

An Oxford University Mountaineering Guide



LOW CRAG

AND HIGH CRAG, S LIGACHAN

by Steve Broadbent

A Pocket Guide To The Rock Climbs Of

LOW CRAG

and HIGH CRAG

FIFTH EDITION

BY STEVE BROADBENT

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<http://users.ox.ac.uk/~climbing>

INTRODUCTION

This publication provides details of rock climbs on both Low and High Craggs in Glen Sligachan. Much of the exploration of this area has been carried out by Oxford University Mountaineering Club during frequent visits between 2000 and 2005. Details of these routes can also be found in SMC Journals.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Many people have been involved in the Club's explorations on Skye, and they all deserve thanks for their support in this exciting project. Adrian Baugh, aided by unhealthy amounts of Black Cuillin, helped to come up with the idea in the first place, and provided the motivation to explore Sgurr Nan Gilleann. Huw Jenkins thankfully steered us away from unlikely mountaineering objectives, and set the trend for high quality, reasonably short rock routes on both unclimbed and well-known crags. Katja Wigmore excelled in her usual role of publicising our achievements and persuading nice people to give us funding, and the newer members of OUMC have done much towards promoting future interest within the Club. Thanks go to Phil Frampton, Lynsey Thomas, Andy Ross, Alison Parker, Rich Welford, Gill Damerell, Ellie White, Clare Atkinson, Mike Streule and Jamie Wakeham.

I would also like to thank the trustees of the A.C.Irvine Travel Fund, whose support of OUMC has been invaluable. In particular, their additional grants for Skye Expeditions are much appreciated, helping to cover not only some individual expenses, but also the unexpected costs of fixing in-situ gear on the crag, and publicising our achievements once we get home.

Finally, our thanks go to those nice people at the Sligachan Hotel, who have provided us with copious amounts of fine beer, exquisite malt whisky, great food, and a warm place to hang out when it's getting really nasty outside!

HISTORY

The Isle of Skye may seem like an unlikely destination for regular climbing trips from Oxford, and it is probably worth describing briefly the history behind these new routing trips.

It was during a particularly wet Easter in 1999 that OUMC climbers Steve Broadbent and Adrian Baugh were forced to abandon an attempt at the

coveted Cuillin Ridge traverse due to torrential rain. With no means of transport they were stranded at Sligachan for several days, being treated to little more than the occasional glimpse of Sgurr Nan Gilleann peeking through the evening clouds. During one of these days, over a pint of Black Cuillin Ale at Seumus' Bar, the pair hit upon the idea of ascending the mountain via the apparently unclimbed East Face.

By the following year, this idea had developed into a full-scale new-routing expedition, aiming to seek out long, remote rock climbs up the Cuillin summits. As well as Katja Wigmore, the pair teamed up with Huw Jenkins, who being one of the most gifted rock climbers in the Mountaineering Club would complete a very varied team.

Armed with a formidable array of equipment, the Club's first dedicated new-routing trip got underway in the Easter of 2000, and started immediately with an interesting turn of events. Poor weather and snow on the upper slopes destroyed hopes of a new line up the East Face of Nan Gilleann, and the team instead explored the lower slopes of the mountain, above Glen Sligachan. Just a few hundred yards from their camp in Coire Riabhach, they were astonished to discover a clean sweep of gabbro rising over 200ft from the grassy hillside. Unclimbed, un-named, and never before touched by human hands, the crag was identified on a rough sketch map by the caption 'Low Crag'. This identified it from the larger looking unclimbed crag higher up the hill, which they imaginatively referred to as 'High Crag'. Perhaps unfortunately, the names stuck.

The following day poor weather again interfered, and the group headed to the sea cliffs of Flodigarry, where they claimed the first new routes of the trip. Jenkins and Baugh picked off a virgin sea-stack with their route **Rude Awakening** and Broadbent and Wigmore claimed the stunningly obvious crack-line to create **Raining Men**.

The first climbing attempts on Low Crag came several days later. Baugh and Jenkins put up the first routes on *Spaceman's Slabs* whilst Broadbent and Wigmore picked off the crag's most obvious line, **April Crack Direct**. Satisfied with these warm-ups, Jenkins and Broadbent then set about the main face of *Panoramix Wall* with a line trending rightwards onto a blank wall high on the face. The attempt ended in failure when Jenkins took two massive falls onto a peg. Back in Seumus', the atmosphere was electric as the team eagerly awaited another chance to get back on the wall. That chance came two days later, when the central overhangs of *Panoramix* were turned this time on the left, giving access to the beautiful headwall above. The resultant route, **Electric Mainline** ranked as one of the most

serious leads in the area. Jenkins and Broadbent went on to climb the utterly unbelievable severe of **Grand National**, before **Iffley Dreams** was claimed by Jenkins and Baugh – named after the Club's favourite bouldering wall in Oxford.

The following year, a repeat trip was cancelled due to Foot and Mouth disease, so the Club had to wait until winter 2001-2002 for a return to Sligachan. This time an extended team would focus on new routing Low Crag and the sea cliffs, whilst scouting for other small valley crags on bad weather days. Adrian Baugh and Rich Welford made an early reconnaissance to High Crag, and on the descent discovered the attractive looking *Riabhach Wall* at Low Crag. Back at Flodigarry, Broadbent and Wigmore climbed the 'last unclimbed face' of the *Tunnel Buttresses* to create **Hogmanay**, and went on to add many high quality lower-grade routes to the *South Stack*, including the classic **Captain Quibble**.

When the weather improved, *Riabhach Wall* was opened with **The Groove** from Broadbent and Wigmore, while Andy Ross and Alison Parker were joined by Adrian Baugh for the first ascent of **The Purple Turtle**, named after the Union's Club in Oxford. **Oxford Blue** provided a further warm-up for Broadbent and Wigmore before their ascent of **Kandahar** and the wall's hardest line to date. Further round on the North Buttress, an attempt on **Varsity Crack** was thwarted by poor weather.

Another extended team returned to the Island in the winter of 2002-2003 hoping to continue last year's run of single pitch routes. Broadbent and Wigmore made a second attempt at **Varsity Crack**, this time to be defeated by food poisoning! Warmer conditions also gave the team chance to explore High Crag for the first time, which proved rather disappointing. Several new routes were climbed on the shorter *Lower Tier*, but the main face did not seem attractive for climbing.

On Low Crag, *North Buttress* was opened up by Broadbent, Wigmore, and Andy Ross with the delightful **Mercury Rib** and the worrying **Faithless**. Adrian Baugh, Jamie Wakeham, and Gill Damerell put up **Warmin' Up** before turning their attention to *Riabhach Wall*, where Baugh claimed the prized **Coolin' Off**. This wall also saw attention from Broadbent and Wigmore, who teetered up the groove right of **Kandahar** to create the loose and scary **Taliban Groove**. **Varsity Crack** finally fell to Ross, Broadbent and Wigmore on the third attempt!

The Club's first attempt at a summer trip to the Isle of Mist came in May 2003, when Baugh, Wigmore and Broadbent snatched a week of

reasonable weather, intent on some hard climbing.. Fresh from some serious exposure in Yosemite, the team turned their attention to the intimidating *Panoramix Wall*, hoping to re-visit the blank wall that had halted initial attempts by Jenkins. After a short day of preparation and top-rope practise the group ascended the tremendously blank line to leave Low Crag with it's second 'big' line, and one of the best – **Journey Into Space**. The name only hints at the length, exposure, and possible outcome.

A further winter trip to Skye over the 2003 – 2004 new year period proved disappointing, with heavy snowfall preventing any serious rock climbing, and it was not until the following Easter that Low Crag saw any further routes. Broadbent and Wigmore, having been repulsed by the tempting prow of *South Buttress*, now turned their attention to the shorter routes of *Panoramix Right Hand*. Unfortunately this wall proved lichenous and slow to dry, though the pair did manage to make ascents of **Marathon** and the **Cracked Buttress**.

The last 'major line' on *Panoramix Wall* was climbed over Easter 2005 by Steve and Katja (now) Broadbent. **Arrows of Desire** follows the tempting prow directly above the Haven, and had been something of a 'project' for the pair for several years, though bad weather had previously prevented an ascent.

THE FUTURE

Low Crag still provides endless possibilities for high quality new routes of all grades. Several of these have already been identified, and many are described in the text. *Panoramix Right Hand* stands out as a good example, where a number of mid-grade lines still await ascents. Others are obvious 'last great problems' which will require a strong team and the right conditions. The central direct line on *Panoramix Wall* looks possible, and the stunning Prow above the Haven has been climbed on top-rope.

The recently explored rocks of the *South Buttress* also appear to hold some climbing potential, with the clean prow up the front of the buttress having already defeated one attempt.

On High Crag, the *Lower Tier* still holds unclimbed lines, although the rock here takes some days to dry out completely. *The Black Wall* looks very serious, but may well be seen of some ultra-hard bold routes in the future – for those who can endure the walk-in!

THE ROUTES

Route descriptions have been provided by the first ascensionists and in some cases are un-checked. Routes depicted on the topos are labelled with a number.

Low Crag

Coire Riabhach, Sligachan, Isle of Skye

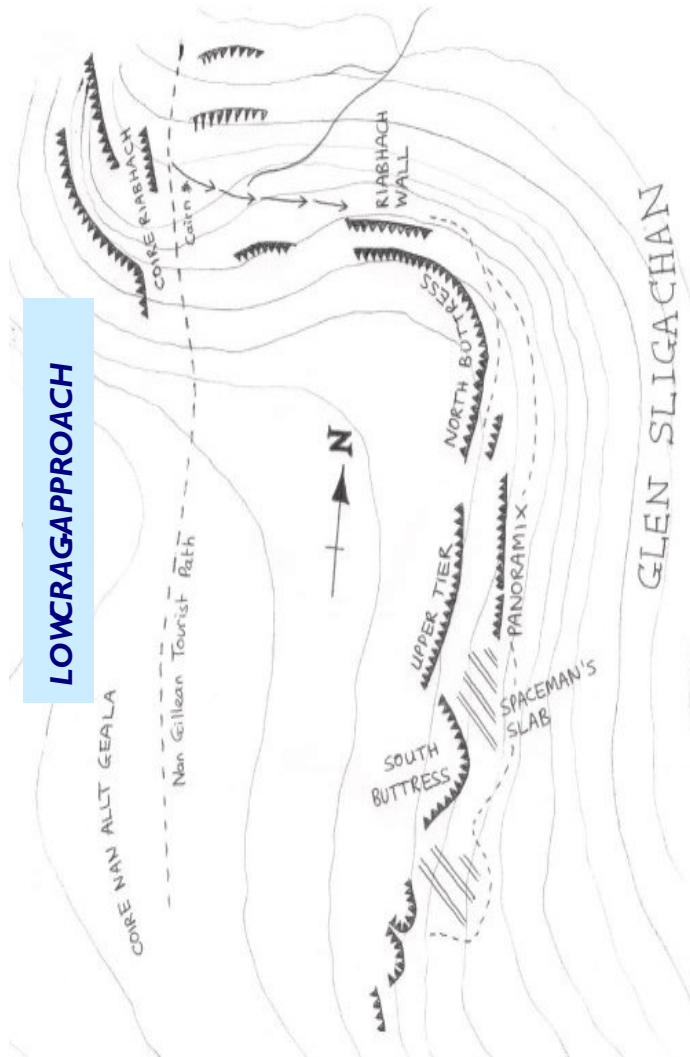
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This crag was opened up by members of Oxford University Mountaineering Club in April 2000, and was described in the 2001 SMC and 2000 OUMC Journals. Since then, continued exploration has revealed further good climbing on the crag, and the following outline supersedes those in the recent journals.

The crag was named during the initial OUMC exploration, when quite accidentally references were made to two possibly unclimbed crags – a low one and a high one. Part of *High Crag* has since been named *Black Wall* (see SMJ 2001), but it is hoped the crag as a whole will adopt the OUMC name *High Crag*!

Low Crag lies at 300m above sea level on the eastern slopes of Sgurr Nan Gilleann, about 1km north of Glen Sligachan Buttress (see SMC guide 'Skye and the Hebrides'). It is a vast crag consisting of at least eight independent buttresses, although the unexplored upper crags appear somewhat loose and broken. The lower buttresses, however, offer superb walls of gabbro which dry quickly after rain and remain in condition when many of Skye's higher crags are out of bounds. The varied buttresses provide a superb range of climbing, from short Gritstone-like routes, to long multi-pitch outings, with grades to suit almost everyone. A huge number of lines still await first ascents at all grades.

Protection is almost invariably worse than it appears on first inspection, and this certainly makes new-routing an interesting experience! The current ethic is to accept some fairly long run-outs and use only traditional gear (small nuts and camming devices). Having said that, it is worth



carrying a selection of pegs which may be used sparingly on otherwise totally unprotected projects. For example, two were pre-placed as the only protection on the final pitch of **Electric Mainline**, and one was even required for the belay at the top of the crag. In such cases, it is preferable to leave necessary pegs in-situ. Because of the very shallow nature of gabbro 'seams', sawn-off knifeblades or small angles are the most useful varieties of peg.

The crag is actually the closest quality climbing to Sligachan, and is approached in under 1.5 hours by following the Nan Gilleann tourist path as far as Coire Riabhach, and turning off to the left (East) at a small cairn halfway up the steep ascent into Coire Nan Alt Geala. A faint sheep track then brings you to the first of the buttresses, Riabhach Wall.

THE LOW CRAG BUTTRESSES

Low Crag consists of five main areas, which are described here from right to left (North to South) in the direction of approach.

Riabhach Wall

The small north-facing wall at the extreme right hand end of the crag provides a number of shorter climbs between V Diff and E4. The wall is well featured and the climbs are reasonably protected. Can be rather lichenous in winter months, requiring several days to come into condition.

North Buttress

This large buttress consists of two main faces – the North Face, which holds a good selection of easier climbs on sound rock, and the more intimidating East Face. This face is characterised by a huge blank slab high on the wall, and a number of alarmingly loose basalt seams. **Varsity Crack** is the only route to date on the East Face, and is a worthwhile struggle for those with a sense of adventure (or humour...)

Panoramix Right Hand

The small triangle of rock below **I'd Rather be Wet than Sorry** holds a couple of short, steep and bold routes. The rock here is more lichenous than most of Low Crag, and requires several days to dry out. A number of routes still await first ascents.

Panoramix Wall

The showpiece of the Crag, and the first wall to see any attention. This stunning 60m wall of clean gabbro dries quickly after rain and is of impeccable quality. The routes here all feel rather serious – partly due to the length and expanse of blank rock, but are generally adorned with good (if small!) positive holds. There are few low grade routes which tackle terrain as exquisite as the nerve-wracking **Grand National**, which provides an awakening introduction to the wall. Panoramix is also home to what may well be the crag's finest route – **Journey Into Space**, taking a death-defying line through some of the blankest parts of the wall, and finishing with a stunning 15m run-out...

Panoramix Left Hand

The shorter wall to the left of Panoramix also holds quick-drying routes of great quality, all in the E2 and E3 grades. Ease of access, simple descent and perfect rock combine to make all these routes worthwhile, but the pick of the bunch is **Iffley Dreams** – one of the very best short routes in the area.

Spaceman's Slabs

A short way to the left (South) of the descent ramp is a prominent slab with a number of overlaps. This slab holds several pleasant friction climbs, which unsurprisingly are rather bold. The rock is generally clean, but takes about a day to dry after bad weather.

South Buttress

This huge rambling buttress holds no climbs at present, though some potential lines have been identified. The rock here is of lesser quality to the rest of the crag, with a worrying amount of friable holds.

An overview of the crag, showing the relative locations of these areas can be found on the centre page of this guide.

The following symbols are used to describe the climbs...



= Often Wet



= Dangerous



= Well protected

LOW CRAG – RIABHACH WALL



The first area reached is a short gabbro wall, reminiscent of a gritstone edge. This is Riabhach Wall, and holds a number of worthwhile shorter climbs. The wall is north facing and can be particularly lichenous after poor weather - Even in the middle of summer these climbs can be quite green when the rest of Low Crag is in good condition. When the wall does dry out, however, it can be a very pleasant place to climb with grades to suit most abilities. Climbs are described here from right to left, in the direction of approach.

Descent from all climbs on this face can be made by walking down an easy slab at the left (East) side of the crag.

At the extreme right hand end is a small incut rectangular slab, which holds the pleasant, though escapable...

1. Escapist's Daydream



[A.Baugh & R.Welford 4/1/02]

★ 10m HS

The centre of the thin slab is soloed on small edges. Belay some distance back.

To the left of this is a bulging rounded arete that bounds the right hand side of Riabhach Wall itself. This arete seems to remain damp when the rest of the wall has dried out, but when it is dry it holds the excellent...

2. Coolin Off

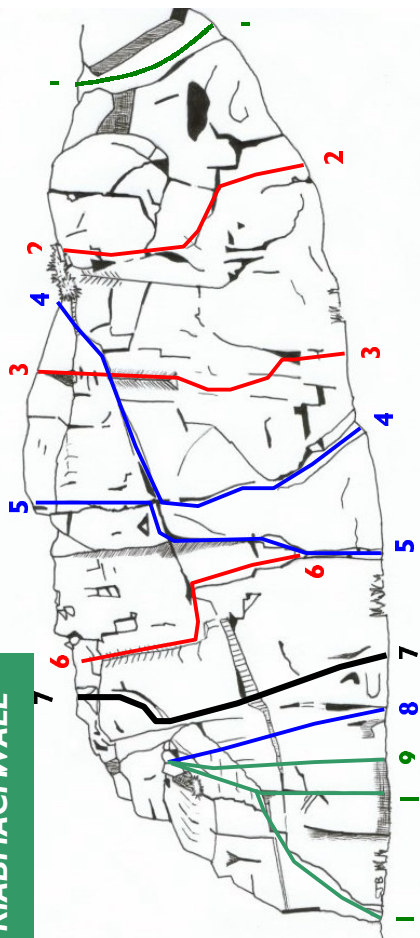


[A.Baugh 31/12/02]

★★★ 20m E1 5a

The prominent blunt rib at the right-hand side of the crag was an obvious 'last great problem' of the wall. Start at a fault immediately right of this and trend up and left to reach a horizontal break with poor protection. From here, insecure moves lead to a huge bucket and easier rib above.

RIABHACHWALL



1. Escapist's Daydream (HS) ★
2. Coolin Off (EI) ★★
3. Oxford Blue (EI) ★★
4. The Purple Turtle (HVS) ★
5. The Groove (MVS) ★
6. Taliban Groove (EI) ★
7. Kandahar (E4) ★
8. Small Slab (HVS)
9. The Seamstress (VD)
10. East Ramp (M)

3. Oxford Blue



[S. Broadbent & K. Wigmore 4/1/02]

★★ 20m E1 5b

A beautifully technical climb linking the obvious scarce holds and requiring thoughtful protection. Head straight up the wall right of The Purple Turtle to reach a small triangular niche (crux). Move out of this more easily to belay above.

4. The Purple Turtle



[A. Ross, A. Parker & A. Baugh 4/1/02]

★ 25m HVS 5a

A well protected route with a challenging crux at mid-height. Climb the prominent leftwards ramp in the centre of the wall and continue directly up the thin flake crack above. Finish rightwards along a basalt ledge.

5. The Groove



[S. Broadbent & K. Wigmore 4/1/02]

★ 25m MVS 4b

The short groove in the centre of the face provides an obvious line, but proves more awkward than it looks. Gain the ledge above and step right to finish directly up more broken ground.

Just to the left of The Groove lies a small but impending wall at the top of the crag. This is the objective of two of the wall's boldest lines...

6. Taliban Groove



[S. Broadbent & K. Wigmore 31/12/02]

★ 20m E1 5a

The shallow corner in the steep headwall right of Kandahar is a bold and technical undertaking. Start as for The Groove but follow the left-hand crack to a small ledge and suspect rock. From here make precarious moves leftwards before finishing up the superbly exposed groove.

7. Kandahar



[S. Broadbent & K. Wigmore 4/1/02]

★ 15m E4 5c

The steep headwall 5m left of The Groove is bold and technical. Climb up easy slabs to excellent holds in the basalt dyke, and poor tiny wire runners high on the left. Then make difficult moves on tiny edges and sidepulls, trending rightwards up the undercut flake crack to the top. Further protection is available, but with the top so close it's almost not worth it...

8. Small Slab



[A. Baugh & R. Welford 4/1/02]

15m HVS 5b

Climbs the short undercut slab immediately right of two basalt seams in the left part of the wall. Starting from the right, pull through the overlap on

undercut holds, and climb the slab directly to finish up the wall above. Poorly protected above the crux.

9. The Seamstress



[R. Welford & K. Wigmore 4/1/02]

10m VD

Solo up between the two basalt seams to the left of Small Slab, before finishing up easy ground above.

10. East Ramp



[K. Wigmore 4/1/02]

20m Mod

The easy walls and ledges close to the left hand arete provide a pleasant scramble. New leaders might, however, prefer to try the variation start (20m, Difficult, f.a. A.Parker 4/1/02) - Ascend the first crack right of the start of East Ramp, and finish up a choice of easy lines above.

LOW CRAG – NORTH BUTTRESS



A short distance around the corner from Riabhach Wall lies another, larger, and more intimidating buttress. On the small clean buttress halfway between Riabhach Wall and this 'North Buttress' three corners have been climbed at Difficult standard.

North Buttress itself can be considered in two main sections. The first to be reached is the North Face, which rises up from a sloping grassy ramp, and is bounded on the left by a long blunt arete. Routes are described working right to left, starting in the corner at the top of the grassy ramp.

11. Alison's Rib



[K. Wigmore & G. Damerell 31/12/02]

25m HD

The vague rib to the right of a prominent square corner is hard lower down, but eases dramatically higher up.

12. Electra



[S. Broadbent, C. Atkinson & K. Wigmore 31/12/02]

25m VD

The square cut corner at the right side of the wall is often damp but provides an entertaining and well-protected climb.

13. Venus



[A. Ross, S. Broadbent & K. Wigmore 30/12/02]

★ 25m HVD

A good route with sparse protection. Start below ledges a few metres left of Electra and follow the easiest line straight up the blunt rib above.

14. Warmin' Up



[A. Baugh, J. Wakeham & G. Damerell 30/12/02]

25m MS

From the large ledge on Venus make an airy but well-protected step left into the large depression in the centre of the upper wall. Climb straight up this and exit via a small slab above. Good, varied, and interesting climbing.

15. Faithless



[S. Broadbent, K. Wigmore & A. Ross 30/12/02]

★★ 25m E1 4c

A poorly protected technical route that follows the vague basalt dyke up the centre of the face. Start just left of a rocky step on the grassy approach ramp. The climbing is interesting and sustained with barely any worthwhile protection.

16. Mercury Rib



[S. Broadbent, K. Wigmore & A. Ross 30/12/02]

★★ 25m VS 4b

A stunning pitch up the blunt arete at the left side of the North Face. The climbing is superb and sustained on immaculate rock, though protection is worryingly sparse. Start just right of the arete and traverse up and left to gain a prominent niche on the arete itself (crux). Continue up the front of the arete until a large belay ledge is reached. From here the top of the crag is reached by easy scrambling.

Continuing round the corner past Mercury Rib the base of the crag becomes much steeper and of poorer quality. This is the Buttress' East Face, and further along there is a steep damp corner which bounds the right hand side of an impressive blank slab halfway up the wall. The only route to be climbed on this face to date starts another 20m to the left, and follows the obvious rightwards-slanting crack at the left side of the blank slab. This is...

Varsity Crack



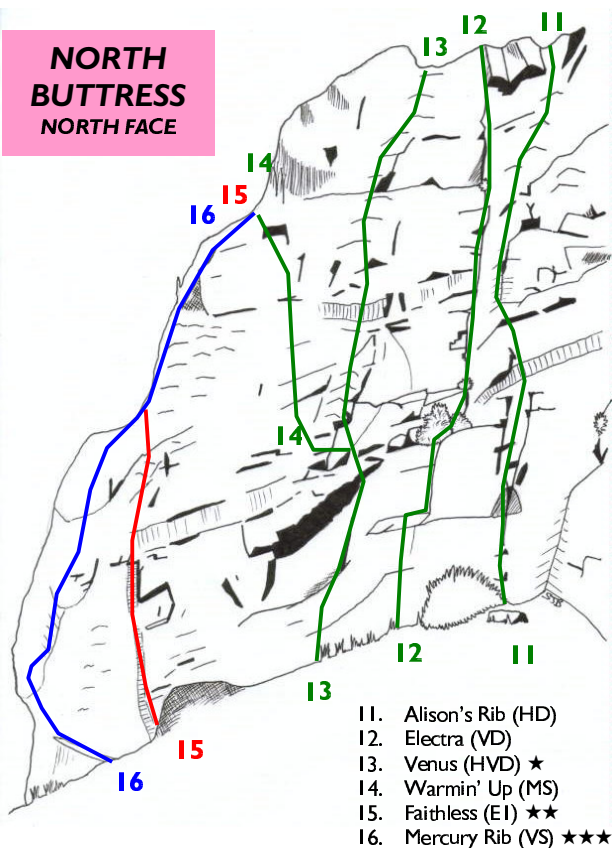
[S. Broadbent, K. Wigmore & A. Ross 30/12/02]

★★ 55m VS

Probably the most adventurous route on the crag. A sense of humour and exploratory attitude will overcome the questionable quality of the rock...

1. 25m. Follow the crack with relative ease, making several steps right onto the face. Belay in the unpleasant vegetated basalt dyke.

2. 30m (4c). The crack above the basalt is overhanging and often dirty, but does contain excellent holds. After a few difficult and exhilarating moves the gradient eases into pleasant scrambling right to the top of the crag.



LOW CRAG – PANORAMIX RIGHT



Instead of following the path up to North Buttress, traverse the hillside slightly lower to reach the impressive Panoramix Area. Just before the main wall is reached, a lower section of crag holds some worthwhile climbs. This is Panoramix Right Hand, and effectively forms the triangle of steep rock below and to the right of I'd Rather be Wet Than Sorry.

The sector consists of a number of small buttresses, towers, and walls, interspersed with seasonal waterfalls. Because of this, the rock takes considerable time to dry out, and during wetter months it can appear alarmingly lichenous.

Despite this, however, there are some tempting lines, with easy access and a convenient descent down the ramp to the right (north).

Cracked Buttress



[S.Broadbent & K.Wigmore 3/04]

★ 17m HS 4a

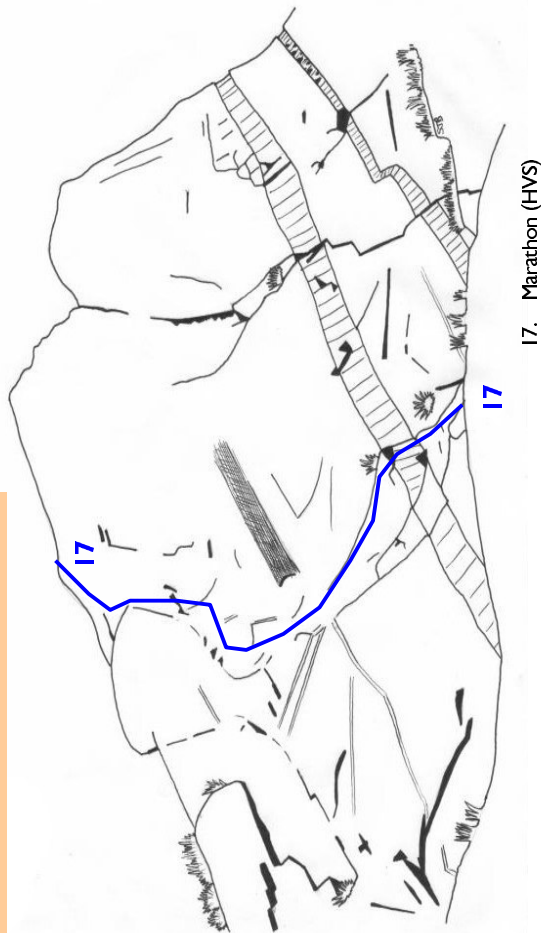
The cracked buttress just to the right of the waterfall gives varied climbing with poor protection. Climb on to the large chockstone via a series of ledges. From here, step up and right to follow the right hand side of the pillar to its rounded top.

17. Marathon 35m HVS 4c



[S.Broadbent & K.Wigmore 3/04]

The flaky crescent groove is considerably harder than it looks, with a tremendous bold run-out above the crux; almost deserving an E1 grade. Start at the foot of the groove and climb to a small ledge. Step right (crux) to gain access to the continuation groove above, which is followed (with ground-fall potential) to the loose ramp of I'd Rather Be Wet Than Sorry.



LOW CRAG – PANORAMIX WALL



The showpiece of the crag, Panoramix wall rises over 200ft in a perfect sweep of clean gabbro, commanding magnificent views over Glen Sligachan. The huge east-facing wall has a serious and committing feel to it, despite the easy access and relatively simple descent. Nearly all the routes here are big undertakings for their grades, but enjoy stunning exposure and immaculate rock.

The wall is slightly off-vertical for its entire height, and adorned with small positive holds. This provokes a very technical and thoughtful climbing style, with even the hardest routes feeling very non-strenuous. Protection, however, is almost invariably worse than it looks from below and care is required. Several in-situ pitons provide a token attempt to protect some of the blankest sections, but a selection of camming devices (including some tiny ones) will prove helpful.

This face, like the rest of the crag, will require a day or so to come into condition after poor weather, but tends to dry more quickly than most of the other buttresses. Descent from the top of the wall is not difficult in either direction, but the left (southern) route is slightly easier.

At the bottom right side of the wall is a rightwards-slanting ramp with an overhang (The Panoramix Roof) above it. This slab appears quite vegetated, and provides the general line of the only poor route hereabouts...

18. Rather be Wet Than Sorry



[K. Wigmore & A. Baugh 6/4/00]

45m VD

A rather damp climb that skirts around the side of the impressively steep wall. Start up the small diagonal ramp just left of the vegetation. This is followed on to the larger ramp up to the edge of the crag, on first loose then wet rock. Finish more easily up around the side of the crag.

19. Journey Into Space



[S. Broadbent, K. Wigmore & A. Baugh 30/5/03]

★★★ 60m E4

A devastating climb, weaving its way up the blankest part of the wall with desperately bold climbing and heart-stopping run-outs. Climbed in its entirety, it's undoubtedly the big line of the crag, but it is possible to climb

both pitches as individual routes. The first, "Journey" E3 5b is more sustained, with the second, "Space" E4 5c more technical.

1. 35m (5b) The epic first pitch has three good runners with long sections of sustained and interesting climbing between them. Start up the sloping ramp as for the previous route, but after 4m head straight up to break through a weakness in the overhang above (peg in wall just above overhang). Traverse rightwards on the basalt until a line of holds leads back leftwards to another basalt dyke and good nut runner. If the nerves are still intact then another wild rising traverse rightwards along the basalt leads to a belay on a cluster of cams close to the right side of the wall.

2. 25m (5c) The blank wall on the upper right side of the crag provides the crux of the route, and amazing exposure. Move back left and pull through the overhang on small holds. A very poor peg runner provides the last (and only) protection on the pitch. Trend up and left on improving holds across the superb blank wall until the ledge of Grand National is reached. Step right and climb the shallow groove as for that route, before continuing straight up on excellent holds to the top of the crag and earning yourself a pint in the Sligachan Hotel...

Original Route



[H.Jenkins 6/4/00]

35m E2 5c

The line of the first assault was forced right to avoid more difficult ground, and eventually thwarted by the 'Jenkins Crack' half way up the headwall. Follow Electric Mainline to the 'Rest Ledge' before escaping rightwards along the unprotected basalt. A rather unsatisfactory outing.

20. Electric Mainline

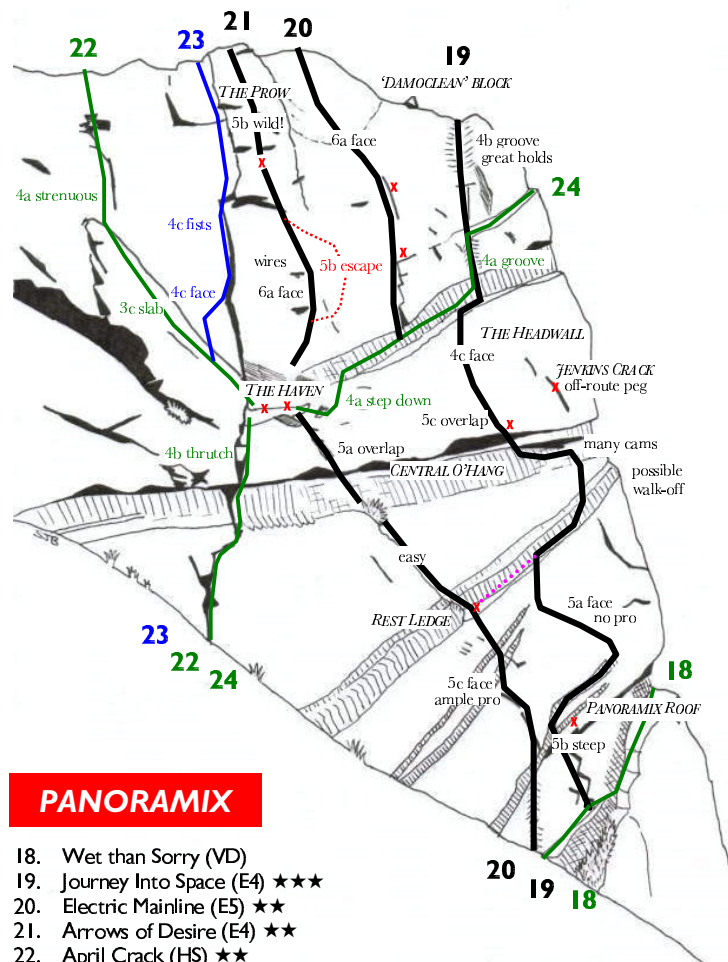


[H.Jenkins & S.Broadbent 8/4/00]

★ ★ 65m E5

Another brilliant and bold test-piece taking a logical line up the steep central wall. The climbing is slightly harder than on Journey Into Space, but the protection is only poor rather than imaginary. The final crux section is bold and sustained in a commanding position. The small ledge below will break your back, but not your fall...

1. 35m (5c) Start up a line of holds leading up to the left of the small overhang. Climb straight up to a diagonal break from where difficult moves lead past two vertical cracks and through a basalt dyke to a rest ledge and peg runner. From here the obvious ramp is followed easily leftwards to a patch of grass below the central overhang (Friend 3 placement below overhang). This is surmounted with surprising ease on small but good holds, which can be hard to see from below. Easy climbing then leads left to belay on the Haven.



PANORAMIX

- 18. Wet than Sorry (VD)
- 19. Journey Into Space (E4) ★ ★ ★
- 20. Electric Mainline (E5) ★ ★
- 21. Arrows of Desire (E4) ★ ★
- 22. April Crack (HS) ★ ★
- 23. April Crack Direct (HVS) ★ ★ ★
- 24. Grand National (S) ★ ★ ★

x = in situ peg

— = Original Route (E2)
 - - - = Easier Alternative to 'the Prow'

2. 30m (6a) A magnificent pitch. Step down and right and pull through the steep ground on excellent holds (as for Grand National). Move right along the obvious basalt dyke as far as a corner with white quartz in it. This is climbed to a small ledge and tied off peg runner. The blank wall above forms the crux of the route and is protected by a peg on the right hand side. Climb the wall until the angle relents. The climbing remains interesting, taking the final wall direct with no more protection, to finish at the highest point of the crag.

21. Arrows of Desire



[S & K Broadbent 27/3/05]

★★ 25m E4

The steep prow above the Haven gives a technical climb of continuous interest in a fine position, and can be adequately protected by small wires.

1. Reach the Haven by following another route, or by abseil.

2. **25m (6a)** From the Haven climb straight up on small holds to a puzzling blank section, where a committing rock-over gives access to better holds above. Clip an in-situ peg (poor) and finish more easily up the exhilarating prow above.

22. April Crack

[K. Wigmore & S. Broadbent 8/4/00]

★★ 45m HS

A fine route that always feels like a bigger outing than the grade might suggest.

1. **25m (4b)** The obvious crackline provides a brilliant, steep struggle up to the Haven, eating all the gear you can carry.

2. **20m.** From the belay, the easiest escape is up the attractive leftwards-slanting slab to finish up a short steep crack.

23. April Crack Direct



[S. Broadbent & K. Wigmore 6/4/00]

★★★ 55m HVS

The classic route up Panoramix Wall is steep, bold and varied, taking an uncompromising line direct to the summit of the crag.

1. **25m (4b)** As April Crack.

2. **30m (4c).** The wall to the left of the crack is climbed boldly until a step right can be made back to its 'security', where poor holds and jams allow for strenuous progress! Easier ground is soon reached...

24. Grand National



[H. Jenkins & S. Broadbent 8/4/00]

★★★ 30m S

A staggering bold pitch following the basalt dyke from the Haven right across the centre of Panoramix Wall. The hardest moves are right at the start, but as height is gained the exposure becomes sensational.

Protection is almost impossible to arrange, so the climb requires a confident approach... could deserve HVS?

1. Reach the Haven by following another route such as April Crack.

2. **30m (4a)** Step down and right from the Haven to reach excellent positive holds for the pull through the steep ground. This brings one onto the basalt where the amazing walk of faith begins. Walk rightwards, with good hand holds, past a quartz vein to a short shallow groove near the right side of the wall. A tricky unprotected move up this groove gains another ledge (gabbro this time) which is followed scarily rightwards to the belay. Tremendous!

LOW CRAG – PANORAMIX LEFT



About 30m to the left (south) of April crack is a short wall with an overlap at half height. The right hand part of this wall tends to remain wet, but may dry out in a prolonged dry spell. Further left, however, the rock is clean and dry, and boasts several short hard routes. Three of these have been climbed.

25. Pulse



[A. Baugh & K. Wigmore 30/5/03]

★ 25m E2 5b

Interesting climbing which skirts the vegetation on the right side of the wall. Start at a series of mantelshelves below the right hand end of the half-height overlap. Climb 10m to the overlap, which is turned using the crack on the right (cleaner than it looks!). Move left up a ramp (tiny cams) to gain handholds in the basalt. From here, climb direct to the top using imagination to move between the well spaced holds.

26. Ifley Dreams



[H. Jenkins & A. Baugh 8/4/00]

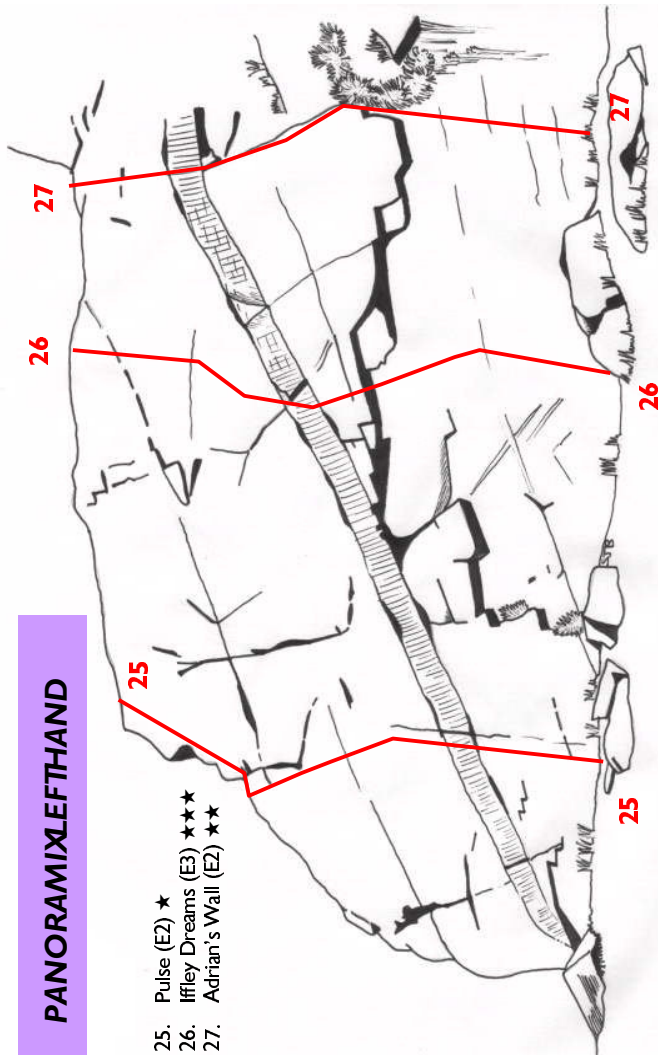
★★★ 25m E3 5b

This brilliant, technical wall climb with a bold top section is a classic of the crag. Climb directly to the obvious hanging flake, and Move left to pull through the overlap on big holds to reach a small ledge (nut runner in slot above). Finish directly up the wall above via a sequence of surprising moves on good but small holds...

An alternative finish which trends right from above the overlap has also been climbed, and found to be slightly easier.

PANORAMIX LEFT HAND

25. Pulse (E2) ★
 26. Ifley Dreams (E3) ★★★
 27. Adrian's Wall (E2) ★★



27. Adrian's Wall



[A.Baugh & K.Wigmore 8/4/00]

★★ 20m E2 5b

The zigzag arete at the left end of the wall is another brilliant bold undertaking, with thin moves to reach the first protection at 11m! Start just left of two hairline cracks.

LOW CRAG – SPACEMAN'S SLABS



Continue walking left (south) from Panoramix Left Hand, until a huge gabbro slab is encountered. This holds a number of very fine, bold slab routes with very little protection but excellent friction. Descent is an easy walk to the left (south) of the slabs. Routes are described from left to right.

Ground Control to Major Tom



[A.Baugh & K.Wigmore 6/4/00]

★ 45m VS 4b

A good climb up the left-hand part of the huge slabs, encountering a wide variety of interesting rock types. Protection is sparse but adequate. Climb straight up to the left of Spaceman's Slab, over three distinct bulges. Belay from a large block at the top.

Spaceman's Slab



[A.Baugh & H.Jenkins 6/4/00]

★★ 45m HVS 4c

The original route up the slabs provides interesting bold climbing. From a weakness in the initial bulge climb the centre of the slab to a basalt dyke below another bulge at about 25m (tiny wire runners). Climb on through the bulge and belay on the easy ground above.

Apollo 13



[A.Baugh & K.Wigmore 8/4/00]

45m E1

A poorly protected route that weaves its way around the overlaps on the right hand side of the slabs.

1. **25m (4c)** Climb thinly to a 'thank God' jug and the slab above (crux). Follow the slab up and rightwards past more overlaps, trending left below the final, largest one to reach a belay in a large niche.
2. **10m (4c)** Climb up and right from the niche to a short roof crack. This is climbed on the left by layaway moves to a belay above.

LOW CRAG – SOUTH BUTTRESS



To the South of the slabs, the crag continues in a series of large, broken buttresses. The rock here is considerably more friable than that on the rest of the crag, and no climbing routes have been recorded.

An attempt on the long prominent rib immediately left of Spaceman's Slabs was thwarted by poorly protected, difficult moves almost straight off the ground. Further exploration may, however, reveal some worthwhile climbing on this buttress.

High Crag

Coire Nan Allt Geala, Sligachan, Isle of Skye
GR 478252

Viewed from Glen Sligachan, High Crag is one of the most impressive pieces of rock in the area. It's potential was identified early in the OUMC exploration, but low lying snow thwarted any hopes of a closer look. During later reconnaissance two teams independently reported the many possibilities that this crag must surely hold, but once again the weather prevented any climbing.

At the end of 2002, the opportunity finally arose to climb on High Crag, when it was discovered that the crag didn't really live up to its potential. The main face is undercut at its base, making all lines exceptionally difficult. The situation is further worsened by up to 200ft of steep ground at the top of the wall, making escape difficult and top-roping awkward. The lower tier is considerably more friendly, but even this doesn't have the vast diversity of climbing seen on the superior Low Crag.

The Black Wall

The awesome wall, 50m high and 60m wide has already been described in journals. To date, Black Magic is the only route to have been climbed, though the wall looks like it might hold several extremely hard bold pitches.

The Tower

At the left side of The Black Wall is a huge tower, which contains no routes at present. Several long and serious possibilities may exist hereabouts

The Lower Tier

Directly below the Black Wall, out of sight from the approach, there is a shorter wall that offers climbs of more reasonable grades. The rock is fairly slow to dry, requiring several good days to come into condition. When it does, however, there are a number of worthwhile single pitch routes. They are described here from right to left.

28. Bedrock



[S.Broadbent, K.Wigmore & A.Baugh 29/12/02]

25m S

An interesting route that wanders up the walls and ledges at the right side of the crag. Start a few feet left of a shallow broken groove and climb the series of short steep walls above.

29. Jacob's Ladder



[S.Broadbent & K.Wigmore 29/12/02]

★ 30m HS 4a

An exciting route following an obvious diagonal line across the centre of the crag. Start up the rightwards-slanting basalt ramp and climb up into the steep corner above. After arranging careful protection pull awkwardly up the left side of the block before finishing to the right.

30. Haribo



[S.Broadbent, K.Wigmore & A.Baugh 29/12/02]

★★ 20m VS 5a

The prominent rightwards-facing shallow corner provides a well-protected struggle! Reach the foot of the corner via a basalt ramp, and climb it on excellent side-pulls. Arrange protection before racing to the top on good but small holds. An excellent pitch.

31. High and Dry



[A.Baugh 29/12/02]

15m HS

Near the extreme left of the wall is a corner with two slanting cracks to its right. Climb between these and pull over onto an easier rightwards-trending steep ramp. Romp up this to a tricky and exposed exit.

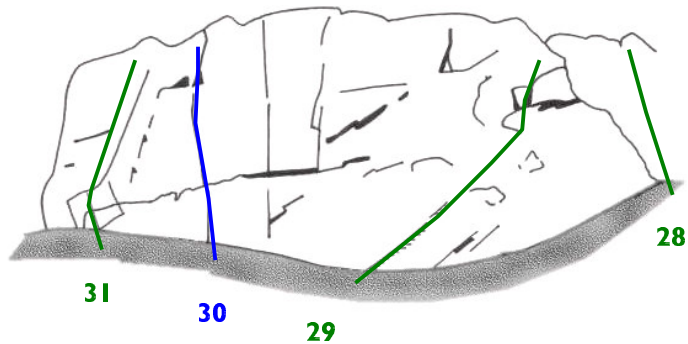
Pink Umbrella



[G. Damerell 29/12/02]

★ 25m H.Diff

Around the corner at the left end of the wall is an inviting small slab with obvious diagonal crack. Follow the crack leftwards and continue over the bulge above.



NEW ROUTES

Please send details of new routes to steve@kub.org.uk so that this guidebook can be updated in the future.