

CICERONE

Scrambles in The Lake District North

Wasdale, Ennerdale, Buttermere, Borrowdale, Blencathra & Thirlmere



John Fleetwood

A low-angle photograph of a person scrambling on a steep, dark grey rock face. The person is wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt, grey shorts, and dark shoes. They are positioned near the top of the frame, with their arms extended to grip the rock. The rock face is composed of large, angular blocks with visible cracks and some sparse green vegetation. The background is a clear, bright blue sky.

Scrambles in the Lake District – North



About the Author

John Fleetwood has lived in the Lake District for over 20 years, and over that time he has developed an intimate knowledge of the area. John loves exploring and has sought to visit every potential crag in the area to find new routes, some of which have been included in this guide. He is a keen runner, photographer and mountaineer and was the first person to complete the Bob Graham, Ramsay and Paddy Buckley rounds in winter, as well as being a previous winner of the FRA Long Distance Award. In 2015, John traversed the Alps in a self-supported trip taking in 60 summits over 1850km. He has climbed and walked in South America, China, Iceland, Norway and the European Alps as well as Britain. When not in the hills, John runs a sustainable investment ratings company.

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Wasdale, Ennerdale, Buttermere,
Borrowdale, Blencathra & Thirlmere

by John Fleetwood

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Updates to this guide

While every effort is made by our authors to ensure the accuracy of guidebooks as they go to print, changes can occur during the lifetime of an edition. This guidebook was researched and written before the COVID-19 pandemic. While we are not aware of any significant changes to routes or facilities at the time of printing, it is likely that the current situation will give rise to more changes than would usually be expected. Any updates that we know of for this guide will be on the Cicerone website (www.cicerone.co.uk/1046/updates), so please check before planning your trip. We also advise that you check information about such things as transport, accommodation and shops locally. Even rights of way can be altered over time.

We are always grateful for information about any discrepancies between a guidebook and the facts on the ground, sent by email to updates@cicerone.co.uk or by post to Cicerone, Juniper House, Murley Moss, Oxenholme Road, Kendal, LA9 7RL.

Register your book: To sign up to receive free updates, special offers and GPX files where available, register your book at www.cicerone.co.uk.

Front cover: The exposed slab at the start of Black Beck Crag, Red Pike (Scramble 7, Route 3)

Half title page: Spectacular bridging on the Arrowhead, Arrowhead Ridge (Scramble 23, Route 7)

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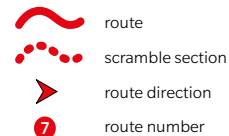
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(for OS legend see printed OS maps)

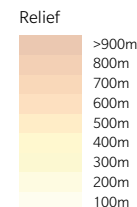


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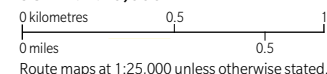


Features on the overview map

 Areas covered by this guide



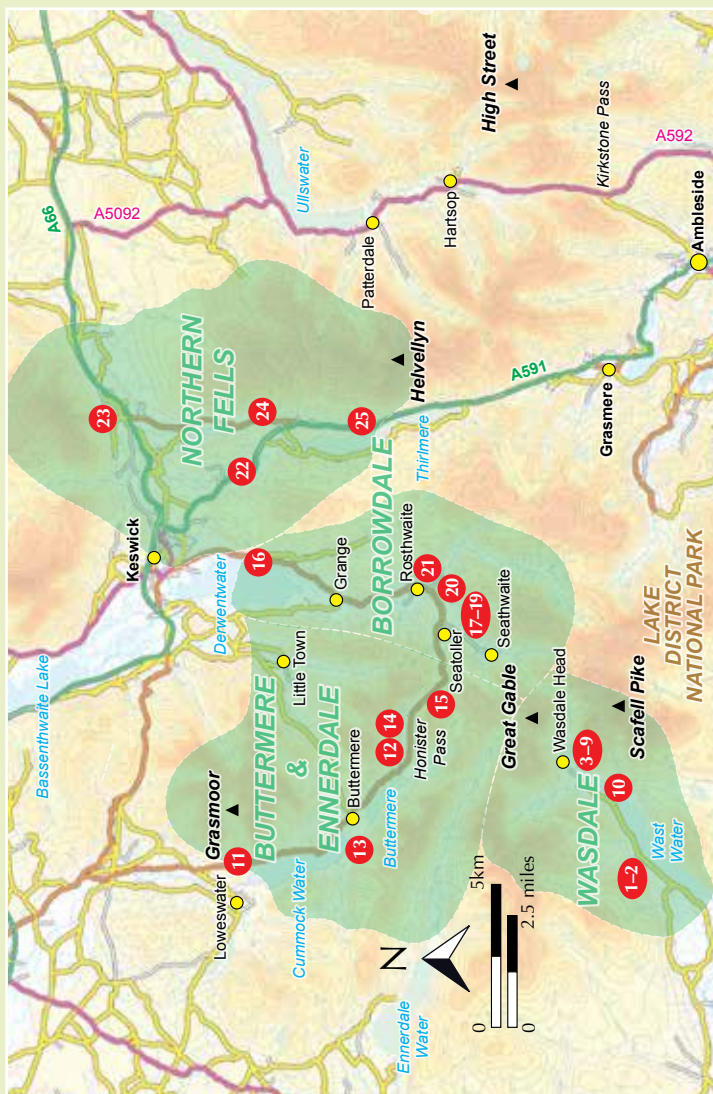
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Warning! Scrambling can be dangerous

Scrambling can be a dangerous activity carrying a risk of personal injury or death. It should be undertaken only by those with a full understanding of the risks and with the training and experience to evaluate them. Scramblers should be appropriately equipped for the routes undertaken. While every care and effort has been taken in the preparation of this book, the user should be aware that conditions are highly variable and can change quickly. Holds may become loose or fall off, rockfall can affect the character of a route, and in winter, snow and avalanche conditions must be carefully considered. These can materially affect the seriousness of a scramble, tour or expedition.

Therefore, except for any liability which cannot be excluded by law, neither Cicerone nor the author accept liability for damage of any nature including damage to property, personal injury or death arising directly or indirectly from the information in this book.



Foreword



When my first guide to *Scrambles in the Lake District* was published in 1982 I could not have expected such an appreciative response. *More Scrambles in the Lake District* came a few years later but it wasn't until 2005 that the routes were collated in a more friendly way into North and South volumes. Reprint after reprint confirmed their popularity.

It is time to pass the baton to John Fleetwood, whose credentials as a mountaineer, adventurer and fell runner are impressive. As an enthusiastic

and skilled photographer I knew he would include inspiring shots and be capable of taking the guides into the modern era of photo topos.

John has found many new and exciting scrambles. These routes have also been assembled into long successive mountain days – challenging for the fittest or memorable as single adventures.

I wish John every success.

Brian Evans



About to enter the chimney on Chockstone Ridge, Grey Crag (Scramble 57, Route 14)

Preface

This book builds on the rich heritage of Brian Evans' pioneering guides *Scrambles in the Lake District* and *More Scrambles in the Lake District*, grouping scrambles into day outings and selecting some of the best of the original scrambles as well as adding new ones. It has been a privilege to explore all of Brian's creations and to add some of my own, while extending the scope of the guide to include some easy rock climbs. In some cases, better lines have been found on previously described scrambles and grades have been amended, although these changes are relatively few in number.

The guide contains a selection of some of the best scrambles, and by necessity some good scrambles have been omitted. A complete list of scrambles is available online at www.cicerone.co.uk/1046.

The character of these scrambles is diverse and what the Lake District lacks in terms of absolute height and scale of the rock walls, it more than makes up for in the beauty and diversity of the landscape. In particular, the gills offer adventures that have an other-worldly quality.

May this book act as both a source of inspiration for your own adventures and as a reliable guide.

John Fleetwood

Summary of routes and scrambles

Route	Scramble	Name	Difficulty	Quality	Climbers' scramble	Suitable for beginners	Page
Wasdale							
1	1	Iron Crag, Middle Fell	3 (2)	☆☆			35
	2	Pike Crag Ridge, Buckbarrow	2 (3)	☆☆			37
	3	Rake and Band, Buckbarrow	2	☆☆			39
	4	White Band, Buckbarrow	D	☆☆	Y		39
2	5	The Netherbeck gorges	2	☆☆☆			44
	6	Steeple East Buttress	VD	☆☆☆	Y		45
3	7	Black Beck Crag, Red Pike	2 (3)	☆☆			48
	8	Green Crag, Mosedale	3+	☆☆☆			53
	9	Upper slabs, Black Crag	2+	☆			55
	10	Wind Gap Edge, Pillar	3+ (1)	☆☆			56
4	11	Wistow Crag, Mosedale	3 (2)	☆☆			59
	12	Pinnacle Ridge, Great Doup	3S	☆☆☆			61
	13	Pinnacle Ridge, Red Pike	3S	☆☆			63
5	14	Ill Gill, Kirk Fell	3S	☆☆			68
	15	Longshoreman's Buttress	1	☆		Y	69
	16	Walking the Plank	3S	☆☆☆			71
	17	East Buttress Original	3	☆			73
	18	Sea Wall Arête	D	☆	Y		74
6	19	Spouthead Gill	3 (2)	☆			77
	20	Climbers' Traverse and Sphinx Ridge	2	☆☆☆			77
	21	Pinnacle Ridge, Westmorland Crag	2	☆☆☆		Y	81
7	22	Needle Ridge	VD	☆☆☆	Y		85
	23	Arrowhead Ridge Ordinary	D+	☆☆☆	Y		87

Route	Scramble	Name	Difficulty	Quality	Climbers' scramble	Suitable for beginners	Page
8	24	Grainy Gill	2 (3)	☆☆			90
	25	Round How	2+	☆☆☆			91
	26	Long Pike Buttress, Great End	2+	☆☆			95
	27	Amphitheatre Buttress	3	☆			96
	28	Ill Crag North West Combe	2	☆			97
	29	Broad Crag NW Buttress	1	-		Y	98
9	30	Lingmell Pinnacle Ridge	3S	☆☆☆	Y		103
	31	Horse and Stick Man	D	☆☆	Y		104
	32	Broad Stand	3S	☆	Y		105
	33	The Banister	M	☆☆			108
10	34	Crenation Ridge	D	☆☆	Y		113
	35	Western Corner	D	☆	Y		114
	36	Mickledore Buttress No.1	D	☆	Y		115
	37	Tottering Tower	2	☆			115
	38	Castor	M	☆	Y		118
Buttermere and Ennerdale							
11	39	Lorton Gully	3	☆☆☆			123
	40	Buttermere Gully	3S	☆☆	Y		125
12	41	Old West	3	☆☆			133
	42	Slab & Notch	3	☆☆☆			134
	43	Seavy Knott	3	☆☆☆			138
	44	Great Round How	2	☆			140
	45	Little Round How	1	☆		Y	141
13	46	Sourmilk Gill, Buttermere	2S	☆			144
	47	Sunday Best, Chapel Crag	2S	☆			145
	48	Raven's Ramble	VD-	☆☆	Y		147
	49	Co-Ed's Chimney	D	☆☆	Y		149
	50	Herdwick Rib, Sheepbone Buttress	D-	☆☆	Y		151
14	51	Stegosaurus	M	☆☆☆	Y		155
	52	The Mole	D	☆	Y		157

Scrambles in the Lake District – North

Route	Scramble	Name	Difficulty	Quality	Climbers' scramble	Suitable for beginners	Page
	53	Oxford & Cambridge Ordinary	D+	☆☆	Y		158
	54	Mitre Buttress Ordinary	M	☆☆	Y		161
	55	January Crack	D-	☆	Y		161
	56	Harrow Buttress	D	☆☆☆	Y		162
	57	Chockstone Ridge	M	☆☆☆			164
	58	Slabs Chimney	M	☆☆			165
15	59	Honister Crag	3S	☆☆			167
	60	Striddle Crag Buttress	3S	☆☆			171
	61	Hassness Gill	2+	☆			173
Borrowdale							
16	62	Cat Gill	1	☆☆		Y	180
	63	Jackdaw Ridge, Shepherds Crag	D (2)	☆	Y		181
	64	Gate Gill	3S	☆☆			183
17	65	Sourmilk Gill, Seathwaite	3	☆☆☆			186
	66	Seathwaite Upper Slabs	M	☆			188
	67	Rabbit's Trod, Gillercomb Crag	2	☆☆			189
	68	Grey Knotts Face	D+	☆☆☆	Y		191
	69	Gamma, Green Gable	D+	☆☆	Y		191
18	70	Taylor Gill Force	3	☆☆			196
	71	Ruddy Gill	2+ (3S)	☆☆			196
	72	Central Gully, Great End	3S	☆☆			199
	73	Skew Gill	1	☆			201
	74	Cust's Gully	3	☆☆			203
19	75	Grains Gill and Allen Crag	2 (3+)	☆☆☆			209
	76	Allencrags Gill	3S (1)	☆☆ (☆)			211
	77	Tongue Tied	2 (3)	☆☆			212
20	78	Corvus	D	☆☆☆	Y		217
	79	Far From the Madding Crowd	3	☆☆			218
	80	Outside (Face) Route	D+	☆☆☆	Y		221

Summary of routes and scrambles

Route	Scramble	Name	Difficulty	Quality	Climbers' scramble	Suitable for beginners	Page
	81	Dovenest Crag – Attic Cave	3	☆☆☆			223
	82	Dovenest Crag – Right-Hand Groove	3	☆			223
	83	Intake Ridge	D (3)	☆☆☆			224
21	84	Combe Gill	3S	☆☆☆			231
	85	Cam Crag Ridge	2 (3)	☆☆☆			231
	86	West Face Route, Sergeant's Crag	D+	☆☆	Y		233
	87	Greenup Edge, Lining Crag	D	☆☆	Y		235
Northern and eastern fells							
22	88	Mere Gill	3	☆☆☆			243
	89	Ashness Gill	3S	☆☆			245
23	90	Sharp Edge	1	☆☆☆		Y	246
	91	Hall's Fell Ridge	1-	☆		Y	249
24	92	Mill Gill	3S	☆☆☆			252
	93	Beckthorns Gill	3	☆☆☆			254
	94	Sandbed Gill	3S	☆☆☆	Y		256
25	95	Helvellyn Gill	1	☆		Y	259
	96	Slab & Slot, Brown Cove Crag	3S	☆☆			262
	97	Stepped Ridge, Brown Cove Crag	2-	☆		Y	262
	98	Central Buttress, Brown Cove Crag	2+	☆☆			265
	99	Striding Edge	1-	☆☆☆		Y	267
	100	Fisher Gill	2	☆☆			268

Quality ratings

No stars Not particularly meritorious in its own right, but worth including as part of a day's outing.

☆☆ Worth climbing but may be discontinuous, short or lacking in continuous interest.

☆☆☆ A route of more continuous interest and a good line.

☆☆☆☆ A classic route with continuously interesting scrambling that is based on a good line.



The dry start to Taylor Gill Force, Seathwaite (Scramble 70, Route 18)

Introduction



Wast Water and Yewbarrow

Scrambling offers the perfect combination of continuous movement and unfettered climbing in a mountain environment. It is a very basic activity that offers adventure, physical activity and mental concentration. Lakeland pioneer, Harry Griffin, clearly identified with this, saying: 'The Lake District teems with opportunities for modest adventure away from the track ... those I have introduced to various unconventional scrambles and climbs have all become addicts' (*Adventuring in Lakeland*, 1980). You may well become an addict.

This guide aims to inspire you to experience some of the best days that the Lake District has to offer. Most outings include scrambles of Grade 3 or

above, but individual scrambles can be omitted if you are not confident scrambling at this grade. Grouping the scrambles into day routes allows the curation of varied and enjoyable mountain adventures, where the whole is greater than a sum of the parts. Some of the scrambles can appear a little contrived or insignificant if taken in isolation, but as part of a bigger day can provide interesting ways of exploring the Lake District.

In the preparation of this guide, many scrambles were tried that didn't make it into the final selection. Some of these are quite good but just didn't fit into a logical day out. Others are pretty terrible! However, we've compiled a comprehensive online database of all

Wasdale

The shapely fells around Wasdale Head are a magnet for walkers, climbers and summer tourists. Wasdale Head is the birthplace of Lake District rock climbing, with the Victorian mountaineers having based their activities at the inn and pioneered many of the scrambles listed here. There is excellent sport on both high- and low-level crags. Facing the Screes across West Water are three beautiful little peaks that repay a visit; these are Buckbarrow, Middle Fell and Yewbarrow, which often have better weather than the peaks around the valley head. Surrounding Wasdale Head are the major peaks of Kirk Fell, Great Gable and the Scafell range. Mosedale bites deeply in towards Pillar and Red

Pike. The classic scramble of Pillar Rock in Ennerdale (see Route 12) can also be accessed from Wasdale.

There are campsites at Santon Bridge, Strands and the National Trust site at Wasdale Head, and a small site at the Wasdale Head Inn.

Car parking and transport

Even at the busiest times, car parking is easy. There are numerous places alongside the road by West Water and a popular parking area on the Green – a triangle of common at Wasdale Head. Parking is also available at the National Trust campsite. There is no bus service up the valley.


Route 1

Middle Fell and Buckbarrow

Start	Netherbeck Bridge, West Water (NY 161 066)
Distance	9.75km
Ascent	870m (360m scrambling)
Grade	Iron Crag and Goat Crag 3 (2), Pike Crag Ridge 2 (3), Rake and Band 2, White Band D
Time	5hr
Conditions	All weather
Equipment	Rope, small rack, helmet, harness

When the high fells are out of condition, the lower rocky hills at the western end of Wasdale provide excellent sport. The south-facing rocks dry quickly, have good friction and form a fine grandstand from which to enjoy the impressive views over West Water to the Screes and Scafell.

Either scramble can be taken in isolation for a quick outing. Three options are given for Buckbarrow: the original route (Scramble 2) takes the right-hand rib of Pike Crag, while an upward traversing ramp makes a pleasant (and easier) alternative (Scramble 3). A Difficult rock climb (Scramble 4) takes the most compelling line up the crag, but care is needed given the fractured nature of the rock and some vegetation. A descent can be made via the gully to the east of Pike Crag if you would like to climb Scramble 2 after ascending either of the other two.



Iron Crag in profile from Goat Crag (Scramble 1, Route 1)



1 Iron Crag and Goat Crag, Middle Fell 3 (2) ⚡⚡, +250m, SE aspect, NY 156 066

Summary

Airy scrambling linking as much rock as you like. The rock is rough and clean, but beware of the occasional perched block.

Approach

The main part of the **Iron Crag** scramble is on rocks to the right of a shallow stream and scree hollow, directly above **Netherbeck Bridge**. Walk through bracken close to the slight stream, to the lowest rocks on the right.

Route

The first small tier is passed by two small rock steps just right of the stream. Walk through bracken to a steep nose, which is climbed on shelving mossy rock, trending right to avoid the steepest part then back left to a **rock crest**. Cross a scree patch to reach another steep nose just on the left. Climb this just left of the edge, then easy rocks lead to the **terrace** below the main crag. There are two main options here: the steep continuous buttress on the left provides exposed scrambling at Grade 3, while the **right-hand alternative** (1) takes easier slabs up the rib straight ahead. The Grade 3 option can be climbed from the bottom at about Difficult standard, or it can be more easily accessed from the left-hand side.



The scrambling continues on easier-angled rock. When it peters out at the top of **Iron Crag**, a short walk down to the left leads to a belt of slabs and the beginning of **Goat Crag**. These can be climbed at all standards according to taste. The easiest



scrambling is more broken on the right, while a steeper start can be made further left at the very foot of the slabs (3). Very enjoyable scrambling follows, with harder and easier options.

Continuation

Scramble up rocks toward the summit of **Middle Fell**. It's worth visiting the summit before descending the path SW for 2km to the road. Turn right onto the road and follow it for 1km to reach a wall rising toward the crag above.

2 Pike Crag Ridge, Buckbarrow

2 (3) 🌟 🌟 🌟, +110m, SE aspect, NY 136 057

Summary

Rather earthy at the start, this is the original scramble on the crag. It winds intricately through a steep lower buttress to finish up the crest of an easier ridge.

Approach

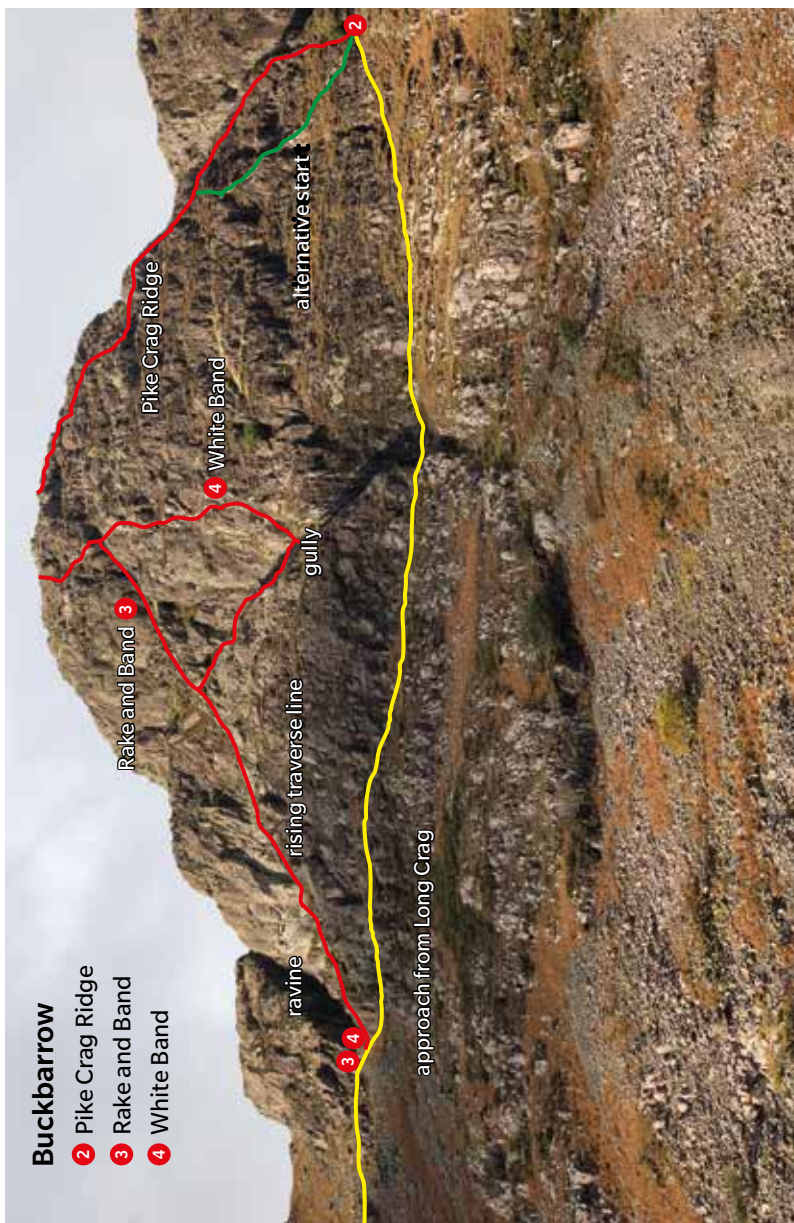
The buttress to aim for is directly below the summit and to the left of a large scree gully. A direct ascent from the road would be unpleasant and trackless, so it is best to approach from below **Long Crag**, following a slight path which ascends just to the right of the wall. This heads for the most popular rock-climbing area. Follow the path well up until a faint track branches across the scree to the right; take this to gain the terraces running horizontally below the broad front of the crags. Traverse these to the right, past a central gully, to reach the scree gully on the right of the main crag. Ascend to a prominent holly bush below the start of the rocks proper.

Route

The lower part of the route takes the steep buttress to the left of the ridge, or else a little rib to its right. This gives interesting but exposed scrambling. A harder alternative goes up leftwards from the holly to a light-coloured rib; this can be climbed directly (3) to its top. However, the original start takes the rocks to the right of the holly and aims for a deep cleft which is 6m left of the buttress edge. Step onto a heather ledge 6m below the cleft and cross to an easy-angled mossy rib 9m to the left. The good scrambling starts here.

Cross the front of the rib leftwards for 6m to reach a ledge with perched blocks, then continue up a clean staircase on the right of a mossy slab. Move right under a steep wall then follow a heather rake which leads leftwards to a large perched block. Squeeze behind this to reach a clean rib 6m to the left. Follow this until easy ledges back on the right gain the edge of the buttress overlooking the gully.

The steep initial buttress has been surmounted with surprising ease and the crest of the ridge above is revealed. Scramble up the interesting edge to a grass platform. The step above is taken by an airy gangway close to the edge. A steep tower



Route 1 – Middle Fell and Buckbarrow

can be avoided on the left or climbed direct to reach a ledge below a final steep barrier. Turn this on the left by a gangway which slants back right. Easy scrambling follows to the summit cairn.

Descent

A small track descends W from the summit of **Buckbarrow**. Follow this down to the road, turn left and enjoy the views of the Screes as you walk the 3.7km back to your starting point at **Netherbeck Bridge**.

3 Rake and Band, Buckbarrow

2 ⚡⚡⚡, +110m, S aspect, NY 135 056

Summary

A good alternative to the previous route; this one wends a devious line up the crag using a rising terrace and finishing with the upper part of White Band.

Approach

Walk up a slight track to the right of the wall. A slabby buttress can be seen above and to your left. Go to the bottom of this.

Route

Climb the slabs pleasantly to the top, then traverse right, descending a little to reach the bottom of the **ravine**. Take a **rising traverse line** right beneath the buttress. There is one slightly awkward move over a slab to a grassy terrace. Go up to where the white band crosses the rake and follow the band to the top.

Descent

A small track descends W from the summit of **Buckbarrow**. Follow this down to the road, turn left and enjoy the views of the Screes as you walk the 3.7km back to your starting point at **Netherbeck Bridge**. Alternatively, from the top of the scramble, the gully to the east of Pike Crag can be descended in order to do Scramble 2.

4 White Band, Buckbarrow

D ⚡⚡⚡, +140m, S aspect, NY 135 056

Summary

This is a climbers' scramble taking the obvious challenge of a distinctive white band of rock that runs almost from bottom to top. It is a compelling line and provides exposed climbing up the front of the crag. The rock is fractured so requires care.

Approach

Walk up a slight track to the right of the wall. A slabby buttress can be seen above and to your left. Go to the bottom of this.



Exposed climbing on the white band

Route

Climb the slabs pleasantly to the top, then traverse right, descending a little to reach the bottom of the **ravine**. Take a **rising traverse line** right beneath the buttress until a gully can be seen descending toward the bottom of the white band. Descend the rib to the right of the gully (looking down) until you can get into the **gully**. Descend to where the white band can be accessed on the far side of the gully.

Climb broken rocks to get onto the white band. Climb the band until you reach a steeper section. Climb this with great care as the rock is splintered and intersperses with heather. Continue more easily above and follow the band all the way to the top.

Descent

A small track descends W from the summit of **Buckbarrow**. Follow this down to the road, turn left and enjoy the views of the Screes as you walk the 3.7km back to your starting point at **Netherbeck Bridge**.

Route 2

Steeple East Buttress via Netherbeck gorges

Start	Netherbeck Bridge, Wast Water (NY 161 066)
Distance	13.5km
Ascent	820m (170m scrambling)
Grade	Netherbeck gorges 2, Steeple East Buttress VD
Time	6hr 30min
Conditions	Warm and dry conditions best for the pool wading and high mountain climbing
Equipment	Rope, small rack, helmet, harness (all essential); spare clothing, waterproof liner, shorts, towel, oversocks and lightweight shoes for the pools

The Netherbeck gorges are places of spectacular beauty. Trees almost form a canopy over the gorges and few walkers realise that just below the path is a deep vertical gash with cascades, pools and a fine waterfall. The atmosphere is verdant and oppressive between the dark beetling walls. The thigh- to chest-deep wading lends itself to hot summer days in a dry spell. In such weather, the gorges can make for a delightful day of slow exploration.

They're also an excellent way to approach one of the finest easy mountain rock climbs in the Lake District, with the combination making a day of great contrast.

From the top of the gorges, a lonely little path leads all the way up to the high plateau of Scoat Fell where a spectacular view of Steeple's East Buttress is revealed. The line of the buttress is compelling – a rib of rough rock leading skywards to the very summit of the aptly named Steeple. This is one of the nicest tops in the Lake District, set apart from the main ridge and crowning wild mountain cirques. The scrambling may be over, but the day continues with high-level ridge walking over Red Pike and Yewbarrow and a steep descent to the twinkling Wast Water.

Scrambles in the Lake District – North

100 popular classics and new scrambles
includes Wasdale, Buttermere and Threlkeld

This is a comprehensive collection of 100 scrambles, presented as 25 routes which link scrambles to make first-class mountain days. The Lake District is one of the most scenic areas in the world, and although there are bigger mountains and more dramatic rock faces, the area has an intimacy and variety that have drawn people since the time of Wordsworth and Coleridge.

This guide takes you into previously unexplored corners of the region as well as describing time-honoured classics, and is particularly suitable for those wanting to experience routes that bridge the gap between mountain walking and rock climbing. There is something here for everyone – whether the beginner sampling much loved classics, or the veteran mountaineer looking for new crags to explore.



Sharp Edge • Cam Crag
Ridge and Sphinx Ridge
• Needle Ridge • Steeple's
East Buttress



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