

# wolphole crag

By Greg Chapman

## Aspect

Situated deep in the heart of the Trough of Bowland on the Lancashire-Yorkshire border, the remote outcrop of Wolphole Crag provides one of the longest approaches of any crag on British gritstone. Thanks to a panorama devoid of almost any sign of man's environmental tampering, this isolated rocky outpost has a timeless outlook which can feel lonely, even in the company of friends.

The first recorded evidence of climbers visiting Wolf Hole is hazy at best. The likes of Paul Pritchard and co. may well have scouted the crag out back in the eighties, although it seems clear that they did not climb any routes. Karl Lunt has also visited the crag between then and the early noughties and is likely the first ascensionist of a couple of the lower graded routes.

It seems probable that the first concerted efforts at the crag were that of Neil Kershaw and Greg Chapman, who, in late 2001 early 2002, climbed the crag's two most eye-catching lines, *Remote Control* and *Global Terrorism*, E7 and E6 respectively, along with a number of other climbs between E4 and VS. More recently, Chapman added a compact circuit of quality boulder problems to the crag, the most notable being the excellent *Freakeasy* (7A+), *Afterlife* (7B+) and *Lone Wolf* (8A).

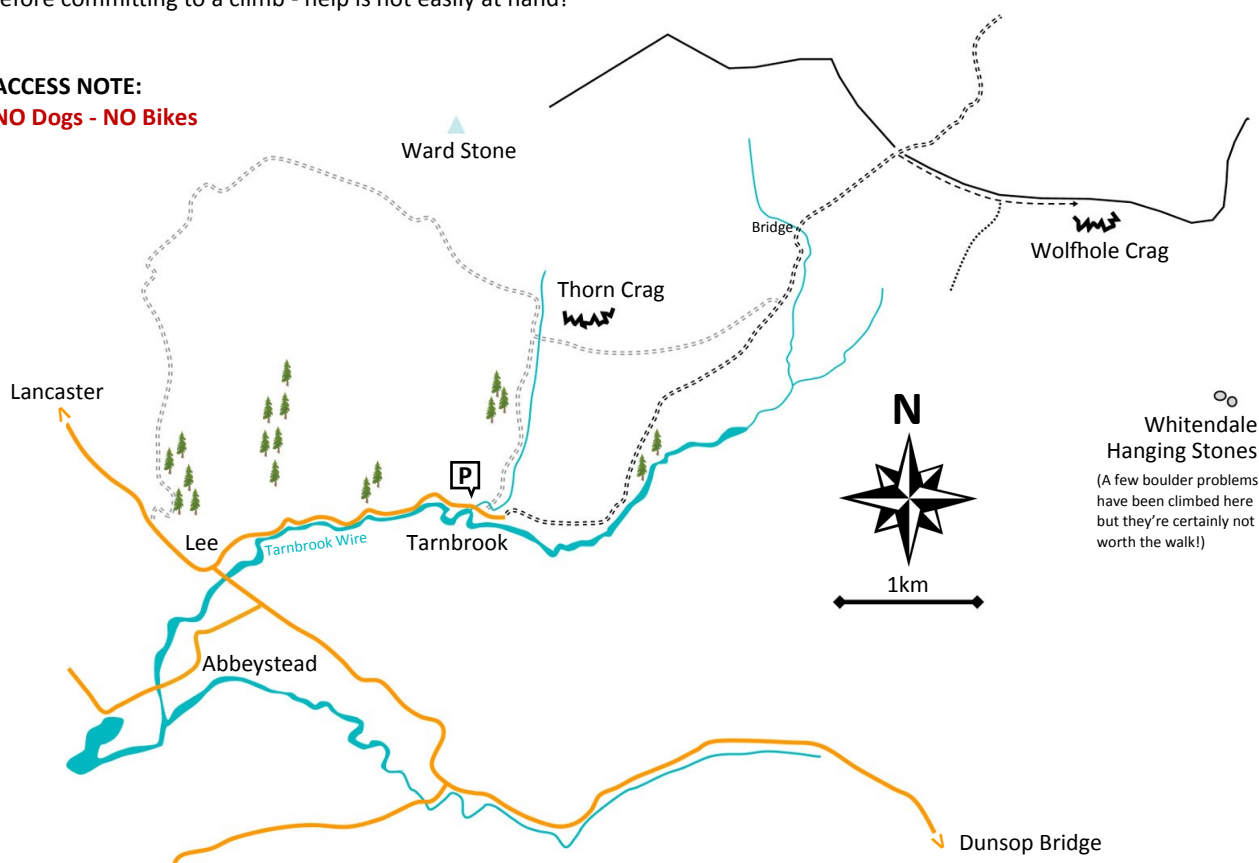
## Approach: NGR SE 634578

From the hamlet of Tarnbrook follow the major bridleway at the eastern end of the hamlet, without deviation, as it gradually winds its way uphill to the head of the valley. After approximately 3km, and shortly after passing (and ignoring) a left turn heading west, the track forks. Continue along the left fork up a short steep section before dropping down to a metal bridge. Staying on the main track, cross the bridge and continue for a further 1km to the apex of the hillside and an open gateway. From here leave the main bridleway, turning right (southeast) and follow the fence which becomes a wall after 1km (on its western side) for another 1km to the crag. Look out for an obvious white trig point and adjacent fence and stile: the main two buttress are immediately beyond this.

Beware: due to the extremely isolated nature of this crag and the sketchy mobile phone reception, please be sure about yourself before committing to a climb - help is not easily at hand!

## ACCESS NOTE:

**NO Dogs - NO Bikes**



The crag is spilt into two distinct sectors: the two house sized buttresses of the Main Crag and Little Wolfhole - a group of blocks on the crag's western most extremity.

### Little Wolfhole

200m before you reach the main crag, Little Wolfhole is just down to your right (at the point when you can first see the trig point in the distance). Only the two best lines are described, however there are a number of other shorter existing lines, as well as a few minor projects.

1. **Boss Drum** (7A/V6) The very blunt arête on the left is excellent if a little sandy. \* *G Chapman*
2. **Freakeasy** (7A+/V7) SDS The eye-catching groove peters out at two thirds height, gaining the top from here is where the difficulties lie. \*\*  
*G Chapman*

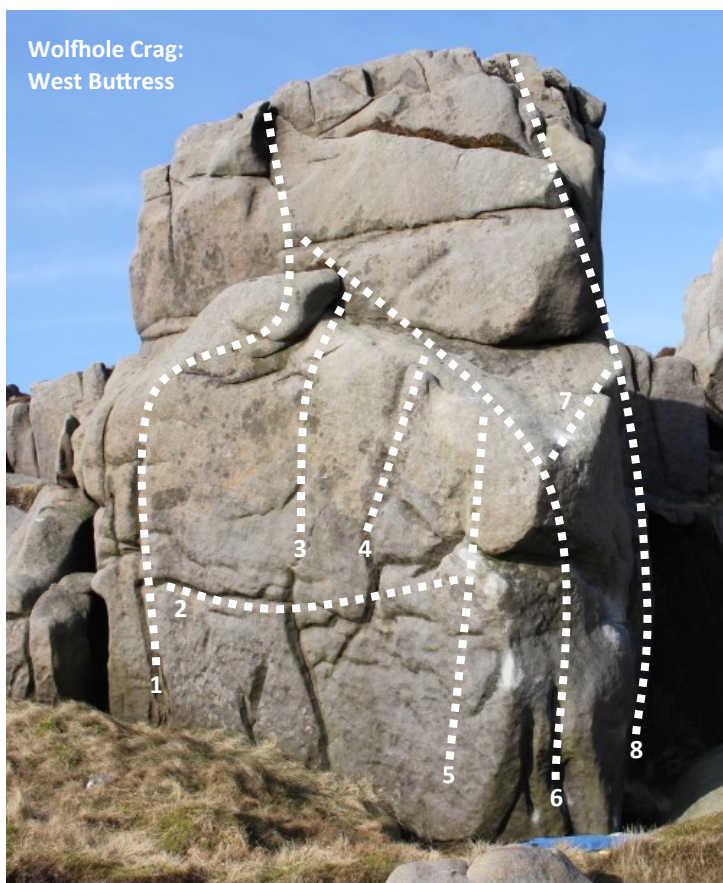
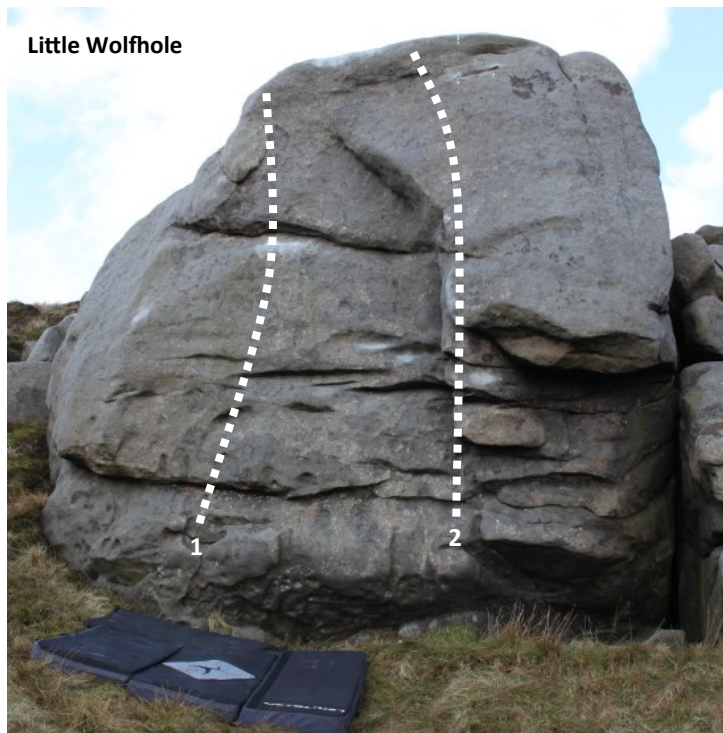
### Wolfhole Crag: West Buttress

The western buttress is all bouldering. Although some lines are rather high most have good landings.

1. **Mind Storm** (7B+/V8) Start up the left side of the wall, using a pinch to gain the lip. Now traverse a line of lip slopers to the centre of the wall and surmount the ledge before finishing direct. \*  
*G Chapman*
2. **Lone Wolf** (8A/V11) SDS From a sloper on the far left, traverse right into *Limbo*. \*\* *G Chapman*
3. **Project** (?) The central wall requires a long reach.
4. **Teen Wolf** (7B/V8) Use head height holds (just right of centre) to pull on and dyno for a jug on the lip, then head up and left to the top. \*  
*G Chapman*
5. **Limbo** (7B+/V8) SDS Sitting to the left of the prow, use a RH pinch and low LH hold to pull on. Make a tricky move for a sloper then up to the lip before moving left and up, as per *Afterlife*. The stand up is 6B+. \* *G Chapman*
6. **Afterlife** (7B+/V8) SDS Climb the prow face-on to a sloper on the lip. Now work left on the sloping ramp to a good hold, then up bearing left again to the top of the block. The stand up is 7A/+. \*\*\*  
*G Chapman*
7. **Afterlife Direct** (7C/V9) SDS As per the original to the lip sloper then bear slightly right to a crack, before continuing direct via an easy but high and slightly gritty finish. \*\*\* *G Chapman*
8. **Fifty Flyers** (4/V0) Up the short wall to the crack system and then direct to a high finish. Sandy  
*N Kershaw*
9. **A Dog Amongst Wolves** (6C+/V5) SDS Essentially a quality sit start to the previous problem: start on a good edge. The large black flake to the right is not in for feet or hands. \* *J Surman*

# WOLF HOLE CRAG

## BOULDERING



# wolfhole crag

## routes

This East buttress is some 60m east of the West buttress and has a 'wolf hole' at the base of the south facing side, presumably how the crag originally gained its name.

Standout routes are the harder ones, all exquisitely technical: 1921 Committee (E4 6b), Global Terrorism (E6 6b/c), and the most out of the way E7 on grit, Remote Control (E7 6c).

Both the East and West Buttresses have peg belays at their summits. All climbs are between 6 to 8 metres high.

### Wolf Hole Crag: East Buttress

1. **Famous Grouse** (V Diff) The vague rambling rib is good but can be sandy. \* *K Lunt*
2. **Flight School** (E3 6b) Climb the line 1m or so right of the rib direct past a poor shallow pocket. \* *C M Fisher*
3. **Global Terrorism** (E6 6b) The direct near central line of the buttress seems almost impossible without chalk to mark the way. A reasonable hold on the slight lip makes the seemingly impossible possible. \*\* *G Chapman*
4. **Remote Control** (E7 6c) The un-protectable arête climbed initially on its right side, before moving to the left near the top is technical, sketchy and still unrepeated! \*\* *N Kershaw*
5. **1921 Committee** (E4 6a) The slight S like crack is thin on gear (originally soloed) but superb. \* *N Kershaw*
6. **Peat People** (VS 5b) A surprisingly tough move gives access to the curving crack and a quality finish. \* *N Kershaw/K Lunt*
7. (?) Start as per *Peat People* but at half height escape rightwards.

### What's in a name?

It is a fact that the Forest of Bowland—"forest" in this context is used in its traditional sense, meaning "a royal hunting ground" - was the last bastion of the wolf within England, with the last recorded sightings being hereabouts around the turn of the 16th century.



Unlike many subspecies isolated from mainland Europe, British wolves were unaffected by island dwarfism, with certain skeletal remains indicating that they may have grown as large as Arctic wolves.

Legend has it that the Last Wolf in England was mercilessly hounded out of Bowland and chased around the perimeter of Morecambe Bay, through Silverdale (how the Wolf House Gallery got its name) to be finally cornered at the limestone spit of Humphrey Head, in south Cumbria, where it met a grizzly end.

