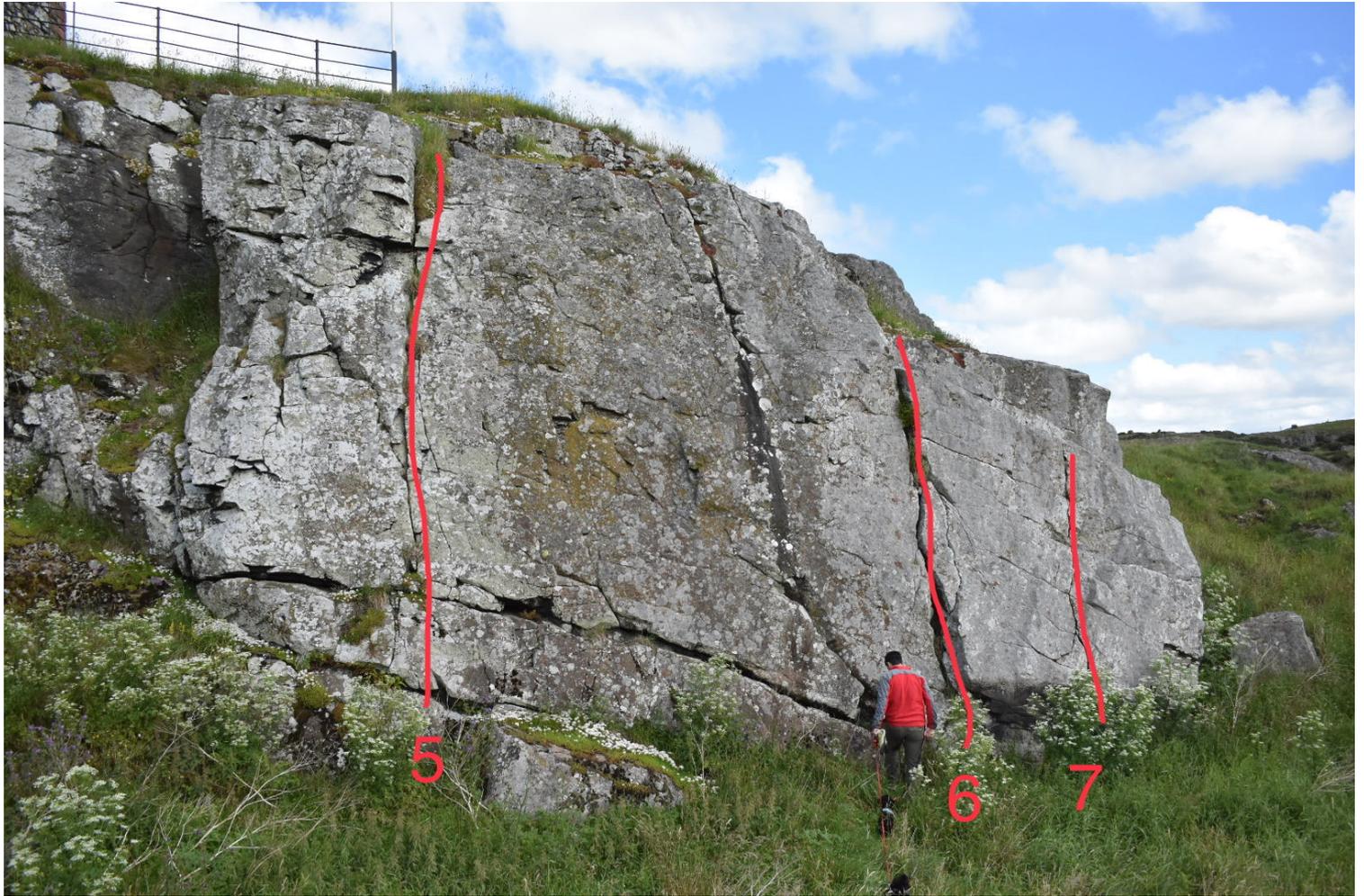
Climb the awkward offwidth between the two overhangs.

**3. Overhang corner 8m V. diff**

Start beneath the central overhang and use edges to climb up and round the right side of the bulge. Once above the overhang step back left onto good holds and finish straight up in a fine position.

**4. The Jug 8m V. diff**

Gain the mossy ledge at 4 meters and then head boldly to the top from there.



**5. Green Crack    8m    VS 4c**

Climb the crack on the left side of the slab finishing over the bulge or to its right side.

**6. The Crack    6m    V.diff**

The second crack on the right side of the slab has some good moves.

**7. The Bulge    4m    Diff**

The initial crack, finishing with a mantel shelf.

# Hilton Buttress



*Michael Haywood on the first ascent of 'Smugglers Wall'. Severe 4a.  
(Photo: G. Smyth)*

Aspect: North / North East Facing  
Height: 45 metres  
Rock type: Sandstone  
Tidal

**Situation and Character:** This is an impressive crag in a splendid situation. Although close to both the main A1 road and the East coast rail line, this section of coast feels quite adventurous and you are unlikely to see other climbers on your visit. The atmosphere is enhanced by the tidal nature of the crag and also the nearby "Smuggler's Bothy" which was built by the famous smuggler John Robertson in around 1760. The downside is the rock quality. Whilst the lower section of the crag can be reasonably sound, the sandstone deteriorates further up and extreme care is needed with copious loose rock in the upper section.

**History:** To the best knowledge of the authors Hilton Buttress had not been climbed on until a series of visits in 2019 by M. Haywood, G. Smyth and D. Battle put up the routes detailed in this guide.



**Approach:** Leave the A1 at the signpost for Lambertton and park on a short stretch of tar just north of this junction. Head down the track and over the railway bridge to join the coastal path and follow this northwards for just over 1km. Follow grassy slopes down to Smuggler's Bothy then scramble down rocks at low tide to approach the buttress from the east.



Black Market Sector: The area with the best rock. This is the shorter left hand wall when facing the main buttress. Routes are described from left to right, seaward to landward.

**1. Pick Pocket**      **6m**      **Severe 4a**    *F.A. M.Haywood & D. Battle June, 2019*

Climb the wall left of black hole on pockets, pinches and breaks.

**2. Black Hole**      **6m**      **Severe 4a.**    *F.A. M.Haywood & D. Battle, June 2019*

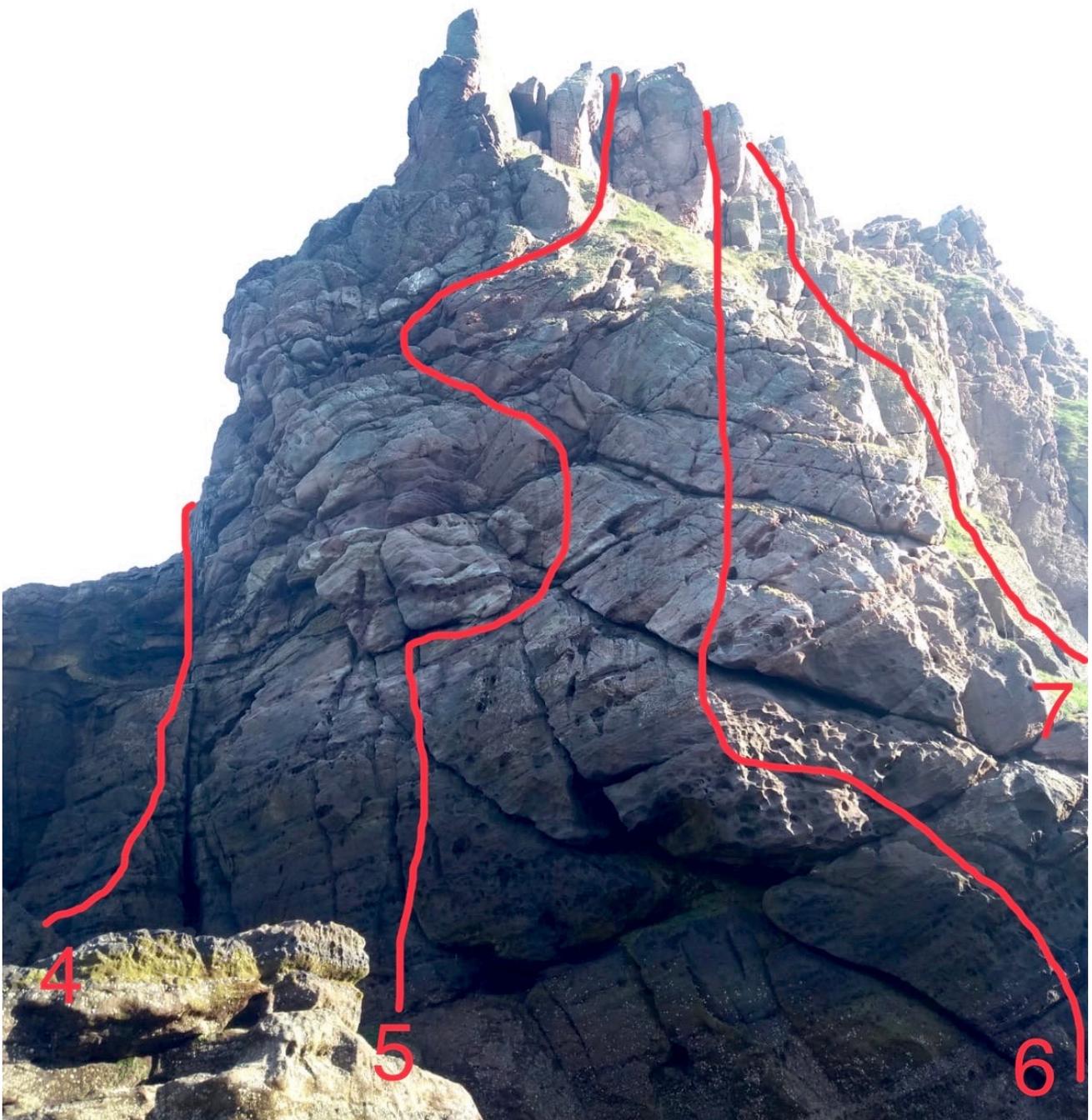
The cave and flaked cracks. Climb over the cave, mainly using the right wall to the obvious collection of flakes and finish on good holds.

**3. Black Magic**      **8m**      **HS 4b \***    *F.A. M. Haywood & D. Battle, June 2019*

A good route. Follow the thin dog legged crack through breaks before moving left to top out on good holds.

**4. Double Bluff**      **15m**      **Very Difficult**    *F.A. M. Haywood & D. Battle, June 2019*

Start on the large boulder at the left end of the main buttress. Climb easily on juggy pockets to a large ledge. Climb out of the corner and onto a large platform. Move to the back and climb awkwardly over the bulge



**5. Smugglers' Wall**      **43m**      **Severe 4a**      *F.A. M.Haywood & G.Smyth, May 2019*

A good route taking a meandering line up the main face.

1. 35m 4a. Start at a deep crack in the center of the buttress. Climb the crack to the bulge. Traverse right under the bulge past a good undercling before continuing up rightwards for 4 meters. Head back left across a small exposed ledge into a niche of dark rock. Go up diagonally rightwards from the niche until it is possible to escape onto the grassy ledge. Nut belay in the second corner crack at the right end of the ledge
2. 8m 4a. Climb the corner crack, going left at the top. Take care with extremely loose blocks and ensure the belayer is positioned away from any stone fall.

**6. The Straight up Smuggler 43m Severe F.A. M. Haywood & D. Battle, June 2019**

1. 30m. Start close to the right corner of the buttress and climb diagonally leftwards onto a pocketed wall. Go directly up from here past two or three diagonal breaks onto the grassy ledge. Belay in the third corner.

2. 8m. Delicately climb the corner above on very poor rock.

**7. The Desperate Smuggler 45m Scottish VS F.A. M. Haywood & D. Battle June 2019**

Impressive looking natural line marred by loose rock - not recommend.

1. 20m. Start up a deep crack 5m right of the corner of the buttress. Continue up the shallow crack above trending slightly right (or up the wall to the left of the crack) to reach a grass terrace and belay on a ledge at the the base of next crack system.

2. 25m. Traverse 2m along the ledge then climb steeply into the crack (crux). Carefully work your way to the top on appalling rock.



*Photographs:*

*Left: Michael Haywood enjoying the initial section of the Straight up Smuggler, severe 4a (photo: D. Battle).*

*Below: David Battle in the doorway of John Robertson's Smuggler's bothy (photo: M. Haywood).*



If you would like to contact the authors of this mini guide please email:

Michael.d.haywood@gmail.com

