

# Great Bank Bouldering

By Pete Apps

Overlooking Miterdale, Great Bank is generously coated in buttresses of granite. Much of the rock is too slabby, too vegetated or too high for bouldering, but there is a worthwhile circuit of problems spread across the hillside. The area was developed by Pete Whillance in the early 1990s and is documented in the 1996 F&RCC guide to Scafell, Wasdale & Eskdale, although the line between bouldering and soloing was somewhat blurred. I have picked out the best bouldering areas from the early development, using the alphabetical designation of areas from the F&RCC guide, and added several more recently developed sectors. However, given the calibre of the original developer, I have not presumed that any of these are first ascents.

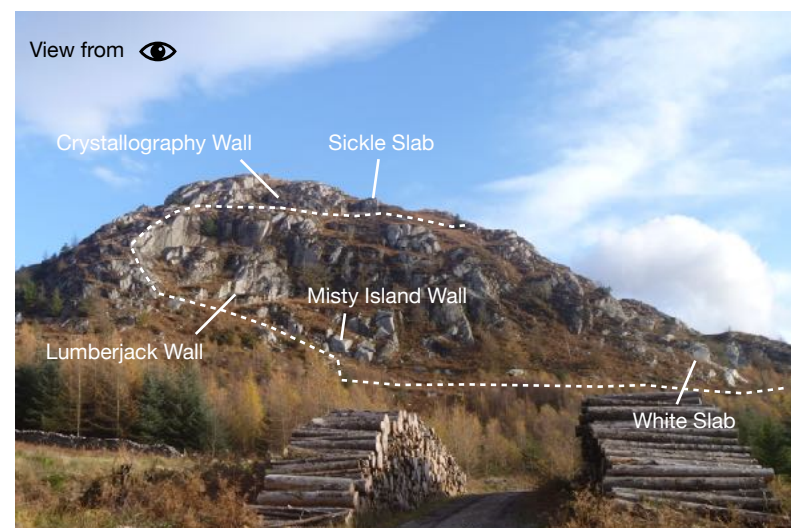
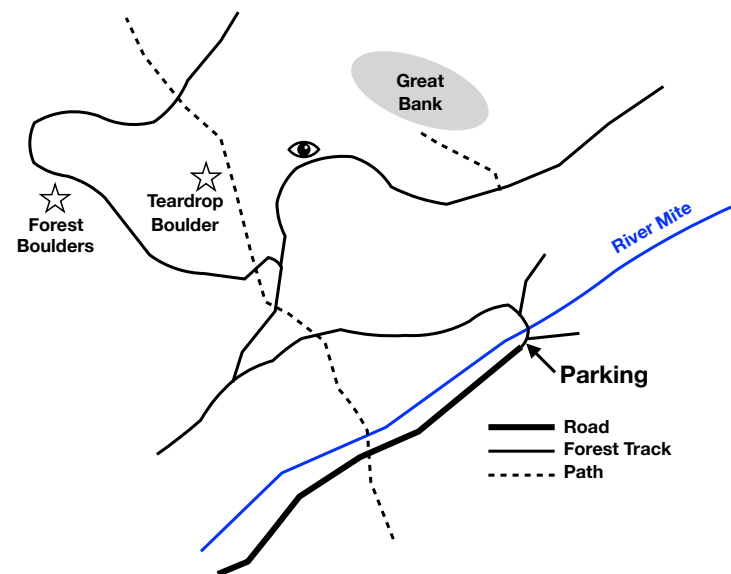
I have given names to the areas and retro-named prominent problems to aid identification. No disrespect to the original developers is intended! The rock is generally clean granite, though the surface can be scrittly through lack of traffic. Cool conditions will help although most of the problems have positive holds so can be climbed year round. In the summer, bracken can make moving between boulders tricky, though this dissipates higher up. A careful check for ticks is also wise after visiting in the summer months.

## Getting There

Great Bank shares the same parking as the Teardrop and Miterdale Forest Boulders and would combine well if your skin can take it. From Eskdale Green take Longrigg Lane past St Bega's School up Miterdale and follow it through a gate to a grassy parking area at the end of the tarmac (OS grid ref: NY 138 016). From the parking, cross the river and follow the track around to the left into the woods. After 500 metres, take the bridleway leading directly uphill on the right and ascend this to the next forest track crossing. Turn right and then in 100 m keep right, through a wooden barrier. Follow the track until it emerges from the trees and Great Bank is visible directly in front (at the eye symbol on the map). On first acquaintance it is worth pausing here to get your bearings as navigation between the sectors can be confusing. Deer fences made a direct approach from this point difficult, but these have recently been removed. Follow the track as it descends then flattens out. As the track enters the deciduous woodland, look for a wall coming down from the left and a faint path just before it. Follow this path along the old fence line at the top of the birch trees.



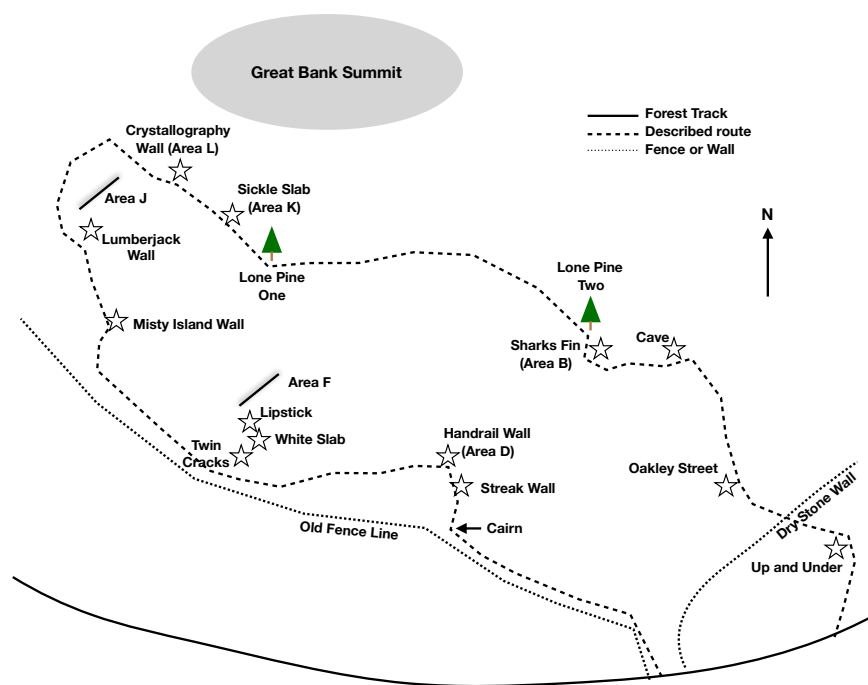
*Reaper* (6B+) on Sickle Slab (photo: Chris Fisher)



## The Boulders

The problems are described in a clockwise circuit around the hillside. Following the circuit in an anticlockwise direction is trickier to navigate. Once you are familiar with the layout it is possible to take various shortcuts but these are not described here. At the time of writing (June 2020), recent logging activity has disrupted the area where the access path leaves the forest track. The lower path through the bracken is cleared. A pair of gardening gloves and some secateurs are a useful addition to the normal bouldering equipment - pull as much bracken as you can from the approach paths!

Follow the cleared path up the slope from the forest track and follow the old fence line leftwards across the hillside to a very small granite wall and a small cairn. At this point, turn directly up the slope, passing between a few pine trees until *Streak Wall* and *Handrail Wall* come into view.



## Streak Wall

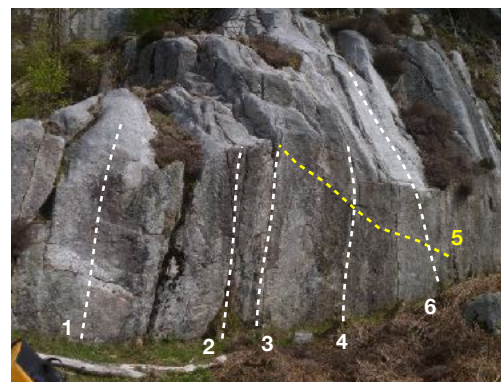
The first rock encountered after breaking up the hillside from the old fence line. Takes some drainage and can take a day or two to dry after rain.



1. **6A+** The left arete is trickier than it looks.
2. **Streak Wall 6B+** The centre of the crimpy wall.

## Handrail Wall (Area D)

Just above Streak Wall is a long low wall with an overhanging prow (*Ten Weeks to Go*, E5 6b) above the far right hand end of it. Drainage is a problem so best after a couple of dry days. Variations and eliminates can be squeezed in.



1. **6B+** SS on the low rail. Straight up to a sloping top. A high right edge helps with topping out.
2. **6A+** Quartzzy edges lead up the wall from an often damp streak.
3. **5+** The hanging finger crack can be damp but is good when clean.
4. **? SS** The crack.
5. **The Handrail 6B+** SS as far right as possible and follow the rising traverse line to finish at the top of problem 3.
6. **5+** SS as for *The Handrail* and head straight up via a fun mantel. The top slab adds some spice.

## Twin Cracks Wall

From *Handrail Wall*, traverse across the hillside until close to the old fence line. Twin cracks wall is visible about 20 metres above the fence at the point where the buttress above *Handrail Wall* disappears from view.



- 1. Twin Cracks 6A** Climb the thin twin cracks with a stretch to holds out left at the top.
- 2. Stumped 6B+** Sit start with left hand on the big sidepull at the base of the left crack. Head up and right of the cracks to the highest point of the wall.
- 3. 5** From the blunt right arete, make a tricky move onto the hanging slab and follow it.

## White Slab



20 metres up and right of *Twin Cracks Wall* is a clean white slab. The centre of the slab is excellent (4) but falling off is not recommended. Many other problems of similar style can be discovered across the hillside.

## Lipstick



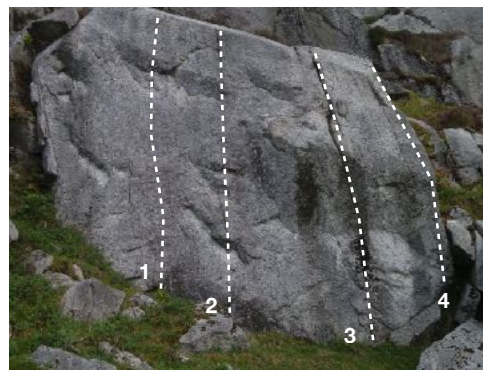
10 metres left of *White Slab* is a small boulder. **Lipstick 6A+** Starts sitting at the left side and traverses the lip of the boulder to pull over at the highest point.

The obvious boulder next to a tree up and right of *Lipstick* is disappointing.

From *Lipstick*, retrace your steps to the old fence line and continue around the hillside to a point where the bracken thins out and a jumble of small rocks covers the slope above. *Misty Island Wall* is visible 50 metres above.

## Misty Island Wall

A pleasant wall of granite. Further easier problems can be found just down and right.



- 1. Misty Island Wall 5** Head into the scoop on the left side of the wall and exit over the smiling overlap.
- 2. Bash 5** Start just right of the rock step in the ground and head for the short vertical crack in the top of the wall.
- 3. Dash 5** Climb the crack with a tricky start.
- 4. Ferdinand 4+** The right arete.

Walk diagonally leftwards up the hillside for 50 metres looking for the remains of a fallen tree on a large ledge. Scramble up to this ledge to reach:

## Lumberjack Wall

A fantastic wall which is steeper than it looks and with holds that tend to be smaller than they look. The problems are high and technical, though the rock is more finger friendly than most around here and the landings are good.

- 1. Lumberjack Arete 6B** The excellent clean left arete of the wall is harder than it looks but eases with height.
- 2. Lumberjack Wall 7A+** The left side of the wall starting from the obvious diagonal crack. The sit start is worthwhile and probably adds half a grade.
- 3. Silky 7A+** Climb just left of the dark streak in the wall moving leftwards around the blank section at two-thirds height.

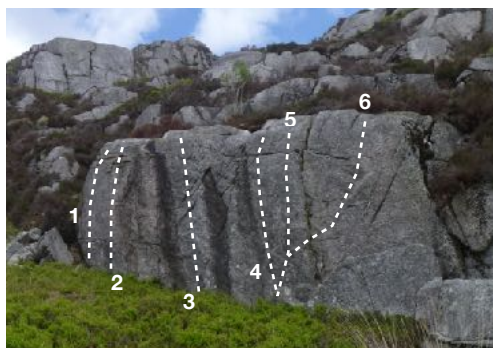




From below the ledge of *Lumberjack Wall*, walk round to the left and ascend a series of rocky ribs (above Area J in the F&RCC guide) until a traverse back right across the hillside can be made. This leads to:

### Crystallography Wall (Area L)

A clean vertical wall which can be climbed virtually anywhere. Unfortunately there are a couple of stubborn drainage streaks so the problems have been described to avoid these. When totally dry, additional problems and variations can be worked out. A beautiful place to sit, eat bilberries and contemplate how fast your skin is wearing out.



1. **5+** From a crouching start on the obvious holds, climb the thin left-facing flake to finish on the arete. Nasty landing.
2. **6A** Climb straight up the wall from jugs via a reachy move to finish just left of a v-notch in the top of the wall.
3. **Body Centred 6C** The wall between the two drainage streaks with powerful moves on undercuts.
4. **Face Centred 6B** SS at the end of the embedded flake in the ground. Head left and up using the crimpy 'ear' to finish at a short vertical crack.

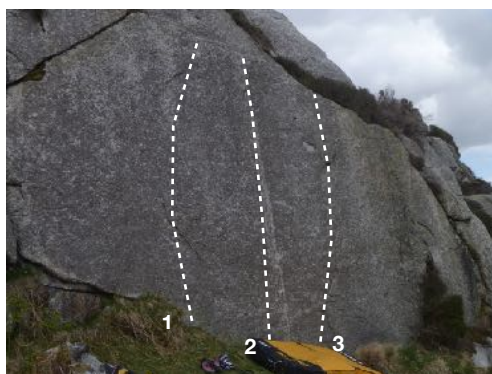
5. **6A** From the same SS, use the flakes to the right to reach a good edge and the top.
6. **6A** Again from the same SS, follow holds diagonally right and up without falling off!

At the same level and 50 metres around to the right is:

### Sickle Slab (Area K)

An immaculate slab of granite.

1. **Sickle Slab 6A** The curving flake near the left side of the slab.
2. **Reaper 6B+** Start with right hand on obvious head-height crimp and head straight up. The grade depends on how strictly holds on the adjacent problems are ignored.
3. **Scythe 5** From the short waist-height diagonal flake climb past the obvious undercling.



From *Sickle Slab*, head 50 metres down and right to a lone pine tree (Lone pine one). From the knoll just beyond this, look across the hillside to another lone pine tree (Lone pine two - see photo). Pick your way across the hillside taking care with areas of steep ground and giant talus. *The Sharks Fin* (Area B in F&RCC guide) lies just below Lone pine two.



### The Sharks Fin (Area B)

The showpiece of this area is the superb arete of *The Sharks Fin*. Landings require care and falling off near the tops of the problems isn't advisable. Mats can be secured on the sloping platform left of *The Sharks Fin* by placing gear in the horizontal break at the base of the wall (Rocks 7 - 9 or large cams).



1. **5+** SS in the left hand groove and top out carefully over the capping roof.
2. **6A** SS and climb the twin shallow seams. The top out is harder than it looks.
3. **?** The seam closest to the arete is very thin.
4. **The Sharks Fin 6A** Layback up the soaring arete.
5. **Sharks Fin Right 5+** Footholds from half height make the right side of the arete from a sitting start a significantly more relaxing encounter.
6. **5** Wall right of arete from sitting. Various problems can be contrived on this wall but are marred by poor landings.
7. **6A+** SS The right hand side of the sharp arete further to the right. Care is required with flaky rock.

50 metres to the right of *The Sharks Fin* at a slightly higher level is:

### Cave Arete

A clean wall and slab with a large oak tree behind it. Unfortunately not as extensive as it looks from a distance.



- 1. Cave Arete 7B** SS with left hand on high crimp and left foot on triangular hold in the roof. Clamp onto the arete and head up the left side of it.
- 2. 4** SS and climb sharp arete.
- 3. 6A** SS at left end of wall and follow rising flake line to a sloping top out.
- 4. 5** The blunt arete is harder and better than it looks.
- 5. 5+** The left side of the slab.

Head straight down the hillside keeping to the edge of the felled area. About halfway down is the obvious square cut roof of *Oakley Street*.

### Oakley Street

**Oakley Street 6C+** SS in the right hand crack under the roof. Reach for a right hand edge right of the crack above the roof and use the finger crack to gain the top. Take care with the flakey rock under the roof.



- 1. 6B+** 10 metres left of *Oakley Street* is a hanging arete which gives a worthwhile problem despite the mossy slab to its right. SS with feet on left wall. Pull round and up onto the right side of the arete and climb it to finish over the top block.

- 2. 6A** Above *Oakley Street* is a wall behind a fallen tree. At the right end of the wall is a shallow groove. SS on holds in the right wall of the groove and climb the groove.

From *Oakley Street*, head down and slightly left to cross the drystone wall at a broken down point 15 metres left of a large boulder in the wall. Aim for a holly tree down and left of this. Below the holly is:

### Up and Under Slab

A high clean slab hidden in the trees.

- 1. Up and Under 6C** Start in the centre of the slab and drift left to finish. The obvious shoulder height foothold is in at this grade.

- 2. Garryowen 5+** The right arete of the slab is excellent and has a scary top out.



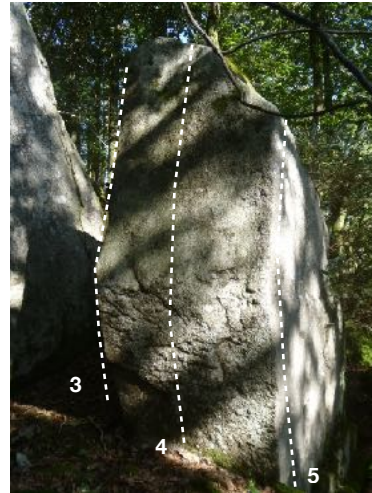


**3. 5+** SS The arete on its left side using just the arete for hands. Using the strange blocky flake for the left hand reduces the grade and the quality. The blocky flake can also be climbed without the arete.

**4. Longhorn 6A** SS and bull work up the two aretes.

**5. 6A+** The start of the right hand side of the arete is harder than it looks.

From this point head down through the trees to reach the forest track.



*Problem 5 (6A) on Crystallography Wall (photo: Chris Fisher)*