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Gillercombe and Sourmilk
Bouldering

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LAKESBLOC - By Greg Chapman

Introduction & Access

Located in the ever-popular Borrowdale valley, the boulders around Sourmilk Ghyll and Gillercombe crag offer some fantastic bouldering, in generally scenic, sunny and user friendly situations. The climbing is on the finest mountain rhyolite, which varies from a slick slate-like substance on some blocks, to a rough Pavay Ark-like rock on others. The grades are mostly spread between the easy to mid-grades, with a limited number of classics offered at the harder end of the spectrum.

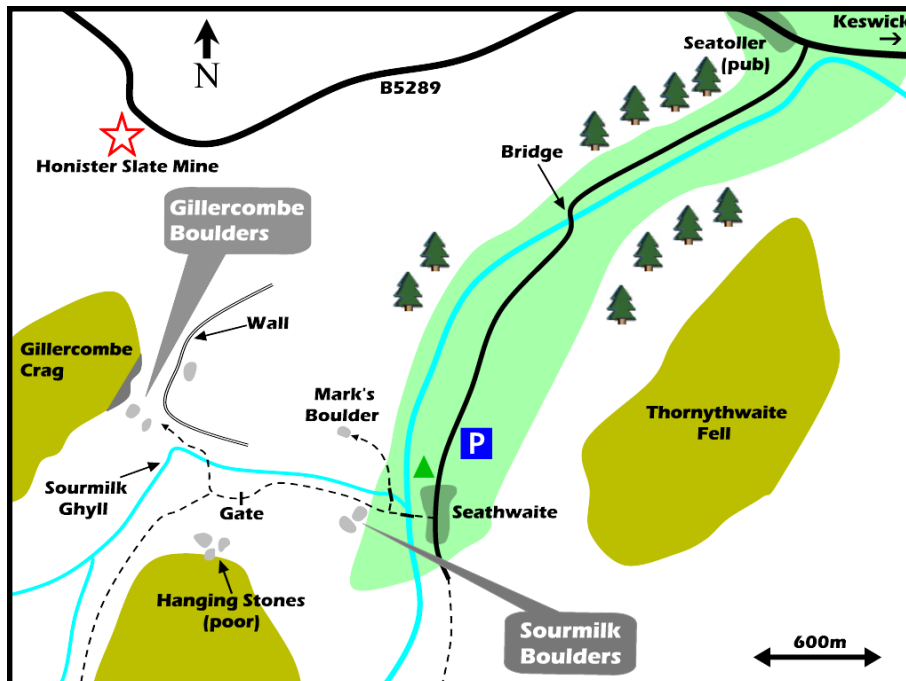
There are no access issues and approaching the areas is generally pretty straightforward. To take in all the sectors the best method of approach is that from the small hamlet of Seathwaite (some 15km south of Keswick), where plenty of parking can be found by the side of the road.

At weekends you may have to walk a little further, as the parking nearest Seathwaite is taken up quickly by keen early-bird walkers, however this shouldn't cause you too much hassle

Image right: The Lakeland classic, *The Arête*, 7b+/V8. This is situated on block 8 at the Gillercombe Circuit.



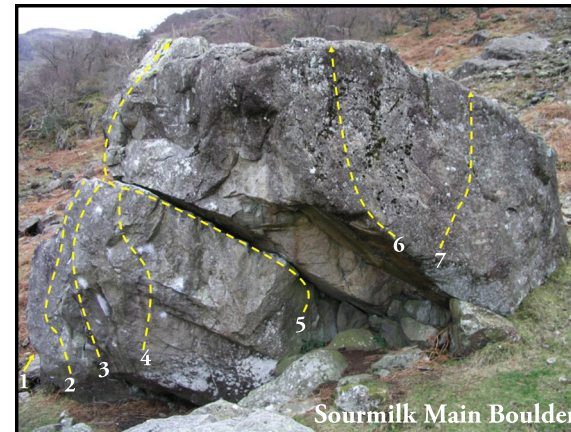
Overview Map



Sourmilk Boulders

The first boulders encountered are those situated at the foot of Sourmilk Ghyll, a mere ten minute, easy walk from the parking. These blocks - along with Mark's Boulder - host a limited but quality offering of around 15 problems. Their easy accessibility and the number of harder lines make them a great port-of-call for an evening or half-days sport. It's worth noting that if you plan on visiting the main sector, after visiting these boulders, it's a real pain in the arse reaching the Gillercombe Boulders directly from Mark's Boulder, especially through the summer bracken (there is no path and it's very steep). The easiest method is to back-track to the base of the ghyll, and approach from here.

The best of the first blocks encountered (the 'Main Boulder') is to the rear of the obvious 'Low Boulder' - a big roof to left of the path just after scaling a dry stone wall via an unusual stile.



On the low block in front of problems 1 and 2 is a good warm-up lip traverse, this is a SDS and goes at 6a+/V3.

1. (5/V1) The short end prowl to the ledge and up.
2. (4+/V0) SDS Start left of the corner and up the left wall.
3. *Thermodynamics* (7a+/V7) SDS The arête climbed on the right started from a low edge. The crack is out. *

4. *Tau Zero* (7c/V9) Use the big side-pull and sloper or crimp to pull on with difficulty, now make a hard move up to a wide pinch and continue to a satisfying slap to gain the ledge. The arête is out. *
5. (4+/V0) SDS Traverse the break, climbing up once at the big ledge.
6. (?) The mucky arête may have been climbed.
7. (6a+/V3) Climb the scoop on cleaned holds starting on the left. A good problem.

There may be a decent line to the rear of the Main Boulder however the landing is often damp.

The next line is on the boulder in front of the Main Boulder'.

8. *The Lip Traverse* (7b/V8) From a low start right of a block follow the lip leftward on cleaned edges to the hanging arête and surmount it direct. Will improve with traffic.



Sourmilk Boulders: Mark's Boulder

This boulder is situated a few hundred metres up the hillside to the north of the boulders at the base of the ghyll. To reach it from the parking, cross the bridge as you would for the other boulders and turn immediately right, to cross another smaller bridge. Now follow the path north, veering gradually upward. On the hillside above, you will see numerous felled trees to the left of a dry stone wall - the remnants of a pine coppice still featured on OS map Explorer OL4. Where the felled trees begin to peter out a vaguely triangular block can be seen, make a beeline for this.

Despite only offering a handful of lines, this block is worth a look - the harder lines are excellent!



1. (4/V0) Vague groove/gully. Highball.

2. (5/V1) Slabby wall on hidden holds.

3. (4/V0) The arête climbed from standing. The sitter is only slightly harder.

4. *Deforestation* (7a+/V7) SDS Starting just right of the arête move into the centre of the face, via some stretched moves, to a central in-cut crimp, before finishing direct. The arête is out.

5. *The Cloud Chamber* (7b+/V8) SDS From matched on a poor horizontal pinch make a tricky move up to a line of edges. Now make a long move to parallel crimps and continue direct, finishing up the cool highball ridge.*



6. *Rodox 78* (7a+/V7) SDS Start at p4 and traverse the face to the right side block. Now gain and follow the lip of the diagonally left trending ramp back up and left to the top of *The Cloud Chamber*.

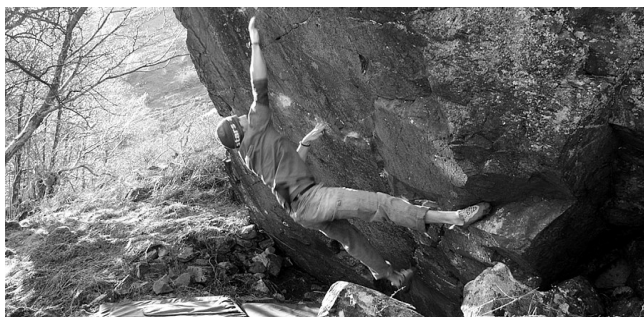
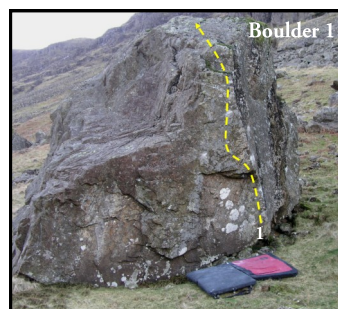
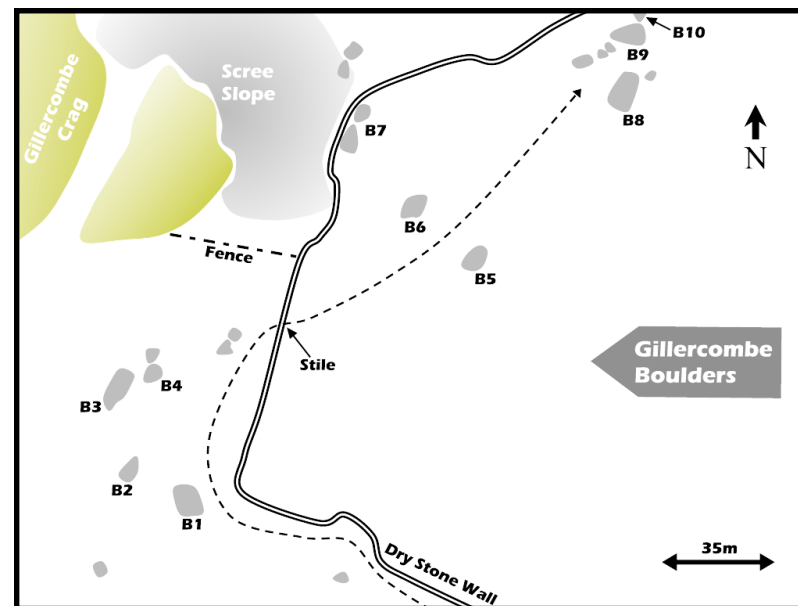


Image left:
The Cloud Chamber,
7b+/V8.

Gillercombe Boulders

The main bouldering arena, from most peoples point of view, is the user friendly circuit situated below the large west facing crag on the grassy plateau at the top of Sourmilk Ghyll. This is easily reached via the well-trodden path flanking the ghyll. At the summit of the falls go through a gate and trend up and right (NW). Where the track levels out the boulders can be seen directly ahead.



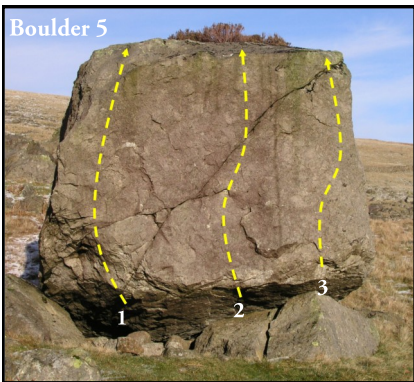
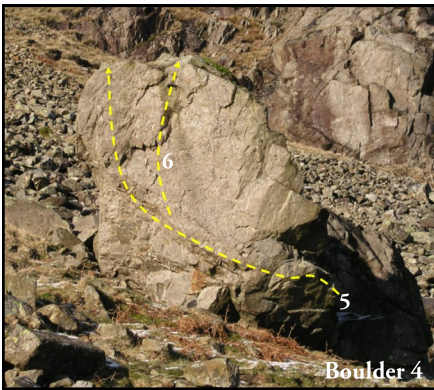
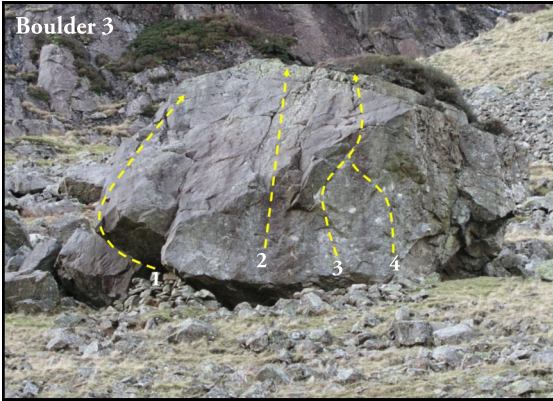
1. *N&G Special* (7b/V8) SDS The high standout arête is excellent if somewhat dirty. From a hold down and right pull on and swing left before tackling the arête direct. Shorties may have to crouch start. The stand up is a worthwhile 6c+/V5.*

2. *Gillercombing* (5/V1) The smart clean wall climbed centrally.

3. *Awesome Arête* (6c/V4) A classic which features little in the way of standard arête technique. Climbed fully on the right is much harder, at around 7a/V6. Highball.*

4. *Neil's Wall* (7a/V6) The seemingly featureless wall taken slightly right of centre. Highball!

Gillercombe Boulders



1. (6a/V2) SDS Left arête. Tough start.
2. (6a+/V3) SDS The centre of the face.
3. (4+/V0) SDS Arête climbed on the left.

1. *Cave Direct* (7b/V8) SDS Climb out of the cave via the hanging prow. The blocks are out. Contrived.

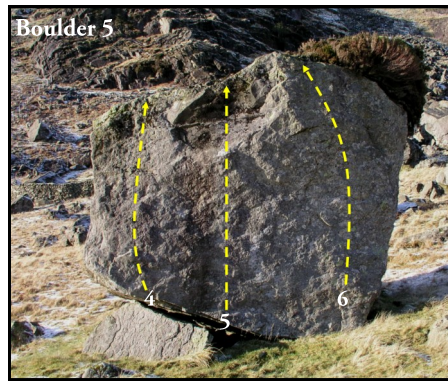
2. (5/V1) The big wall can be sent via numerous wandering lines. Highball.

3. *Poor Man's Caution* (7a/V6) SDS From a good hold pull through to the diagonal line of holds and up. Highball. *

4. Project - Sitter past a sharp crimp, linking into P3.

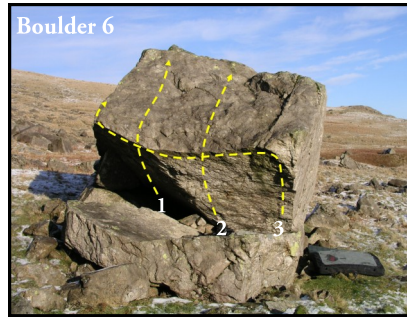
5. *Absolute Zero* (7b/V8) SDS Start on the end of the block and traverse at a low level leftward onto the face and up the wall right of the arête.

6. *Zero Kelvin* (7a/V6) The centre of the wall. Adding a sitter, from down to the right, makes it slightly harder.



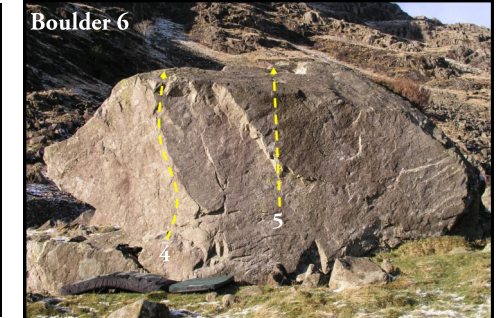
4. (3+/V0) Arête/wall.
5. (4+/V0) The centre of the face. Dirty.
6. (6a+/V3) SDS Right arête climbed on the left.

Gillercombe Boulders



1. (5/V1) SDS Mantle the lip.
2. (6a+/V2) SDS Another lip mantle.
3. (6b/V3) SDS Up the arête/prow and follow the lip to the arête and up.

Boulder 7: This block is located near the dry stone wall to the rear of Boulder 6. It hosts a number of excellent easier lines, between Font2 & 3 (V0), all on its main face.

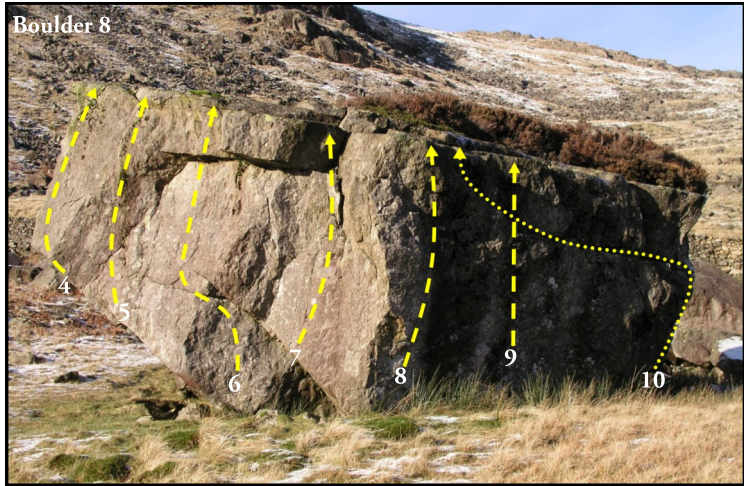


4. *Mike's Problem* (6b/V4) SDS The vague rib, started to the left. *
5. (6a+/V2) A short but perplexing line up the centre of the face.



1. (4/V0) The central slab, off the block, is a decent problem.
2. *The Arête* (7b+/V8) SDS Uber classic of the venue and Lakeland as a whole! Start just right of a detached block and follow the holds along the lip to pinches on the arête and up. ***
3. *The Arête RH* (7b/V8) SDS The arête climbed starting on the right isn't quite as good as the original, but is still a great line. **
- 3a. *The Arête Stand* (6c+/V5) An equally worthwhile proposition is the excellent arête climbed on the left or right from standing. **

Gillercombe Boulders



- 4. *Sunshine Arête* (6c+/V5) Technically just the right side of the classic arête, but hey!
- 5. *The World's Hardest V3* (6b/V3) The undercut wall via a depression is perplexing to say the least! *
- 6. (6c/V4) SDS Climb out of the left side of the niche, up the wall and past a small overlap.
- 7. *The Groove* (3/V0) The scooping groove is nice, but be gentle with the fragile looking block. Can be done from sitting if necessary.
- 8. *Marley* (4+/V0) SDS The enjoyable little arête on the right is a thought provoking little gem.
- 9. *Blastoff* (5/V1) SDS The central wall is a great piece of low grade dynamacism. *
- 10. *The Shelf* (5+/V1) SDS From the end arête follow the shelf up and left trending toward the top of P8. The arête can also be climbed direct at font5.



- 1. (5+/V1) SDS Traverse the lip left to right.
- 2. *The Crack* (6a+/V3) SDS The slanting crack is quality. *
- 3. (5+/V1) SDS Bulging arête.
- 4. *Al's Weird Route* (6b/V3) SDS Start on the left of the end face and sweep right and up.

Boulder 10: This block hosts a good (but abrasive) RtoL lip traverse at 6b/V3.