

Slipstones



Slipstones is a fine crag in the little known valley of Colsterdale at the eastern edge of the Yorkshire Dales. The crag consists of a series of small buttresses which range in height from ten to thirty feet. The larger buttresses have some excellent short routes, while the smaller buttresses have some of the finest bouldering problems in Yorkshire. The rock tends to be near-vertical, with technical climbing on small edges. The scenery is stunning, with fine views over Colsterdale. The crag faces southwest and catches the sun all day; ideal for sunny winter afternoons or summer evenings.

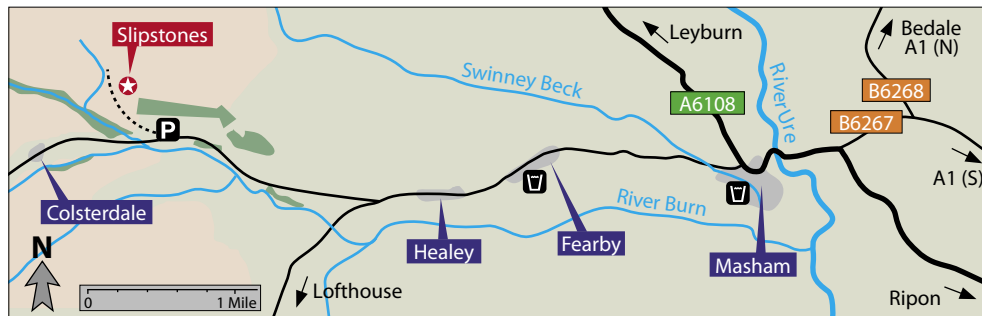
Slipstones

- Character: high moorland edge
- Altitude: 300 m
- Aspect: southwest facing
- Approach: 15 minutes walk
- Problems: 60 problems, V0- to V13

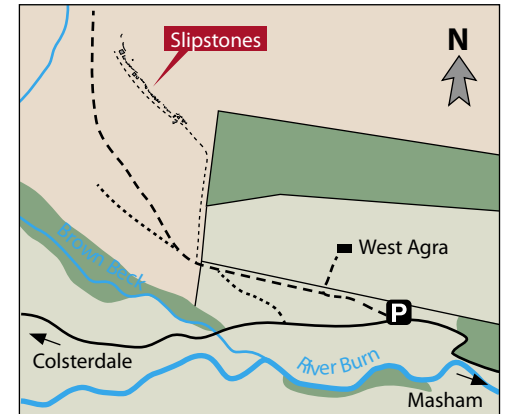
Access & Directions

The crag is near the small town of Masham, famous for the Theakston & Black Sheep breweries. From the town take the road signposted Fearby and Healey. Not far past the picturesque village of Healey, turn right onto a single track road leading to Colsterdale. After a mile and a half a hairpin bend is reached; park in a small layby just beyond this. There is room for seven or eight cars here. Take care not to block the track - if there is no space here, park further back along the road, where there is space before the hairpin bend.

From the parking area follow the obvious track up the hill. Where the track turns right to a house continue straight on along a grassy track to reach a gate. Once through the gate turn immediately right, following a small path beside the wall. The crag soon comes into view. Continue up the path until another faint path leads across the moor, arriving at the crag at the Sulky Little Boys boulder. About fifteen minutes walk.



Note that the YMC guide recommends a different approach, crossing the moor near the far (left) end of the crag, but the landowners prefer climbers to use the approach described here. In any case, this approach is easier, and leads straight to the best bouldering area.



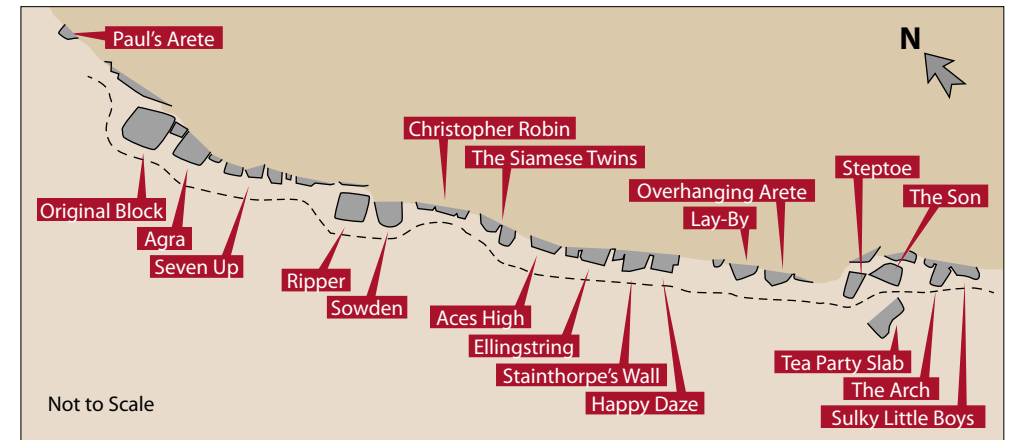
Overview

The crag runs along the edge of Colsterdale moor in a series of separate buttresses. Towards the left-hand end the crag is around thirty feet high and is best suited to climbers with ropes, particularly as the landings tend to be poor. There are some fine routes here, but with a few notable exceptions the bouldering isn't particularly special.

From the centre of the crag (around the Siamese Twins) rightwards, the buttresses decrease in height and the landings improve. A few of the buttresses are a little too high or too broken, but many of them have superb bouldering with some truly classic problems.

This guide concentrates on the bouldering, with only a few of the longer routes being mentioned. For more information on these & other routes, consult either the YMC "Yorkshire Gritstone" guide or the Smartboys "North East England" guide.

The crag is described from left to right.



Highlights

There are so many fine problems and micro-routes it's difficult to pick a top ten, but the following are particularly good:

In the lower grades (up to V2) - Right-Hand Twin, Rock On, Tiptoe, Slanting Flake.

Medium grades (V3 to V6) - Timeless Divide, Leaning Wall, Strictly Personal.

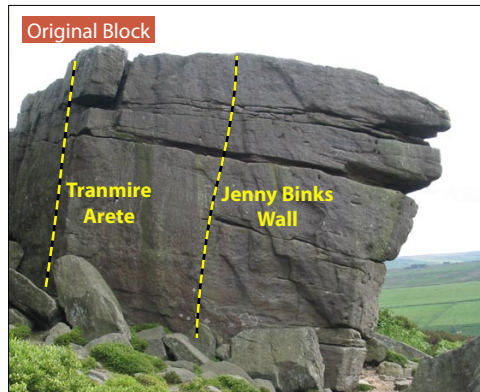
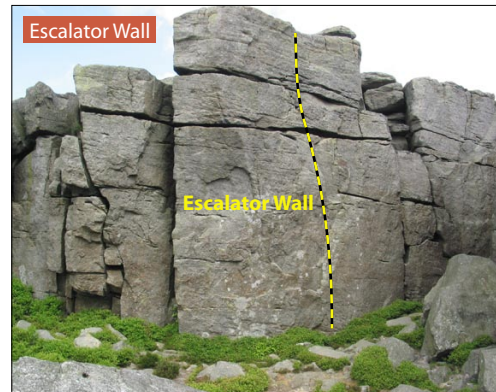
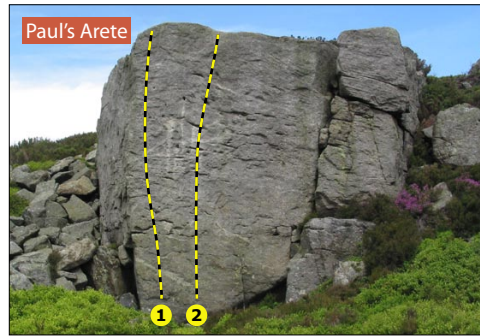
Higher grades (V7 and up) - Lay-By Arete, Stipule, Sulky Little Boys.

In addition to these boulder problems, many of the routes are superb. Tranmire Arete, Original Route, Zoom, Sowden & Ripper stand out, but the quality is universally high.

Paul's Arete

The narrow buttress at the extreme left end of the crag has an obvious arete with a clean wall to its right.

- ★ 1 **V2 Paul's Arete**
The right side of the big arete. The left side of the arete is rather harder, with a poorer landing.
- ★ 2 **V2 Steve's Wall**
The wall to the right via a long reach.

**Escalator Wall & Original Block**

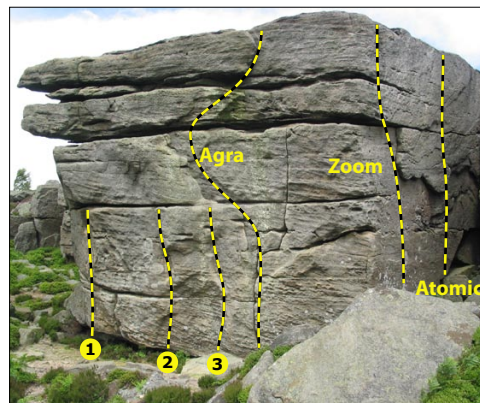
Original Block is the huge detached block towards the left-hand end of the main edge - the biggest boulder at Slipstones. Behind and left of this block is the slightly smaller Escalator Wall.

The centre of the left wall is **Escalator Wall** (HVS 5a). The arete just to its left is also good too: **Space Truckin**, (E1).

The slabby wall in the gully at the back of Original Block has some easier routes, including the excellent **Tranmire Arete** (Severe). The wall to the right has several unlikely-looking VS routes with dodgy landings. **Jenny Binks** climbs slots in the centre of the wall.

The overhanging front face has an obvious ramp and crack - **Original Route** (HVS 5a). Finally, the face right again has another excellent route up the flake on the arete - **Zoom** (HVS 5b), and a technical E3, **Atomic**, up the centre.

This isn't the best area for bouldering. The front face of Original Block has a few problems, and the traverse of this face is worthwhile.

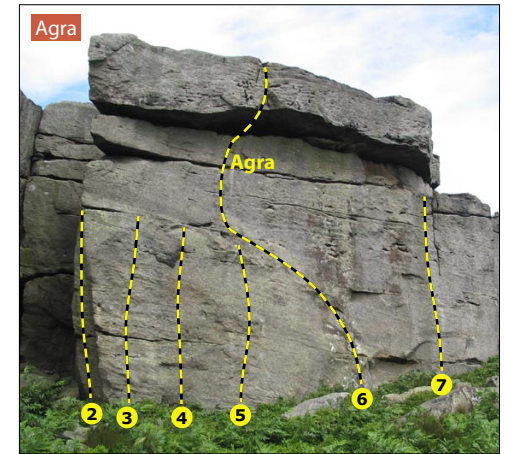


- 1 **V0-** Climb the crack in the arete to the high break.
- 2 **V1** The shallow groove and pockets from a sit start. Or start at the arete and traverse left to finish up this problem - strenuous.
- 3 **V0-** The shallow groove to the right.

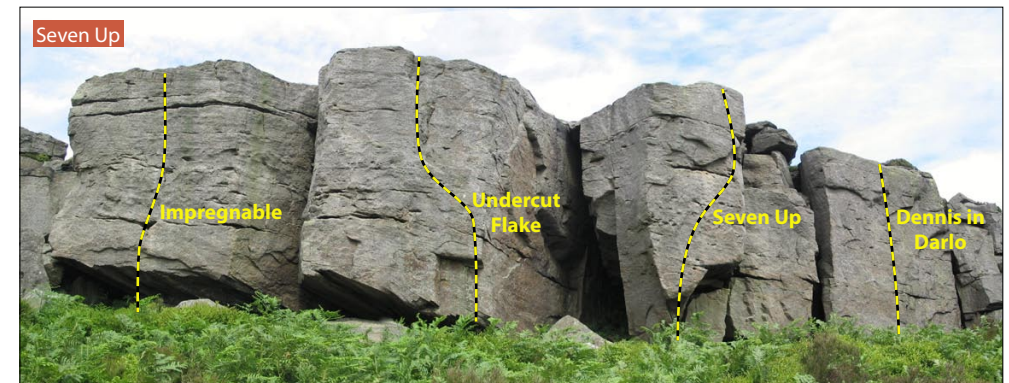
Agra Buttress

Across a small bay from Original Block is Agra Buttress. The bay and front face have some good routes, and a few good boulder problems. The obvious left-slanting ramp line in the centre leading up to a roof at the top is **Agra** (HVS).

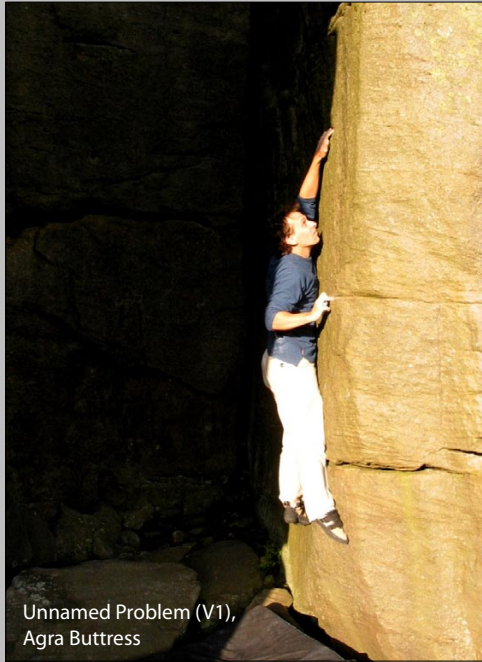
- 1 **V1** Start just left of the left arete of the buttress (the right wall of the bay) and climb to the break via a deep pocket on the left.
- ★ 2 **V3 Timeless Divide**
The twin aretes, climbed direct, are excellent.
 - 3 **V5** The right side of the left arete of the buttress, with a long reach for the break from poor pockets.
 - 4 **V7 Agrete**
A long reach gains the thin black flake right of the arete.
- ★ 5 **V2 Agra Direct**
The direct start to the route Agra. Nice thin slab climbing.
 - ★ 6 **V1 Agra**
A leftwards rising traverse along the line of weakness to reach the jugs above the direct start.



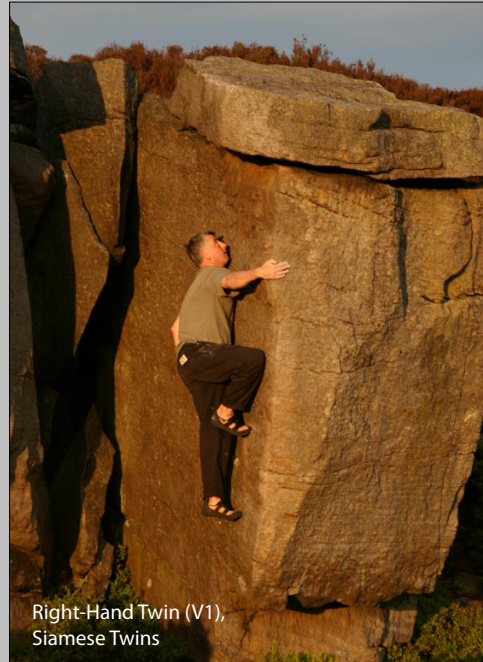
- 7 **V6 Wisecrack**
The thin hanging crack beside the right arete of the buttress, climbed direct, or much more easily from the right.

**Seven Up**

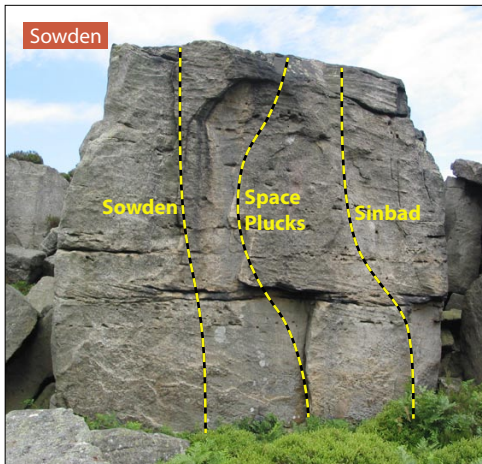
A series of four short, narrow buttresses, separated by deep chimneys. The low-level traverse starts here, but otherwise the bouldering potential is limited, with less-than-ideal landings. The undercut left-most buttress has a prominent hole near the bottom - **Impregnable** (E2) climbs the centre of the wall past the whole. The left-slanting ramp on the next buttress right is the pleasant **Undercut Flake** (HS). The line of least resistance on the narrow, undercut buttress to the right is **Seven Up** (E2 5c). The right-most buttress, a short vertical wall, is taken by **Dennis in Darlo** (E1 5c).



Unnamed Problem (V1),
Agra Buttress

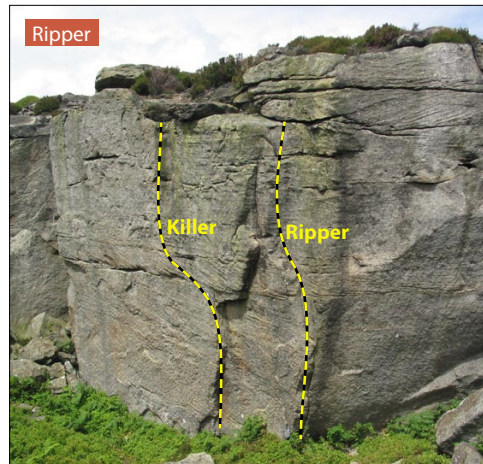


Right-Hand Twin (V1),
Siamese Twins



Sowden

This large buttress is actually a free standing boulder standing in front of the main edge. On the front face, the slim groove on the left is the classic **Sowden** (HVS 5a). The blank wall to the right is taken by two routes, **Space Plucks** and **Sinbad** (both E3). The slabby wall left of the front face has some technical slab problems with poor landings; the back wall is smaller and of less interest.



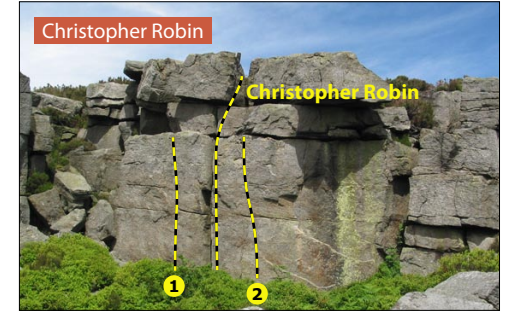
Ripper

This gently overhanging buttress is too high for the average boulderer. The right arete is the classic **Ripper** (E1 5c), and the short corner and pockets just to the left is **Killer** (E3). The traverse across the break is worthwhile.

Christopher Robin

The series of short buttresses in the bay between Ripper and the Siamese blocks has a few short routes and problems. The route **Christopher Robin** (Severe) takes the wide crack splitting a smooth wall.

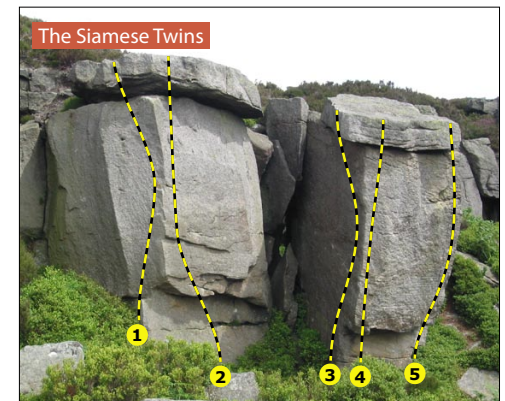
- 1 **V1 Cummins' Route**
The wall left of the wide crack.
- 2 **V1 Right Wall**
The wall just right of the crack.



The Siamese Twins

These two buttresses in the middle of the crag, separated by a wide gully, are home to some very fine problems.

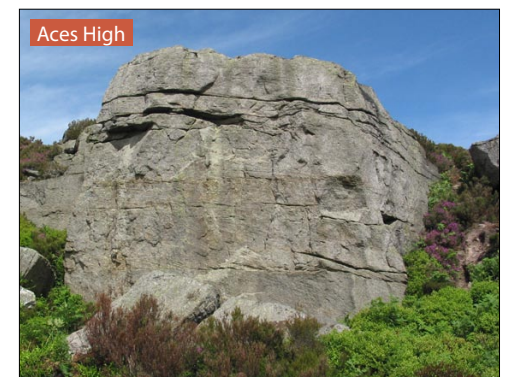
- 1 **V3 Friday the Thirteenth**
The left side of the blunt arete of the left-hand block.
- ★ 2 **V4 Sunday the Twentieth**
The arete climbed on the right past a shallow pocket high up. Start direct from the ground at this grade, or more easily from the left. The top feels scary. Excellent.
- ★ 3 **V2 Right-Hand Twin**
The arete right of the gully, climbed on the slabby left side. A superb problem.
- ★ 4 **V6 Leaning Wall**
The arete on the overhanging side is also superb, but much harder. The sit-start is also worthwhile.



- ★ 5 **V4 Strictly Personal**
The next arete, climbed on its left side, with the help of two pockets on the right. A top quality problem.

Aces High

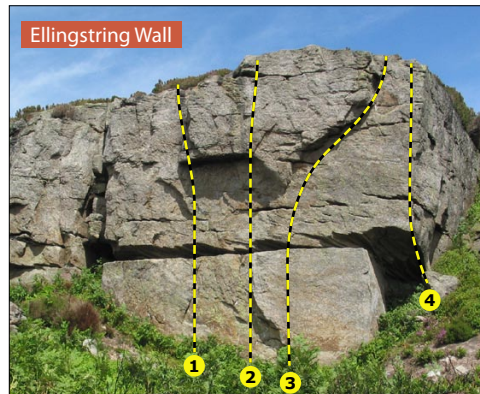
The next buttress has some short, pleasant, easy routes. The best route is a **Aces High** (VS), which climbs the centre of the wall moving right at the top.



Ellingstring Wall

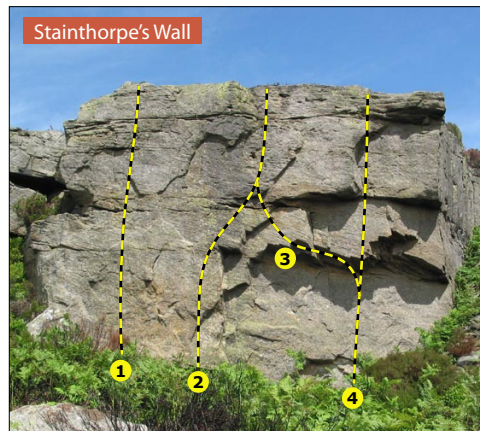
This vertical wall has some nice short routes, but no bouldering.

- ★ 1 **VS Yaud Wall**
The left-facing hanging groove is very good.
- 2 **VS Ellingstring**
The centre of the wall.
- ★ 3 **VS Diagonal**
Another excellent micro route, following the slanting overlap.
- 4 **VS Gymnast**
The undercut right arete of the buttress.

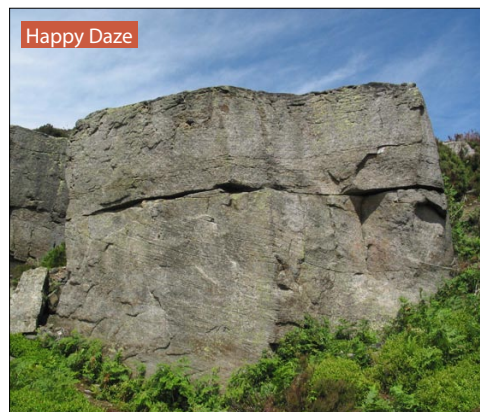
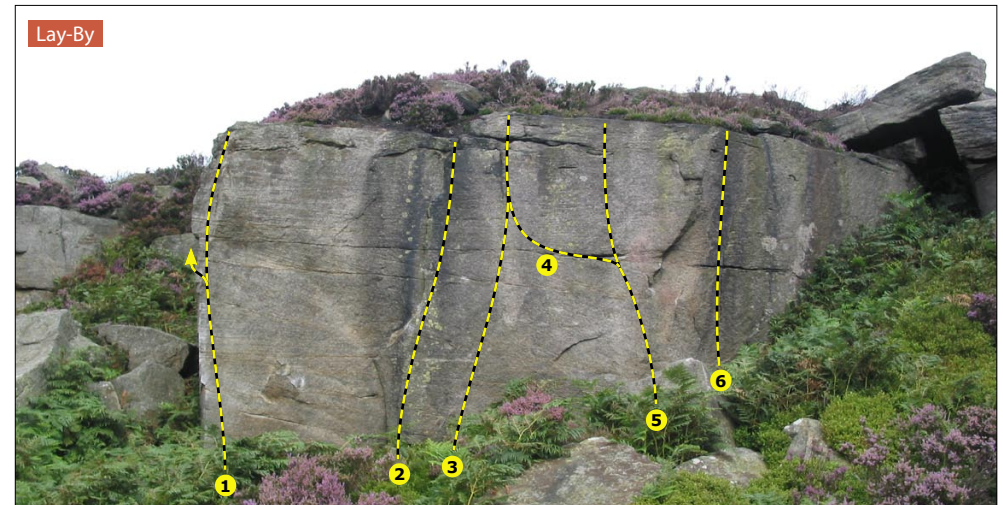
**Stainthorpe's Wall**

Stainthorpe's Wall is easily identified by the stepped roofs on its lower right-hand side. A bit high for bouldering perhaps, but the climbing is good.

- 1 **V0- Fearby**
The left side of the wall.
- ★ 2 **V0 Stainthorpe's Wall**
The centre of the wall, gained from the left.
- ★ 3 **V1 Stainthorpe's Wall Right**
Gain the centre of the wall from the beneath the overhangs on the right. Less direct but better.
- 4 **V3 Fascinationby**
The hanging groove at the right side of the wall. High!

**Happy Daze**

The next buttress is an off-vertical wall with several routes in the lower grades up to Hard Severe. The climbing is pleasant enough, but it's not really bouldering.

**Lay-By****Lay-By**

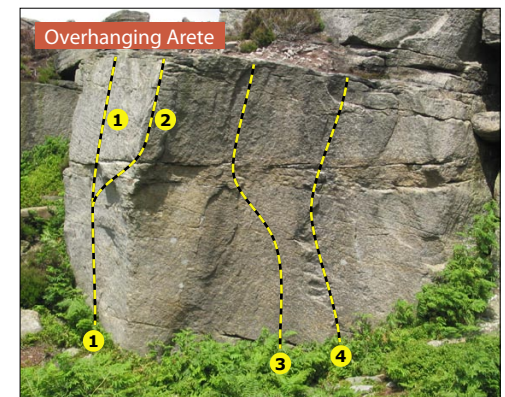
One of the many highlights at Slipstones, this smooth vertical wall has some superb bouldering.

- ★ 1 **V8 Lay-By Arete**
The left arete of the wall on its right side, with a desperate start. Finish on the left side, or direct on the right at V9.
- ★ 2 **V3 Lay-By**
The flake line in the centre of the wall is a classic.
- 3 **V5 Little Baldy**
Climb the wall to the right without the flake, finishing up Rock On Left-Hand. Crimpy.
- ★ 4 **V4 Rock On Left-Hand**
From the wide horizontal slot right of the flake crack, reach up and left to a pocket in the shallow hanging groove. Superb.
- ★ 5 **V2 Rock On**
Another excellent problem up the right side of the wall, with a rockover move onto the slot.
- 6 **V1 Rock Off**
The right side of the arete, above a sloping landing.

Overhanging Arete

The next boulder has a gently overhanging front face.

- 1 **V0 Twenty Something**
The wall left of the left arete of the buttress.
- ★ 2 **V0 Overhanging Arete**
The arete by the line of least resistance - start at a big hold on the left to reach layways on the arete. Nice climbing.
- ★ 3 **V3**
The centre of the wall with a fine dyno to finish. Or try the wall slightly left again - harder.
- ★ 4 **V0- Flakey Wall**
The line of big flakes.





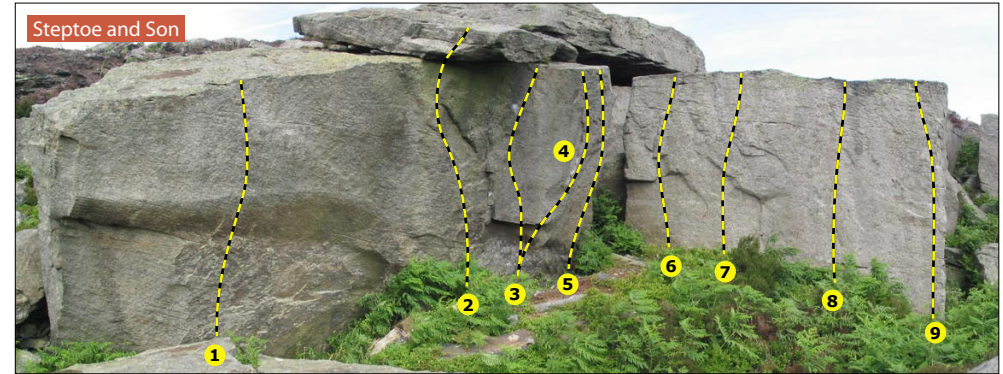
Steptoe (V3)



Rock-On (V2), Lay-By Buttress



Sulky Little Boys (V7)



Steptoe and Son

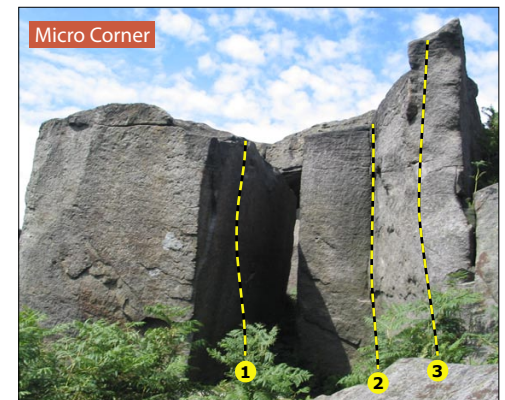
Steptoe and The Son are the two walls of an open corner. Both have fine climbing. The left-hand wall is The Son - the problems here tend to be quite powerful. The right-hand wall, Steptoe, is higher and has some technical, crimpy wall problems.

- ★ 1 **V13 Super Furry Animal**
A massive dyno at the left side of the wall, starting from a tiny layaway.
- 2 **V6 Sidewinder**
The centre of the wall beneath the overhang, starting at some pathetic sloping crimps.
- ★ 3 **V11 Exocet**
From a sit-start at a big undercut go straight up the wall via a pathetic sloper, or move left to finish up Sidewinder (V9).
- ★ 4 **V9 Stipule**
An eliminate, starting from the undercut and climbing the wall to the right without the arete, via a big dyno.
- ★ 5 **V1 Curving Crack Arete**
The right arete from a sit-start. Nice.
- 6 **V2 Bert Wells**
Climb the wall just to the right of the wide crack. At this grade a bounce start is allowed, but the arete is out.
- 7 **V2 Centre Left**
The centre-left of the wall. Reachy and crimpy.
- ★ 8 **V3 Steptoe**
The wall slightly left of the arete, starting at two layaways. Reachy and crimpy, and unnervingly high.
- ★ 9 **V1 Tiptoe**
The fine arete, climbed on the left, with a tricky reach at the start.
V2 The right side of the Tiptoe arete is also good, but a touch harder.

Micro Corner

Behind Steptoe is a small, dark recess.

- ★ 1 **V3 Small Dyno**
On the short wall opposite Micro Corner, jump from two good pockets to an obvious edge. A harder (static) variation uses a big layaway near the arete on the left.
- ★ 2 **V6 Micro Corner**
The small corner in the dark recess. Perplexing.
- 3 **V0-** The easy sharp arete right of the corner.



Micro Corner

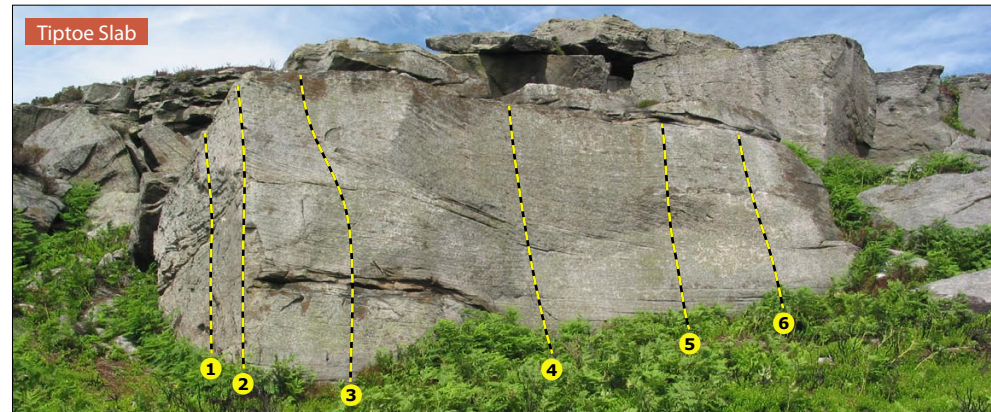
The Halifax Bomber Memorial

About fifty yards below Tiptoe Slab is a memorial to the crew of a Halifax bomber which crashed on the hillside here on the night of 23rd November 1943. All eight crew members died.

The aircraft was based in Selby in North Yorkshire. On the fatal night it set off on a navigation exercise with six other aircraft, despite warnings of gale force winds. The crash is thought to have been due to structural failure caused by the severe weather conditions. Two of the other aircraft on the same exercise also crashed, one of them just a few miles away on Great Whenside.



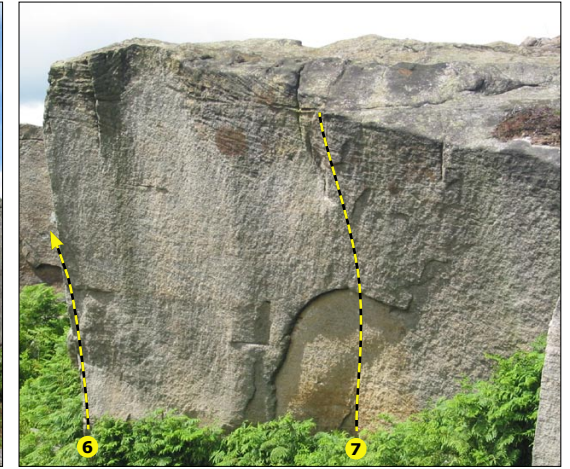
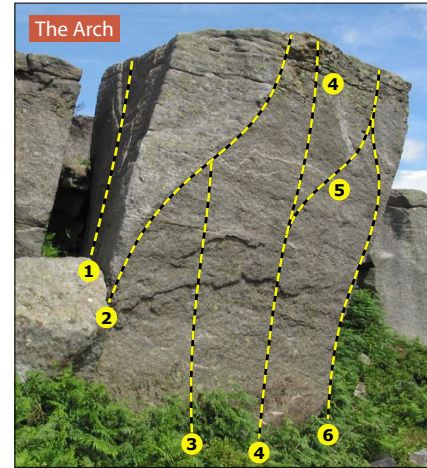
More information can be found on the Lancashire Aircraft Investigation Team website at <http://web.ukonline.co.uk/lait/site/Halifax JB926.htm>.



Tea Party Slab

Below Steptoe & The Son this fine smooth slab is climbable at any point at around V0-V2. The problems tend to be fingery and reachy.

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| <p>1 V0 Welcome Wall
The centre of the short steep wall left of the slab.</p> <p>2 V0 Stereo Android
The arete between the wall and slab, climbed on the steep side.</p> <p>★ 3 V0- Tommy's Dilemma
The narrow buttress on the left side of the slab. An excellent, easy problem.</p> | <p>★ 4 V0 Tea Party Slab
The centre of the wide slab, starting just right of the long half height ledge.</p> <p>★ 5 V1 A Question of Balance
The slab immediately to the right, starting at the left edge of the narrow ledge.</p> <p>★ 6 V1 Right Edge
The right-most line of clean holds, starting at the right edge of a narrow ledge.</p> |
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The Arch

This impressive boulder has two blank-looking walls either side of an arete. There are some fine, hard, crimpy problems here.

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| <p>1 V1 Left of the blank walls and at a higher level is this innocuous slab, with a less-than-ideal landing.</p> <p>★ 2 V5 Davies Ramp
The left arete and ramp on the narrow front wall. Scary, as the landing isn't perfect. Start from the boulder on the left.</p> <p>★ 3 V8 Simple Sally
The direct start to Davies Ramp, starting on the left side of the narrow wall at a good small crimp.</p> | <p>★ 4 V9 Holeshot
The centre of the narrow face, moving right at the top to finish on the arete.</p> <p>★ 5 V10 Anniemutt
Start as for Holeshot, but continue direct to the top, avoiding Holeshot's rightwards-escape.</p> <p>★ 6 V13 Cypher
The incredible arete.</p> <p>★ 7 V? Project
The obvious arch in the blank wall to the right of Cypher. Futuristic!</p> |
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Sulky Little Boys

The last (or first!) little buttress has a couple of top quality problems, including one of Slipstones' many fine arete problems.

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| <p>1 V5 Supple Wall
The slabby wall left of the left of the arete via an extremely sloping hold. Height-dependent.</p> <p>★ 2 V7 Sulky Little Boys
The central arete is a classic. Starting on the right side, make a difficult rockover to reach a pocket and an easier finish on the slabby side. Staying on the right side of the arete all the way is a superb V8.</p> <p>3 V4 Start up the slanting flake, then make a long reach left to finish up a thinner flake.</p> | <p>★ 4 V0- Slanting Flake ★
The obvious slanting flake in the centre of the wall. Excellent.</p> |
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